

# The American Press and the Rise of Hitler, 1923–1933

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To my father, Robert Klein,  
who instilled in me a passion for history.

## Dissertation Abstract

### "THE AMERICAN PRESS AND THE RISE OF HITLER, 1923-33"

This Ph.D. study will trace the development of National Socialism in Germany as it was depicted by three major American newspapers: the New York Times, the Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Daily News. While news stories and editorials will be analyzed with respect to scope and bias, particular attention will also be paid to the decision-making processes within the newspaper establishments themselves. In attempting to understand the "news behind the news", an archival-driven methodology will be used in conjunction with the more conventional product-driven one. That is to say, memoranda and cables between publishers, editors and foreign correspondents will be examined in addition to the back issues of the newspapers themselves. By adopting this twin-pronged methodological approach, the scholar will be able to view the Hitlerian phenomenon through the eyes of the American public as well as penetrate the minds of newspapermen.

My choice of publications is based strongly on the availability of primary source evidence. The Newberry Library possesses important internal documents of the Chicago Daily News. Specifically, a great deal can be learned about this newspaper's coverage of the rise of Hitler through an analysis of the relevant sections of the Charles H. Dennis Papers, Edward Price Bell Papers, Carroll Binder Papers, Edgar Mowrer Papers, Paul Mowrer Papers and Victor Lawson Papers, as well as other assorted materials. I will use the data generated from the Newberry Library in conjunction with information from the Sigrid Schultz Papers, courtesy of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Mass Communications History Center), as well as documents from the New York Times Archive. This will provide fresh insights into the news and editorial perceptions of the Chicago Daily News, Chicago Daily Tribune and New York Times as they relate to the events in Germany between 1923 and 1933.

A key feature of this study will be a comprehensive analysis of how the relationship between a newspaper's management (which in the upcoming chapters will also be referred to as the "Home Office") and its Berlin bureau influenced the publication's news and editorial coverage of Germany. Furthermore, by examining the transatlantic correspondence between the Home Offices of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune and their field reporters, the reader will gain insight into issues which transcend the subject matter of this dissertation. These issues include: 1) Who exercised control over the formation and presentation of news -- management or the field reporter? 2) How did each paper's coverage of Hitler's rise to power reflect the journalistic principles of the day, especially those related to accuracy and objectivity? and 3) How did journalists define their role in the conduct of international affairs during the 1920's and early 1930's? Did they view themselves as detached recorders of events or as active participants in the political process, hoping to influence the course of events by shaping their coverage to conform to a particular ideological agenda?

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To my aunt, Helene Weintraub, I owe an especial debt of thanks for her invaluable help and encouragement. Her numerous acts of kindness would comprise an additional chapter if detailed here.

And finally, I will be forever grateful to my mother, Marilyn Klein, whose immeasurable support can never be recompensed.

# *Abbreviations*

## **Newspapers**

<u>CDN</u>	<u>Chicago Daily News</u>
<u>CDT</u>	<u>Chicago Daily Tribune</u>
<u>NYT</u>	<u>New York Times</u>

## **German Political Parties**

DDP	German Democratic party
DNVP	German Nationalist People's party (also referred to as the Conservative party)
DVP	German People's party
KPD	German Communist party
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' party (also referred to as the Nazis)
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany

## **Other**

<i>FRUS</i>	<i>Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
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## Introduction

At first glance, a historical study of the perceptions of the press seems like a straightforward research task. The scholar need only consult the publications, any relevant secondary works and possibly memoirs. In methodological terms, the result would be a product-driven study, the product being newspaper headlines, articles, editorials, pictures or even cartoons that represent a point of view -- one that is a result of decisions made by publisher, editor and correspondent -- within the context of a particular period. Many media historians have adopted the practice of quantifying data from newspapers; thus, press perception studies have become more noted for their statistical rather than qualitative analysis. One French press historian, Jean-Jacques Becker, even calculated the percent of column space and word count devoted to the July Crisis of 1914.<sup>1</sup> The late American press historian, Michael Emery, advised that the first step in conducting a press perception study was to compile a statistically sound newspaper sample.<sup>2</sup> With a few notable exceptions,<sup>3</sup> most American historians have adopted this method to study press perceptions.

Thanks to microfilm, a researcher has greater access to larger numbers of publications than ever before. It is conceivable that a scholar could complete a Ph.D. press

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<sup>1</sup>Becker, J-J, 1914: *Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre* (Paris 1977), see also Herrmann, G. "American Press Perceptions of the Death of the Weimar Republic" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Carnegie Mellon 1979), Appendices.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Emery to the author, April 1994.

<sup>3</sup>See Liebovich L., *The Press and the Origins of the Cold War 1944-1947* (New York 1988), Heald M., *Transatlantic Vistas: American Journalists in Europe, 1900-1940* (Kent, Ohio 1988) and Edwards, J. *The Foreign Policy of McCormick's Tribune, 1929-41*, (Reno 1971). For a similar approach with the British press, see Cockett. R., *Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement and the Manipulation of the Press* (London 1989).

(2)

perception study within the confines of the local branch library.

A product-driven approach allows the historian to determine the degree of media consensus on a particular issue. For example, after analyzing editorials from seven American newspapers, I concluded that despite their different locations and audiences, these publications maintained a strongly anti-Austrian stance during the July Crisis of 1914.<sup>4</sup> Where a newspaper's management encourages general autonomy among its reporters, a product-driven approach can also allow the historian to compare the judgments of field correspondents in their news columns with those of management on the editorial page. However, this approach can effectively address only two general questions: namely, what did a particular article state about a particular event and how much attention was devoted to that particular event? What is left to speculation are the answers to why the publication reported an event the way it did and why it took the editorial position it did.

What is missing from a product-driven work is a strong qualitative analysis based on archival information. A press historian who relies solely on what appears in print cannot effectively address the fundamental components of historical analysis -- causation, dynamics, judgment and meaning. And only by examining the decision-making behind the coverage (or, at the very least, the context in which newspaper decisions were made) can a press scholar put forth a level of analysis found in other branches of history -- hence the need for an archival base.

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<sup>4</sup>Klein, G. "Reaping the Whirlwind: Austria, Germany and the American Press July 1914" (University of London, M.A. Thesis 1990).

(3)

When asked if any archival material existed for a study of U.S. press perceptions of the rise of Adolf Hitler, the late Michael Emery responded, 'I doubt it highly and you will probably waste a lot of time in the process'.<sup>5</sup> That he tried to dissuade me from even attempting this approach reflects the condition of American press archives and historical press material in general.

For a variety of reasons, (the most important of which was the incremental and informal nature of journalistic decision-making), American newspaper records of the 1920's and 1930's, especially editorial board minutes and internal memoranda, were either destroyed or never written in the first place. Poor indexing of press records is also an obstacle to the researcher. Where extensive holdings do exist, they are often inaccessible to the researcher because most are under the ownership and discretion of the publisher's descendants.

Despite its difficulties, the merits of an archival-driven study are inestimable. Whereas a product-driven study bears witness to what journalists wrote, an archival-driven study may elicit what journalists were thinking, questioning, wondering about or even desiring. By utilizing both methodologies, I will provide a fuller, but by no means complete, sense of how the mainstream\* American press viewed Germany and the Hitler phenomenon.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>M. Emery to the author, April 1994.

<sup>6</sup>\*For the purposes of this study, the terms "mainstream" and "major" press are defined as those publications which were generally recognized as legitimate news sources whose editorials espoused ideas that fell within the two-party American political spectrum of the 1920's and 1930's. Thus, a conservative isolationist publication such as the Chicago Daily Tribune or a liberal internationalist one such as The Nation would still be considered "mainstream", but the Socialist World would not.

This thesis will examine how the New York Times, the Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Daily News, in particular, perceived the decline of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Adolf Hitler between 1923 and 1933. Although a moderate amount of historical attention has been paid to Hitler and the American press<sup>7</sup>, only three detailed studies, George Herrmann's "American Press Perceptions of the Death of the Weimar Republic" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Carnegie Mellon 1979), Klaus Schoenthal's "American Attitudes Toward Germany, 1918-1932" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State 1959) and Michael Zalampas's *Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich in American Magazines, 1923-39* (Bowling Green, Ohio 1989) focus on the Weimar era.

These pieces represent a point of departure for this dissertation. Though Schoenthal devotes only a few pages to U.S. press coverage of the rise of Nazism, his conclusions provide a useful context for my study by identifying important trends in the development of U.S. press sentiment towards Germany. Schoenthal argues that the press's views regarding Germany went through three distinct stages, eventually coming full circle by the end of 1932: 1) hailing the overthrow of the Hohenzollern monarchy at the close of World War I; 2) sympathizing with the plight of the Weimar Republic over the issues of "War Guilt" and reparations; and 3) ultimately condemning the German character with the ascension of Adolf Hitler. Moreover, Schoenthal demonstrates that each shift in American public opinion coincided with a shift in geographic

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<sup>7</sup>See Lipstadt, D., *Beyond Belief: the American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York 1982). Far less satisfactory is Norden, M. "American Editorial Response to the Rise of Hitler: A Preliminary Consideration", American Jewish Historical Society Quarterly, Volume LVII (October 1968) pp.290-297 because of its lack of depth and glaring inaccuracies.

arenas: specifically, between 1918 and 1922, U.S. attitudes toward Germany were influenced primarily by events within America itself such as demobilization and the Senate debate over the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles; between 1923 and 1930, by European issues such as reparations, inter-allied debts and their link to the 'war guilt' question; and between 1930 through 1932, by German-based issues, especially after the Nazi electoral breakthrough in September 1930.

Whereas Schoenthal's and Zalampas's work are marked by their broad chronological and material scope, Herrmann's thesis is noteworthy for its much narrower focus. By concentrating on the last 15 months of the Weimar Republic, Herrmann sought to ascertain exactly how well the American press kept its readership informed and accurately apprised of the developing Nazi phenomenon. Herrmann conducted extensive quantitative analyses, employing twelve newspapers and twenty-one magazines reflecting different political, ideological and geographic backgrounds. He determined the amount of news and editorial coverage devoted to Germany by totalling the number of German-related news items, clarifying the subject matter of each item and calculating the frequency with which German-related stories made the front page. Herrmann also quantified news and editorial opinion, although he failed to differentiate between the two. He assessed the general tone of press opinion as to the stability of the Weimar Republic by placing a newspaper's position into one of three categories: a)'Government in a Strong Position', b)'Government Barely Hanging onto Power' or c)'Republic on the Way Out'.<sup>8</sup> As a result of this comprehensive

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<sup>8</sup>Herrmann, "American Perceptions", P. 230.

statistical analysis, Herrmann came to three conclusions. First, despite its isolationist tendencies, the American press provided extensive coverage of German politics. Second, with some striking exceptions such as The New Republic, the American press was far too optimistic about the future of the Weimar Republic and did not grasp the reality of the Nazi phenomenon until many weeks after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. And third, the periodical press journalists tended to be more accurate than the daily newspaper press in their overall commentary regarding Germany's internal situation.<sup>9</sup>

Except for a short conclusion where he echoed Herrmann's praises of the periodical press, Zalampas refrained from including any detailed analysis in his work.<sup>10</sup> Instead, his book was comprised essentially of a series of quotes which were connected to form a narrative.

Despite their differences in scope, Schoenthal's, Herrmann's and Zalampas's works are essentially product-driven studies. None of the authors made substantive use, if any, of press archival material and thus all three pieces suffer from a distinct lack of qualitative emphasis. For example, despite over 250 pages of extensive quotes from U.S. publications, Herrmann provided only a cursory explanation as to why the media perceived events in Germany in the way it did, stating that the American press 'allowed the inherent American faith in democracy and progress to shade commentary in an optimistic direction'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid. P.iii.

<sup>10</sup>Zalampas, M. *Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich in American Magazines, 1923-1939*, (Bowling Green University Press, Ohio 1989) Conclusion.

<sup>11</sup>Herrmann, "American Perceptions", op. cit.

The present study will not only compare and contrast the attitudes of mainstream American publications towards Hitler's rise but it will also address the reasons why some of their coverage took the form it did -- thus seeking to fill the void left by Herrmann, Schoenthal and Zalampas. By adding an archival dimension, this investigation will illustrate how personalities, business and political ideology, as well as chance, shaped the news and editorial coverage of the rise of Hitler -- even to the point where the actual developments in Germany exerted only a marginal influence. Where direct archival material is lacking, this dissertation will attempt to provide a fuller understanding of the existing level of product-driven analysis by identifying consistencies and inconsistencies among and between news and editorial opinions of the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News. Moreover, it will try to explain the origins of these patterns by examining primary source documents, which though not discussing Germany in particular, will shed light on the general decision-making processes of each newspaper. Even though this study is not designed as a press *opinion* survey (critics would be correct in claiming that three newspapers alone fail to comprise a satisfactory press opinion sample), an in-depth analysis of these three newspapers, as well as an overview of other major American publications, will also give the reader a sense of how other segments of the press perceived the Hitler phenomenon.

However, a great deal of political, philosophical and social diversity characterized the New York Times, the Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Daily News, differences clearly seen at the publishing level. Adolph Ochs (New York Times publisher),

Robert McCormick (Chicago Daily Tribune publisher) and Victor Lawson (Chicago Daily News publisher) each differed as to the mission of the modern newspaper. Whereas Ochs saw the Times as an all-encompassing record of significant events, McCormick viewed the newspaper as an instrument of political and social change. Ochs and his managing editor Carr Van Anda stressed the principles of journalistic objectivity and thoroughness of account; Lawson's correspondents, however, championed the new journalism of the 1920's and 1930's: 'not so much to tell what has happened as to tell how and why it happened, and what it means'.<sup>12</sup>

The publications also differed in their international perspectives, especially on U.S. foreign policy. The New York Times and the Chicago Daily News supported the basic tenets of Wilsonianism: U.S. participation in the League of Nations and world affairs in general, open diplomacy and multilateral disarmament. The Chicago Daily Tribune, on the other hand, was strongly isolationist; it opposed U.S. participation in the League of Nations (as well as in European affairs in general) and advocated a buildup of the American military, especially the navy.<sup>13</sup>

All three publications also possessed influence far beyond their own readerships because of their syndicated news services. Moreover, the plethora of newspaper mergers and consolidations in the 1920's reduced the quantity and variety of publications for general consumption. Thus, small regional newspapers with

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<sup>12</sup>Desmond, R. *Crisis and Conflict: World News Reporting Between the Two World Wars, 1920-1940* (Iowa City 1982) and Heald, *Vistas* P.101.

<sup>13</sup>"Memorandum on the Press of the United States, 1922-32" prepared by the British Library of Information for Whitehall, PRO FO395/459.



low operating budgets became dependent upon a handful of large foreign news information sources. For instance, despite its own relatively low circulation, the New York Times dominated the syndicated foreign news circuit along the Eastern seaboard. The Chicago Daily Tribune, which in 1930 had the second largest nationwide morning circulation, provided syndicated foreign news to the New York Daily News, which had the largest nationwide morning circulation. And finally, the Chicago Daily News syndicated foreign news service was noted for its influence both inside and outside the United States, especially in Canada, Latin America and even Great Britain.<sup>14</sup>

A salient feature of this study will be a comprehensive analysis of how the relationship between a newspaper's management (which in the upcoming chapters will also be referred to as the "Home Office") and its Berlin bureau influenced the publication's news and editorial coverage of Germany. Furthermore, by examining the transatlantic correspondence between the Home Offices of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune and their field reporters, the reader will gain insight into issues which transcend the subject matter of this dissertation. These issues include: 1) Who exercised control over the formation and presentation of news -- management or the field reporter? 2) How did each paper's coverage of Hitler's rise to power reflect the journalistic principles of the day, especially those related to accuracy and objectivity? and 3) How did journalists define their role in the conduct of international affairs during the 1920's and early 1930's? Did they view themselves as an order of 'dispassionate

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid p.14, London's *Daily Telegraph* was among the CDN's subscribers.

monks'<sup>15</sup> meticulously recording the events of the day or as active participants in the political process, hoping to influence the course of events by shaping their coverage to conform to a particular ideological agenda?

Given that an archival analysis of communication between the Home Offices and their Berlin outposts is the primary thrust of this inquiry, the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune were selected for this study because they maintained news bureaus in Germany between 1923 and 1933. Although there were other newspapers which fit this criteria such as the New York Herald Tribune, Philadelphia Public Ledger and the Hearst newspaper conglomerate (courtesy of the International News Service {INS}), only the publications listed above possessed an accessible and sufficient amount of relevant archival material necessary to conduct this type of analysis.

The reader should be forewarned, however, about the specific deficiencies within the available archival holdings of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune, which in a number of instances limit the ability to reach clear-cut conclusions. Unexplained chronological gaps in the correspondence between foreign-based journalists and their respective editors pervade all three newspapers. The amount of correspondence between the Chicago Daily News Berlin bureau and the Home Office though abundant in the mid-1920's is virtually non-existent after 1926. Conversely, although there is a good deal of primary source material about the paper's editorial decision-making after 1927 (thanks in large part to the Carroll

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<sup>15</sup>This is how Alex Jones and Susan Tift (authors of an upcoming biography of the Sulzbergers) described the reporters of the NYT. Jones and Tift to the author, April 1994.

Binder papers), there is very little before then. With regard to the New York Times, the volume of transatlantic correspondence is much greater after 1930, especially 1933. And in the case of the Chicago Daily Tribune, the quantitative levels of relevant archival material vary from year to year, and even month to month.

It is also critical to note that except in the cases where the reporter's "proofs" (his or her's unedited original dispatch or mail story) are cited, it cannot be known with absolute certainty whether the ideas contained in a correspondent's published article were actually his or her's own. Fortunately, through an examination of journalists' correspondence, there were many occasions where one could reasonably surmise the extent to which a reporter's interpretations had been edited.

Despite the aid of the Binder papers, the day-to-day editorial decision-making in all three newspapers remains a mystery, in part because the editorials of all three newspapers were unsigned. Fortunately, there exists enough evidence to identify the driving forces behind each paper's editorial views on Germany between 1923 and 1933. In the case of the Tribune, it was its autocratic publisher, Colonel Robert McCormick; for the Times, it was the editorial page editor, Rollo Ogden; and for the Chicago Daily News, it was publisher Victor Lawson and editor-in-chief, Charles H. Dennis, through the end of 1931 (approximately), and editor Carroll Binder thereafter.

As a direct consequence of the uneven nature of the available archival evidence,\*<sup>16</sup> the degree of emphasis placed on each

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<sup>16</sup>\*Despite repeated attempts, the author was unable to gain access to the Chicago Tribune Archive located in Wheaton, Illinois and hence relies solely on the Sigrid Schultz papers, housed in the State Historical

newspaper varies from chapter to chapter, often making direct and detailed comparisons among the three newspapers difficult. Notwithstanding these limitations, the archival material analyzed will seek to answer basic questions of causation, which most journalist historians of this period have heretofore failed to raise or address. Hopefully, this dissertation will at least help shift the focus of press perception studies from "what newspapers and magazines were saying" to identifying the factors that influenced the presentation of news. In short, this study seeks to demonstrate the importance of the "news behind the news" as much as the news itself.

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Society of Wisconsin, for archival information about the paper. In addition, the U.S. Consulate Papers (Berlin) which may contain information about the activities of American journalists in Germany were unavailable for examination at the time of this writing because they were in the process of being transferred from Washington DC to College Park, Maryland.

## Chapter 1 **The Beer Hall Putsch**

On 9 November 1923 Erich Ludendorff, Germany's de facto leader during the last years of the Great War, and Adolf Hitler, a young upstart who had made a name for himself among the elements of the fringe Right, attempted to overthrow the Weimar Republic. Their ambitious plan, dubbed the Beer Hall Putsch, called for a takeover of the Bavarian government and then a march on Berlin. The coup's failure was assured when Gustav von Kahr and Otto von Lossow, (the Bavarian Commissioner and the Bavarian Reichswehr chief respectively) defected from the ranks of the conspirators. The Putsch ended when the Hitler/Ludendorff contingent was stopped by gunfire from von Lossow's troops outside the capital building in Munich. Hitler emerged unharmed, but was captured a short time later and charged with high treason.<sup>17</sup>

In a wider context, the Beer Hall Putsch was just one of many attempts by extremists to overthrow, and Separatists to secede from, the Weimar Republic since its birth in 1919. 1923, however, marked the climax of political chaos. Between September and November of that year, Germany witnessed Communist uprisings in Hamburg, Saxony and Thuringia, Reichswehr mutinies in Küstrin and Spandau, as well as Separatist takeovers in the Rhineland.

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<sup>17</sup>For a discussion of the Beer Hall Putsch, see Hanfstaengl E., *Unheard Witness* (Philadelphia 1957), Gordon, H., *Hitler and the Beer Hall Putsch* (Princeton 1972), Nicholls, A.J., *Weimar and the Rise of Hitler* (New York 1991) pp.89-91, Craig, G., *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford 1975) pp.466-67 and Eyck, E. *A History of the Weimar Republic* (London 1975) pp.272-75.

This political chaos was in large part an outgrowth of Germany's defeat in the Great War, a conflict which left Germany in massive debt. Not only were the new Weimar governments burdened with paying reparations to the Allies, they were obligated to reimburse their own people (military salaries, widows' pensions, etc.). Between 1919 and 1923 successive Weimar ministries avoided implementing unpopular, yet necessary austerity measures such as tax hikes and reductions in government benefits to put Germany's financial house in order. Instead, they implemented policies which worsened the predicament.

The most notable of these mistakes was the intensification of the wartime practice of inflating the Reichsmark as a means of covering costs. When the Allies demanded reparations payments in hard currency, Germany defaulted, prompting the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923. The Cuno and Stresemann ministries responded by inaugurating a policy of passive resistance, of which inflating the Reichsmark *ad absurdum* was an integral element.<sup>18</sup>

The scenes of German citizens carting stacks of semi-worthless money in wheelbarrows came to symbolize the surreal nature of the early years of the Weimar Republic. Though the actual economic impact of the hyperinflation remains a topic of

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<sup>18</sup>Nicholls, *Weimar* pp. 83-89, Eyck, *Weimar*, pp.225-251 and Childers, T. *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill 1983) pp.50-53. For an in-depth discussion of the origins and development of the Ruhr crisis, see Kent, B. *The Spoils of War: The Politics, Economics and Diplomacy of Reparations* (Oxford 1989), Marks, S. *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918-1933* (London 1976), Trachtenberg, M. *Reparation in World Politics: France and European Economic Diplomacy, 1916-1923* (New York 1980) and Schuker, S. *The End of French Predominance in Europe: The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan* (Princeton 1978).

debate,<sup>19</sup> historians agree that this period of financial chaos severely undermined public confidence in Weimar leaders as well as in the system of parliamentary democracy as a whole. Weimar's lack of credibility was an essential precondition for the political unrest which culminated with Hitler's failed Putsch.

The issue of legitimacy haunted the Republic from its inception because many Germans blamed Weimar's founding parties, [the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the German Peoples Party (DDP) and the Catholic Centre Party (Zentrum)], for the nation's defeat in the Great War. After all, not a single inch of German territory had fallen into enemy hands. This scapegoating of the "November Criminals" gained additional plausibility after Weimar's representatives signed the humiliating Treaty of Versailles. In fact, Hitler was one of many politicians who espoused the "stab-in-the-back" theory of Germany's loss of the war.

Equally important was that the prestige of the Monarchic Right -- particularly that of the army -- emerged from the Great War not only intact, but greatly enhanced. The origins of this peculiar state of affairs are not important here. Worth noting, however, is that the renewed popularity of the Right marked a reversal of thirty years of electoral decline. In fact, in the last pre-war Reichstag election, the conservative parties garnered only 12% of the vote.<sup>20</sup> Had the High Command been held

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<sup>19</sup>David Southern et. al. make a strong argument that the impact of the hyperinflation was uneven, benefitting some while hurting others. See Southern, D. "The Impact of the Inflation: Inflation, the Courts and Revaluation", in Bessel, R. & Feuchtwanger, E. *Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany* (London 1981).

<sup>20</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, P.24.

responsible for Germany's defeat in the Great War or had war been avoided in the first place, support for the Monarchic Right might have dwindled into oblivion. Instead, it emerged as a formidable opponent of the Weimar Republic.

It would be inaccurate to contend, however, that the problems associated with the Weimar Republic were rooted exclusively in the events of 1914-1918. German governments since the time of Bismarck found themselves increasingly unable to maintain popular consensus on issues basic to the functioning of a State because of the ever-widening socio-economic rifts resulting from the nation's rapid industrialization in the late 19th and early 20th century. Political parties helped ossify these divisions by appealing primarily to their particular natural constituencies, (i.e. the SPD courted the blue-collar vote, the Zentrum courted the Catholic vote, etc.). Because their leaders felt that by appealing to a broad range of the electorate they risked alienating their core constituencies, political parties rarely employed a "big tent"<sup>21</sup> electoral strategy. In fact, through 1933, only the Nazis sought to transcend Germany's socio-economic and religious cleavages.<sup>22</sup> Coupled with Germany's wide political spectrum, it is small wonder that from 1893 to 1914, successive Wilhelmine governments ruled without a popular mandate, leading some historians to conclude that had war not

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<sup>21</sup>Term coined by Lee Atwater, who ran George Bush's successful U.S. presidential campaign in 1988. Bush's victory was due in large part to his appeal to moderate independents to join the conservative controlled Republican Party.

<sup>22</sup>For an excellent discussion of German political culture, see Childers, *Nazi Voter*, pp.15-26.



intervened the Hohenzollerns might have found themselves deposed.<sup>23</sup>

The Great War, though ending the lives of millions of Germans, did not alter the *modus operandi* of German political culture. Moreover, further fragmentation occurred within the Right, among Völkisch groups, the German National Peoples Party (DNVP) and small anti-Marxist single-interest parties, as well as within the Left, between the Socialists and the Communists (KPD), thus reinforcing the practice of single-constituency campaigning. This made the formation and longevity of majority coalition ministries and the maintenance of Reichstag mandates difficult even during periods of relative stability. In fact, at no time in its fourteen-year history did the parties loyal to the Weimar Republic (the SPD, DDP and Zentrum) receive a collective overall majority in any single Reichstag election.

Thus, American journalists based in Germany found themselves in a country bedevilled by economic, political and social strife. In 1923 the question for these correspondents was whether Weimar's leaders could steer Germany onto the path of moderate democracy. The failed Beer Hall Putsch seemed to offer American journalists reason for hope.

\*                         \*                         \*

The Beer Hall Putsch received world-wide media attention. Most U.S. newspapers, including those from the nation's smaller cities such as Omaha (NE) and Newark (NJ), covered the overseas story. Despite Hitler's presence, the American press regarded Ludendorff as the abortive coup's dominant figure. The Utica

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<sup>23</sup>This idea is suggested by Berghahn, V. in *Modern Germany, 2nd Edition* (Cambridge 1987) pp.24-25,36.

Press (NY) described Hitler as 'merely the cover behind whom Ludendorff and his monarchist associates organized the Putsch'. Fortunately for the Nazi leader, his more prominent co-conspirator bore the brunt of the American press's unsparing ridicule and mockery. 'Ludendorff may never live down the laughter', remarked the New York Herald, also suggesting that his movement would have been 'repulsed by "keep off the grass" signs'. Political cartoons were also unforgiving. One World (NY) sketch entitled "Dictator for a Day" showed a self-satisfied Ludendorff toasting himself with beer in hand while another cartoon carried by the Bell Syndicate depicted him as a down-hill skier who had just crashed headlong into a large tree which represented the German government.<sup>24</sup> As far as most segments of the American press were concerned, 'Napoleon had his Waterloo, Ludendorff his Munich' -- both he and Hitler were now 'down and out and thoroughly discredited'.<sup>25</sup>

However, some U.S. newspapers still believed that the German far right would continue to be a chronic concern for the advocates of parliamentary democracy. Although the Boston Post Dispatch claimed that the failed coup 'showed that Republican Germany is stronger than expected', the Springfield Union (MA) found it 'difficult to visualize anything except continued disorder manifesting itself in some form or other'.<sup>26</sup> H.L. Mencken's Baltimore Sun was even more pessimistic:

While neither Hitler nor Ludendorff is of the calibre to unite Germany under reactionary control, there can be little

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<sup>24</sup>Literary Digest, 24 November 1923, pp.14-15.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted from the Cincinnati Times-Star and the New York Tribune, Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

doubt that the majority opinion throughout all sections of the Reich is daily becoming more favorable to the Bavarian ideal, which is for a firm dictatorship in the first place, with a more effective opposition to follow.<sup>27</sup>

Although acknowledging the anti-semitic dimension of the Hitler/Ludendorff movement, the majority of American newspapers associated the German far right with monarchism and autocracy rather than with persecution and totalitarianism. This misperception of the wide-sweeping goals of the Nazis and their fascist allies encouraged many journalists later to underestimate the impact of a prospective Nazi-ruled Germany.<sup>28</sup>

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The Munich Putsch story found its way onto the front pages of three newspapers, the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Daily News, with three distinct publishing traditions. What makes the sustained front page status of the story all the more remarkable was that many facets of each newspaper's publishing tradition made this level of coverage unlikely. That the Beer Hall Putsch succeeded in overcoming these obstacles helps us understand how newspapermen distinguished between standard and "blockbuster" news.

Adolph Ochs's attempt to make the New York Times the world's most complete and comprehensive news source may have diminished the possibility of sustaining a story's prominence. The Times printed more articles and more words than any other newspaper. Ochs employed the largest network of national and international reporters of any newspaper. Moreover, as a director of the

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>For an additional discussion of American press opinion, see Schoenthal, "American Attitudes", pp.103-4.

Associated Press, Ochs utilized this service to supplement (and sometimes substitute for) staff-written stories. Thus, the Beer Hall Putsch competed for prominence against the world's top stories. However, it can also be argued that the sustained presence of the Putsch story on the front page of the New York Times was consistent with Ochs's philosophy. Unlike his contemporaries, who consistently varied their front page format among international, national, regional and local events on a daily basis, Ochs tended to feature one or two foreign stories on the front page, which was permitted by the paper's eight-column format. Thus, the image of the New York Times as the newspaper of record helped both to enhance and diminish the prospects of sustained life for the Putsch and other international stories.

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Colonel Robert McCormick never claimed that his Chicago Daily Tribune was the "newspaper of the world", only that it was the 'world's greatest newspaper'.<sup>29\*</sup> Unlike the New York Times, which maintained a relatively low circulation primarily among the educated and influential elite, the Tribune was a "mass" Midwestern daily. In order to establish broad-base appeal McCormick aimed to integrate the sensationalist practices of William Randolph Hearst with a concentration of exclusive in-depth reporting within the framework of his unbridled isolationist conservatism. This marketing approach resulted in a comprehensive, readable and, above all else, highly provocative publication. McCormick offered a unique combination

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<sup>29\*</sup>In fact, this claim also served as the inscribed slogan on the masthead of the Tribune during his tenure.

of news, commentary and entertainment which appealed to a diverse audience that included Iowa farmers, immigrant Chicago meat packers and Midwestern railroad magnates, although the middle and upper classes formed the backbone of the paper's readership.<sup>30</sup> In the cut-throat business of Chicago newspapering, McCormick wished to position the Tribune between Hearst's "yellow" Chicago American and Victor Lawson's intensely sober Chicago Daily News. That he accomplished this marketing feat explains in large part why the American and the Daily News are distant memories while the Tribune continues to thrive.

McCormick's news strategy also underscores the remarkable nature of the Beer Hall Putsch story. Unlike the New York Times, whose front page was usually composed of six to eight headline stories, the Chicago Daily Tribune usually consisted of one or two banner headline stories and several lesser articles. The Hitler-Ludendorff fiasco enjoyed banner headline status on three days of its five-day stint (9,10,12 November), quite remarkable for a newspaper which prided itself on fresh intriguing news geared towards a Midwestern audience, most of whom had never ventured outside the confines of their own state.

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Perhaps most surprising was the appearance of the Beer Hall Putsch story on the front pages of the Chicago Daily News (9 and 10 November). Unlike his Times counterpart, Chicago Daily News publisher Victor Fremont Lawson preferred that the paper not 'unduly deal with foreign news'<sup>31</sup> because 'Chicago readers

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<sup>30</sup>Edwards, Tribune, P.33.

<sup>31</sup>Dennis to Moderwell 14 March 1925, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

ordinarily are more deeply interested in local or national events than they are in events occurring in foreign countries.'<sup>32</sup> Instead, he reserved the front page for local news, relegating even important overseas stories, such as the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr, to page two. Moreover, when local political and feature events were lacking, the Chicago Daily News instead published the results of the city's sports teams in a banner headline format. When his managing editor suggested the idea of printing international news on the front page in an effort to enhance the prestige of the paper's foreign service, Lawson's response was lukewarm:

Your suggestion of printing some of our short interesting cables on the front page is well worth trying out. Of course, we must not do it to the extent of displacing good local stuff from that page.<sup>33</sup>

It seems paradoxical that the Chicago Daily News foreign service, considered by many as one of the best international news organizations in the world, was founded by a man who later tended to relegate it to a lower status than that of its local reporters. While the answer to the conundrum is by no means clear, the archival evidence suggests that Lawson's initial decision to create a world-wide syndicated foreign news service was based on late 19th century market conditions<sup>34</sup> as well as an

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<sup>32</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 4 June 1926, Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Lawson to Dennis 17 Feb. 1922, Dennis Papers, Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Bekken to the author, 24 September 1996. Bekken took strong exception to my theory that Lawson did not express long-term interest in his foreign news service. Instead, Bekken argued that because Lawson's parsimony permeated all areas of the business as well as his personal life, his behavior 'indicated no special antipathy to the [foreign] service'. My own feeling, as I discuss on the next page, is that Lawson's parsimony fuelled his disinterest in, and desire to scale down, his overseas staff. Thus, Bekken's contention appears to support, rather than contradict my view.

impulsive response to the European press backlash against the United States during the Spanish-American war (1898):

It is no longer desirable, or even safe, for public opinion in this country to rely, as it now does, almost exclusively on foreign agencies, most of them subsidized by foreign governments, for their news of foreign countries.<sup>35</sup>

For this reason Lawson and his successors, unlike Ochs, disdained the use of other news agencies (especially foreign ones) in Daily News reporting.<sup>36</sup> Management prompted their overseas reporters to interpret events in a way favorable to the "American point of view" -- a perspective synonymous with 'pure altruism'.<sup>37</sup> 'American correspondents must be careful to keep their minds from being in some degree colored [sic] against their own country's reasonable point of view by the flood of spoken and written comment reflecting other points of view', wrote Lawson's editor-in-chief, Charles H. Dennis. Dennis instructed his European bureau chiefs 'to at all times be right' and yet 'at all times be American'. In practice, Chicago Daily News reporters should 'give due weight to American policies and American interpretations of foreign policies and problems'.<sup>38</sup>

Quite obviously, management's policy was fraught with ambiguity. For example, which 'American interpretation' should the correspondent promote, an internationalist or an isolationist one? In addition, while this ambiguity afforded flexibility to the paper's correspondents to analyze events to their own liking, it also led to editorial conflicts between the

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<sup>35</sup>Lawson memo (undated), Box 93, CDN papers, Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Dennis to Binder, 13 December 1928, Binder Papers, Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Dennis to O'Flaherty, 26 July 1924, Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

Home Office and its European service, especially between Dennis and his Berlin bureau chief, Edgar Ansel Mowrer, from 1924 on.

After the Great War, Lawson came to view his foreign news service as a financial liability whose growth and status needed to be kept in check. Unlike Ochs, who believed in saturating the American public with overseas news, Lawson believed in erring on the side of parsimony. He stressed the importance of acquiring spectacular news, but:

We shall restrain ourselves when we have news approximating the border line in the matter of interest to American readers.<sup>39</sup>

By the 1920's it became apparent that Lawson was having second thoughts about his turn-of-the-century creation. He consistently complained that international dispatches were 'frequently too long and occupied more space than desirable'. From a business standpoint, Lawson believed that foreign news would not sell to an American public which longed to return to the confines of isolationism. In fact, several months before his unexpected death in 1925, the Daily News publisher planned to downsize the paper's foreign service operation.<sup>40</sup> Ironically, the life of the foreign service may have been saved by the death of its founder.

Both historians and Daily News personnel credit the transformation of the foreign news service into a first-rate organization to correspondents Edward Price Bell and Paul Scott Mowrer and, to a lesser extent, editors Charles H. Dennis and Hal O'Flaherty, but not to Victor Lawson, whom Bell

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<sup>39</sup>Dennis to Moderwell, 14 March 1925, CDN Papers, Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Dennis to Moderwell, 12 Sept. 1925, Ibid.



characterized as a 'half-baked, bombastic provincial'.<sup>41</sup> Even Dennis, who admired Lawson, admitted that the publisher exhibited little interest in the performance of the foreign service and its concerns usually remained 'unfinished business'.<sup>42</sup> The relegation of the Daily News foreign service to second-class status within its reporting ranks was a constant source of internal friction even after Lawson's death.<sup>43</sup>

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News coverage of the Beer Hall Putsch in the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News began on 9 November with summaries of the conspiratorial activities at the Munich Bürgerbräukeller and culminated with Hitler's arrest on 13 November. All three newspapers assigned multiple-column, front-page space and in-depth coverage and analysis in their back pages to these events. This coverage included exclusives from Tribune correspondent Larry Rue, who provided the paper with an on-the-scene story from the Bürgerbräukeller, and from the Daily News, which published an article written by Ludendorff himself.

However, the reporting by the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News illustrates -- with notable exceptions -- a general lack of uniformity among the three publications regarding the origins, development and implications of the abortive coup. This lack of consensus has its roots in each paper's separate journalistic tradition, editorial

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<sup>41</sup>Bell to his wife(?), 24 March 1923, Bell Papers, Ibid. See also Startt, J. *Journalism's Unofficial Ambassador: A Biography of Edward Price Bell* (Athens, Ohio 1974)

<sup>42</sup>Dennis to P. Mowrer, 11 April 1924, CDN Papers, Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>For instance, see P. Mowrer to Pryor 18 Sept. 1962, Box 82, Ibid.

philosophy, mode of operation and calibre of personnel. True to form, the Times provided the most comprehensive coverage of the crisis and the Tribune, the greatest degree of "on the spot" reporting, whereas the Daily News provided the highest level of interpretive reporting. This does not mean that one paper was necessarily more accurate, objective or informative than the others. Though the Times provided the fullest information on the crisis, one should not infer that its readership possessed a greater understanding of the Putsch than the Tribune's readership. Likewise, the fact that the Tribune provided exclusive eyewitness accounts did not necessarily mean that these accounts were more accurate than those of the Daily News. And finally, that the Daily News provided extensive news analyses of the event does not mean that these analyses were necessarily objective.

I raise these points to remind the reader that, unlike in other press perception studies, my goal is not to play historical judge -- praising those newspapers that alerted their readers to the Hitler phenomenon while condemning those who underestimated the Nazis. My purpose, rather, is to convey a sense of how and why news editors and writers behaved in the way they did, thus providing the reader with a basis for making reasoned judgments about the larger issue of the media's responsibility to alert the public about the growth of extremist movements in general.

Although examining what the press actually said about the coup can be satisfactorily addressed by examining the appropriate issues of the newspapers themselves, analyzing the reasons why press coverage took the form it did requires an

abundance of archival evidence. And therein lies the rub -- Putsch-related press documents are sadly lacking. Specifically, among the available private papers of the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News, there is a dearth of internal memoranda regarding the Putsch not only between the Berlin bureaux and the Home Offices but also within the Home Offices themselves (whose records are indispensable for studying editorial analysis). What we are left with is evidence that often hints at, but does not fully elucidate, each paper's behind-the-scenes proceedings. The following paragraphs will attempt to reconstruct a historical jigsaw puzzle with many key pieces missing. Nevertheless, even this somewhat speculative analysis highlights many previously ignored facets of international reporting and commentary.

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The Beer Hall Putsch editorials of the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Daily News reflected managements' general stance towards the Weimar Republic and the Versailles settlement as a whole. The New York Times and the Chicago Daily News condemned the Putsch and expressed unreserved support of the Weimar Republic while the Chicago Daily Tribune, although failing to mention the Putsch, took the opportunity to castigate what it saw as the left-wing tendencies of the Weimar regime. An editorial analysis also reveals that press coverage of Germany's internal politics was shaped within the context of the overall debate between internationalists and isolationists: a positive portrayal of the Weimar regime was thought to legitimize future American involvement in European affairs while

a negative presentation would reinforce U.S. aloofness. This interpretation probably explains why the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News lauded the character and fortitude of the Weimar Republic in its Beer Hall Putsch editorials whereas the Chicago Daily Tribune did not. Moreover, this interpretation might also explain why the Times and the Daily News subsequently exalted the Weimar Republic even when such praise was completely unwarranted.

The editorials of the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News tended to mirror each other. The Times echoed the sentiments of President Ebert, stating that the fascist/monarchist plot was the 'work of lunatics' and that Ludendorff and Hitler were 'better fitted for a comic opera stage than a serious effort to overthrow the Berlin government'.<sup>44</sup> Although less mocking, the Chicago Daily News denounced the Putsch with similar vigor. 'The success of the [Hitler/Ludendorff] movement would have plunged Germany into civil war', the paper pronounced, but the nation recognized that there was 'no salvation in royalist, militarist and junker reaction'.<sup>45</sup> Both papers placed themselves unabashedly behind the fledgling Weimar Republic. Convinced that 'unity, order and freedom for Germany were impossible except under a sincere republican regime', both publications felt that the Weimar government's demonstration of 'remarkable vitality' in the face of the coup 'left the Republic more secure'.<sup>46</sup> The Times even went further, iterating that had the coup spread to Berlin 'the

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<sup>44</sup>NYT editorial 10 November 1923.

<sup>45</sup>CDN editorial 10 November 1923.

<sup>46</sup>CDN & NYT, Ibid.

great mass of German workingmen would have resorted to a general strike to prove their devotion to republican forms of government', while the Daily News dubiously claimed that the failed Putsch clearly indicated the Reichswehr's loyalty to the Weimar regime.<sup>47</sup>

In retrospect, each paper overestimated the allegiance of the populace to Weimar. No mention was made of the disillusioning effect of the hyper-inflation or the debt crisis on the German people. In particular, the New York Times's unwavering faith in the sagacity of the German people would be a consistent theme in its editorial coverage of the rise of Nazism, even at the height of Hitler's electoral successes.

'Of course I know that Ludendorff is crazy', Chicago Daily Tribune publisher, Colonel Robert McCormick confided to his Berlin bureau correspondent, Sigrid Schultz.<sup>48</sup> And yet, on his paper's editorial page not only did McCormick refrain from criticizing the German field marshal, he refrained from discussing the Beer Hall Putsch altogether -- this, while his counterparts at the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News were conducting extensive post-mortems on the subject. The Tribune's only editorial comment, entitled "Socialist Failure", was a mere six sentences in length.

Visible among the causes of misery in Germany is the failure of a socialistic government to suppress or even repress for the benefit of the people the operations of profiteers and exploiters. The food riots reveal the fury of the people. Sometimes the police stand aside and allow the mobs to have their way. That seemingly is all the government could do -- allow the people to use violence against certain classes. Protection of the masses from exploitation by privileged

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>McCormick to Schultz, 11 March 1927, Schultz Papers, Box 4, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

classes is one of the purposes of socialistic government, and the Berlin government is supposed to be that of a socialistic republic. It fails to keep great industrialists, profiteers and plunderers from adding to the misery of the people in want of even meager subsistence.<sup>49</sup>

For a man like McCormick with a legendary reputation for long-winded dicta the "Socialist Failure" is conspicuously terse. The title of the piece itself is partisan, suggesting that the Weimar Republic was a disaster because of what he saw as its left-leaning nature. McCormick further assailed the inability of the Weimar government to protect its citizenry from the clutches of exploitative industrial capitalists -- the alleged *raison d'être* of the regime itself. Moreover, whereas the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News equated Weimar Germany with 1780's America, McCormick's Chicago Daily Tribune likened it to Lenin's Russia. And, whereas the Times and Daily News presented the Beer Hall Putsch as a huge triumph for the Stresemann regime, the Tribune hinted that the coup attempt itself was an indication of Weimar's weakness, brought about by its socialist tendencies.

We can only speculate as to why McCormick refrained from discussing the Putsch directly and Hitler and Ludendorff in particular. His own Berlin bureau correspondent admitted that the coup left a regime for which McCormick held no fondness 'incalculably stronger'.<sup>50</sup> For McCormick to have highlighted the Hitler/Ludendorff fiasco would have also highlighted the Tribune's inaccurate prediction of Germany's demise. And while there is no evidence to suggest that McCormick admired Hitler at

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<sup>49</sup>CDT editorial 10 November 1923.

<sup>50</sup>CDT 10 November 1923, P.1.

the time, it is possible that the publisher's fascination with the German military may explain the lack of criticism of Ludendorff in the Tribune's editorial pages.<sup>51</sup> In fact, while McCormick privately questioned Ludendorff's sanity, he held the German field marshal in high enough regard to recommend him to the newly created Robert Rutherford McCormick Military History Chair at Northwestern University.<sup>52</sup>

Ascertaining the reasons why the Chicago Daily News and the New York Times staunchly supported the Weimar Republic in 1923 while the Chicago Daily Tribune did not is quite difficult because of a general dearth of internal documents. For example, the New York Times Archive contains no editorial department memoranda from the interwar period. Moreover, the paper's editorial page editor, Rollo Ogden, kept little written correspondence. Although Ogden's deputy, Dr. John Finley, maintained an extensive collection of private papers, they bear little relevance to this study. Worse yet, the actual authorship of New York Times editorials remains a mystery. Thus we are left to speculate on the motives behind the paper's editorial stances, relying on loosely related evidence. Likewise, the current unavailability of most Chicago Daily Tribune internal documents places us in a similar position.

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Only the New York Times attempted to trace the origins of the Bavarian Beer Hall Putsch. Cyril Brown, the paper's Berlin

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<sup>51</sup>Edwards, *Tribune*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>52</sup>McCormick to Schultz, 11 March 1927, Schultz Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society. As it turned out, Ludendorff was not eligible for the post because of Treaty of Versailles restrictions.

bureau chief, claimed that the German Government's decision to end passive resistance to the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr, coupled with the spectre of communist revolution, prompted Hitler to plan a coup 'as early as September', but the Nazi leader had to wait for Ludendorff's approval. Relying upon unspecified 'Hitler circulars', Brown postulated that Hitler believed that restoring the Wittelsbach monarchy in Bavaria would ignite revolution in other separatist-minded German states which in turn would 'repudiate Prussia and rally around Bavaria in a new empire'.<sup>53</sup> The Times's news department made the important point that Hitler -- not Ludendorff, von Kahr or anyone else -- was the motivating force behind the coup. The Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News echoed this sentiment, although the latter presented a somewhat misleading headline to the contrary.<sup>54</sup> Despite acknowledging Hitler's central role in the coup, none of the three newspapers under examination devoted much attention to his background, platform or personality. Instead, they profiled the "big name" in the affair, Erich Ludendorff.

Much of the outcome of the Beer Hall Putsch rested upon the actions of the Bavarian dictator, Gustav von Kahr. When von Kahr reversed his earlier position of 8 November and disavowed Hitler and Ludendorff on the morning of 9 November, the prospects for a successful coup dissipated. Von Kahr later claimed that he had been coerced into going along with the conspirators at the 'point of a gun', turning against them when

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<sup>53</sup>NYT, 9 November 1923, P.2.

<sup>54</sup>'STORMING TROOPS TAKE HITLER ALONG WITH LUDENDORFF' CDN  
9 November 1923 P.1.



he was no longer threatened.<sup>55</sup> During the crisis Hiram K. Moderwell of the Chicago Daily News was more staunch in his advocacy of von Kahr than was von Kahr himself. On 10 November Moderwell praised the Bavarian dictator for 'his usual dexterity' in 'pretending to agree with the Hitler scheme for organizing a national government in Munich, thus avoiding arrest and the possible disorganization of his forces'.<sup>56</sup> The Chicago Daily Tribune correspondent Larry Rue's eyewitness exclusive from the Bürgerbräukeller provides an interesting contrast. Although acknowledging Hitler's attempts initially to arrest von Kahr, Rue suggested (without explicitly stating it) that when von Kahr accepted the position of president of a provisional German government with a 'heavy heart in accordance with the interests of Bavaria and the Fatherland', he did so of his own free will. Without engaging in a lengthy discussion of the validity of the two accounts, later scholarship seems to support Rue's more balanced presentation.<sup>57</sup>

Rue's eyewitness account of the beginnings of the Putsch was the product of three factors: publisher McCormick's commitment to obtaining fresh exclusive news, Rue's amicable relations with the Nazi hierarchy, and luck. Because McCormick wished to avoid repeating the Tribune's failure to adequately cover Mussolini's march on Rome a year earlier, he and his staff made extensive preparations to place the paper in a prime position to cover any breaking story emanating from Germany's Right wing. To this end, he dispatched Larry Rue to Munich in early November

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<sup>55</sup>Nicholls, *Weimar* P.90.

<sup>56</sup>CDN 10 November 1923.

<sup>57</sup>See Gordon, *Beer Hall* and Nicholls, *Weimar*.

1923.<sup>58</sup> Rue, an experienced, well travelled reporter, specialized in covering crises. He was one of the first journalists to make extensive use of the airplane in order to help him acquire information about breaking news. Rue's excursions, of course, depended on his publisher's financial backing. Not only did McCormick fund Rue's travels and expensive tastes, he also financed Rue's direct acquisition of news tips and stories. The evidence strongly suggests that monetary compensation was often a necessary prerequisite for effective reporting from Germany -- especially in acquiring information from the Nazis.<sup>59</sup> Chronically strapped for cash and unconcerned with public opinion abroad, many party officials frequently demanded 'commercial compensation' for Nazi-related stories. William Nash, dispatched by the Chicago Daily News to south Germany in early November 1923, cabled a blistering indictment entitled "No Money, No News" excoriating the Nazi attempt to "'shakedown" [sic] American newspapermen'.<sup>60</sup>

While Nash (noted for his poor interpersonal skills<sup>61</sup>) condemned the Nazis from Coburg, Rue courted them in Munich. The evidence clearly suggests that Rue (along with H.R. Knickerbocker of the New York Herald Tribune and Dorothy Thompson of the Philadelphia Public Ledger) enjoyed good

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<sup>58</sup>Wales to foreign service 11 April 1923, Box #4, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. In fact, McCormick ordered a complete investigation of the matter.

<sup>59</sup>There are a number of allusions to this practice. Most direct are Enderis to Birchall, 18 Jan. 1932 and Enderis to James 5 Jan 1933, James #6-0455, 1164 NYT Archive. See also Moderwell to Dennis 27 September 1923, CDN Papers, Newberry Library. This practice was also prevalent in Vatican reporting. See O'Flaherty to Binder 13 March 1929, *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>CDN 6 November 1923, P.2.

<sup>61</sup>Bell to Lawson, 26 June 1924, Bell Papers, Newberry Library.

relations with Ernst Hanfstaengl, the Party's de facto foreign press secretary. On the afternoon of 8 November, after Hitler instructed Hanfstaengl to alert the international press of his intention to proclaim a new German government at the Munich Bürgerbräukeller that evening, the Harvard-educated Junker selectively sought Rue out but to no avail. With time running out, it appeared that Rue's absence from his hotel room would cost him and the Tribune an exclusive story. But luck intervened. Because both men shared similar tastes in food, Hanfstaengl found Rue at their favorite Hungarian restaurant less than two hours before Hitler's first appearance on the international scene.<sup>62</sup> Thus, all of McCormick's preparations -- his establishment of a makeshift intelligence network, his willingness to pay for stories and his decision to send a correspondent to Munich rather than to Coburg (where the Chicago Daily News and the New York Times thought the fascists would strike) -- would have been for nothing had it not been for a common culinary taste; proof that luck sometimes plays an important role in the reporting of fresh news.

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Each newspaper's Beer Hall Putsch coverage reveals an important feature of international reporting: the attempt to predict the course of events during a crisis. Here again, we see a divergence of views. Although Cyril Brown of the New York Times and Hiram Moderwell of the Chicago Daily News recognized the seriousness of the crisis, both predicted the Putsch would fail. Brown believed the coup would be suppressed when Hitler

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<sup>62</sup>Dornberg, J. *Munich 1923* (New York 1982) P.21.

and Ludendorff carried out their plan to march on Berlin [they never actually did], because of his great faith in the somewhat duplicitous head of the Reichswehr, General Hans von Seeckt.<sup>63</sup> Moderwell, with the advantage of the Daily News's later filing deadline than its morning counterparts, definitively stated that 'the whole affair will be finished in twenty four hours'.<sup>64</sup> In contrast Chicago Daily Tribune chief Berlin correspondent, John Clayton, argued that because 'the entire rank and file is permeated with nationalist members and the nationalist spirit, there is every chance that the entire German army will flock to the standard of General von Ludendorff and Herr Hitler, march on Berlin and place Herr Hitler's national government in power there'.<sup>65</sup> That Clayton erred in his prediction is of minor importance. What is relevant, however, is the nature of the prediction and what it reveals about the Chicago Tribune.

Clayton's entire presentation provides us with an example of "journalistic overplay" -- the practice of sensationalizing facts in order to substantiate an extreme claim or prediction. Despite the fact that downtown Berlin was tranquil on the night of November 9th, Clayton seemed to convey the impression that the city was on the brink of civil disorder:

We found the police fully prepared to deal with the situation. Their machine guns had not yet been unlimbered but they were ready to be placed at strategic corners to control the streets.<sup>66</sup>

Conversely, this is Moderwell's account of the same scene:

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<sup>63</sup>NYT 9 November 1923, P.1.

<sup>64</sup>CDN 9 November 1923, P.1.

<sup>65</sup>CDT 9 November 1923, P.1.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

It is remarkable how little impression yesterday's dramatic action in Munich has made upon the mass of Berlin's population... Berlin takes the news from Munich quite calmly, the people going quietly about their business. Nothing disturbed the peace of the night and early morning.<sup>67</sup>

Clayton's stark prediction was no aberration -- it was consistent with the Chicago Daily Tribune's "spin" on its German coverage throughout the week *preceding* the Putsch. One can see the "overplay" of the paper's headlines from 30 October through 6 November 1923:

30 October, 'BERLIN CABINET TOTTERS AS IT OUSTS SAXONS'  
31 October, 'ROYALISTS MOVE UP CANNON FOR BERLIN MARCH'  
1 November, 'ARMY OF 30,000 MASS FOR DRIVE TOWARD BERLIN'  
3 November, 'DICTATOR NEXT FOR GERMANY; SOCIALIST BOLT  
                  SPEEDS NATION TO A MONARCHY'  
5 November, 'FULL DICTATOR POWER SEIZED BY STRESEMANN; ENDS  
                  PARLIAMENTARY RULE IN GERMANY'  
6 November, 'GERMANS CALLED TO ARMS TO BEAT ROYALIST COUP'

If Clayton had predicted the Putsch's failure, he would have repudiated the sensationalist approach taken by his own newspaper. Consequently, if there had been any prospect for a successful coup, Clayton might have been obligated to promote such a possibility so as not to undermine the momentum of the Tribune story. Only when greeted by overwhelming evidence to the contrary -- namely, the full-scale suppression of the coup, would he be able to abandon this course.

Clayton's practice of "journalistic overplay" is no surprise; it was a salient feature of publisher Colonel Robert Rutherford McCormick's newspaper philosophy.<sup>68</sup> McCormick used this tactic

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<sup>67</sup>CDN Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Clayton also had a reputation for "dirty dealing" with the competition as well as his sources. See Binder to his wife 13 Sept. 1929, Binder Papers, Newberry Library.

in the paper's alarmist banner headlines. From his marketing viewpoint, presenting 'the news so that a kid could get it at a glance' increased circulation among the less educated, while heightening the importance of a story through a disproportionately strong headline. McCormick's headlines also reflected his political views. In foreign affairs, he presented world news through his prism of Anglo-phobic isolationism and obsessive anti-communism. Jerome Edwards compellingly argues that the Tribune's negative banner headlines 'served as a device to reinforce the idea of noninvolvement with the affairs of other nations'.<sup>69</sup> Of the three newspapers scrutinized in this study, the Tribune most consistently raised the spectre of communist revolution at home and abroad.<sup>70</sup> This theme was ever-present in the paper's German coverage. Although optimistic about (and welcoming) an imminent Weimar collapse, the Tribune vacillated between its predictions of restored monarchy and a communist takeover.

It is obvious from analyzing the headlines of the Chicago Daily Tribune in the days leading up to Hitler's attempted coup that McCormick played the monarchical restoration card to the hilt. Clayton, however, deviated from the Tribune position the day before Hitler's move in an inconspicuously placed dispatch entitled, "Royalist Coup Fades".<sup>71</sup> The Beer Hall Putsch afforded him the opportunity to "jump back on board", which he did with

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<sup>69</sup>Edwards, J., *Tribune*, P.38

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., pp.38 & 59-64. McCormick expressed similar sentiments to members of his staff. Upon assigning William Shirer to the Vienna bureau, the Colonel remarked, 'don't fall for those Socialists and Communists there'. Shirer, W., *My 20th Century Journey* (New York 1976).

<sup>71</sup>CDT 8 November 1923 P.8.

the reckless abandon that characterized his boss, once again predicting an imminent German collapse. Notwithstanding the plausibility of this interpretation, however, there is as yet no available direct evidence showing that Clayton tailored his Beer Hall Putsch prediction to coincide with the general ominous tenor of the paper's German coverage. It is safe to say, however, that the Tribune's consistent use of alarmist headlines damaged the paper's credibility, a sad irony given the calibre of many of its overseas reporters.<sup>72</sup>

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Whereas McCormick sought to ensnare his readership with up-close coverage of the Putsch, Adolph Ochs sought to impress his by employing a broader, comprehensive approach in reporting the event. True to form, the New York Times printed more articles and editorials on the Beer Hall Putsch than did its two competitors in this study. The paper's coverage emanated primarily from four sources: bureau chief Cyril Brown, reporting on events in Munich and the reaction in Berlin; European service head Edwin James, reporting from Paris on the French reaction to the Putsch; an unnamed correspondent (probably P.J. Phillip), reporting from Coburg (located approximately 150 miles north of Munich) on the possible spread of the revolt to neighboring German states; and an unknown writer in the Home Office, who provided a background history of the event.

Despite this collective effort, the major burden of the Putsch's coverage fell on Brown. He was responsible for the two

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<sup>72</sup>A 1936 poll of 93 Washington correspondents revealed that the Chicago Daily Tribune was considered one of America's 'least reliable and least fair newspapers'. Edwards, Tribune, P.3.

most important aspects of the coup -- the particular developments in Munich and the Reich government's reaction. Unfortunately, it appears that the Home Office felt -- and justifiably -- that Brown's performance left much to be desired. In fairness to Brown, the absence of a Timesman in Munich forced him to rely on second-hand accounts from the Associated Press and probably from the Berliner Lokalanzeiger on Hitler's storming of the Bürgerbräukeller on the evening of 8 November and the suppression of the coup on 9 November.<sup>73</sup> That Brown refrained from analyzing the implications of the Putsch can be traced to the paper's emphasis on comprehensive news presentation rather than interpretation, a characteristic to be discussed in later chapters. However, Brown himself was culpable for failing to provide adequate information on the reaction of Stresemann's government in Berlin. Although he noted that Chancellor Stresemann and President Ebert held a cabinet meeting at midnight on the 9th, Brown failed to report the contents of the resulting government proclamation issued one hour later. This placed the Times in the embarrassing position of having to publish the Chicago Daily Tribune's account of the declaration on page one. In fact, Brown appears to have interviewed only one member of the Reich government during the crisis -- an unnamed army intelligence officer who provided the New York Times readership with a forgettable three word exclamation.

That Brown provided his superiors with little information, especially regarding the actions of the Reich government, is reflected by the number of words in his dispatches; his articles

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<sup>73</sup>Van Anda to Brown, 22 October 1922, James #5-1089, NYT Archive.



were the shortest and least satisfactory of those of the Timesmen assigned to the story. Brown's poor performance probably accounts for the conspicuous absence of his dispatches after 10 November. It appears that his responsibilities were shifted to the unnamed Coburg correspondent who arrived in Munich on 11 November. Brown's failure to provide extensive and up-to-date coverage may have represented the final straw after a spotty tenure of service to the Times. The evidence strongly suggests that Brown's 'insulting manner and persistent drunkenness' were a source of embarrassment to the paper and his inappropriate request for a vacation did not ingratiate him with management.<sup>74</sup> Three months after the Putsch, Brown was unceremoniously dismissed and replaced by Thomas R. Ybarra.<sup>75</sup>

The Brown fiasco highlights the important role of the chief bureau correspondent in effective overseas reporting. It also underscores a problem that would plague the New York Times throughout the 1920's and 30's -- the paper's failure to hire a top-flight correspondent for the Berlin bureau. Moreover, the German office was in a continual state of flux throughout the Weimar period. During a ten-year stint (1923-33), the Times's Berlin office employed six different chief correspondents (not to mention five "number two" and four "number three" men) compared to two for both the Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News. The Berlin bureau's lack of staff stability resulted in a consistent lack of effective reporting, a fact noted by Times management. As I will discuss in later chapters,

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<sup>74</sup>Swope to Van Anda 28 July 1922, Brown to Van Anda 12 December 1923, Van Anda to Brown 13 December 1923, James #5-1144,71,78 Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Van Anda memo 9 January 1924, Van Anda to Brown 8 Feb 1924, James #5-1177,84, Ibid.

however, many problems associated with the Berlin bureau were created or exacerbated by the Home Office in New York.

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Unlike the New York Times, the Chicago Daily News's Beer Hall Putsch coverage appeared to be in better hands. Although Hiram Moderwell had held the Berlin post only for little more than a year, the evidence suggests that the Scottish-born correspondent inaugurated an effective news gathering apparatus throughout Germany. Moderwell recognized that, unlike the rest of Europe where news emanated primarily from the capital city, Germany's decentralized political organization entailed a wide range of news sources throughout the Reich. Moderwell often travelled throughout Germany because he believed that 'the big story more often than not, lies outside Berlin'.<sup>76</sup> He also secured the services of William Nash as the Daily News's roving "number-two" man although, as previously mentioned, Nash's inability to establish an amicable rapport with the Nazis probably cost the paper an eyewitness account of the November 8th events in the Munich Bürgerbräukeller.<sup>77</sup>

Despite Nash's failure, Moderwell provided Chicago Daily News readers with fresh, reasonably accurate and comprehensive coverage of the Putsch even though Western Union may have broken down on 9 November.<sup>78</sup> Moderwell implemented two measures which

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<sup>76</sup>Moderwell to Dennis 23 July 1923, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>77</sup>Nash was probably hired more for his family's connection to Charles Dennis. In any event, Nash's tenure came to an abrupt end in the spring of 1924 not because of his journalistic deficiencies, but because he took an unauthorized trip to Spain, courtesy of the paper's expense account! See Dennis to O'Flaherty 14 October 1924 and O'Flaherty to Dennis 21 September 1924, Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Maclean to Dennis 11 November 1923, Ibid.

benefited him greatly during the crisis. First, because of his working relationship with a local editor affiliated with the powerful Mosse newspaper chain, Moderwell was able to gain access to pre-published information from such reputable papers as the Berliner Tageblatt.<sup>79</sup> Second, because of his paper's willingness 'to pay reasonably for good information that could not otherwise be got', Moderwell paid a well connected local journalist ten dollars a week for Reich government news tips and information.<sup>80</sup> At times, it appeared that Moderwell's news gathering means worked too well. In fact, he apologized to the Home Office for sending Berlin news 'which was a little ahead of the facts'.<sup>81</sup> In any event, the management of the Chicago Daily News was highly impressed with Moderwell's work. Dennis even requested editorials from the Berlin bureau chief, a privilege rarely granted to a news correspondent.<sup>82</sup>

For Moderwell, the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch probably was a cause for celebration; like many professionals stationed overseas, Moderwell had developed an empathy for the plight of his adopted home. He felt that the newly formed Weimar Republic had the difficult task of 'on the one hand, keeping the people always keyed up to the seriousness of the situation while on the other, preventing them from getting into a violent mood'.<sup>83</sup> Moderwell also praised Germany for her 'calmness and moral

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<sup>79</sup>Moderwell to Dennis 27 September 1923, Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Moderwell to Dennis 23 July 1923, Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Moderwell to Dennis 13 March 1923, Ibid.

firmness' in the face of French military pressure and German industrialist subterfuge throughout 1923.

Did Moderwell's personal political views interfere with his ability to present German news objectively? Though there is no clear answer, the evidence suggests that Moderwell struggled to suppress his internal bias. For example, during the Ruhr crisis, Moderwell stated to Dennis that he felt that he 'would be committing a crime if [his] articles helped to justify the [Franco-Belgian] invasion and the bullying, starving and shooting of unarmed [German] civilians in a time of peace'. However, in the same letter, Moderwell worried that his articles were 'colored by [his] emotions'.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, we only have Moderwell's published dispatches of 9 and 10 November to provide us with his personal insights concerning the Beer Hall Putsch. Moderwell's optimistic reports from Germany, especially his statement that Ludendorff's and Hitler's failure strengthened the Berlin government, were rooted at least partially in the correspondent's hope that the nation would 'pick itself up out of what seemed a condition of inevitable chaos'.<sup>85</sup>

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These episodes illustrate the latitude afforded to overseas correspondents to interpret a particular event, especially if the reporter enjoyed a good reputation. Richard Mowrer, who served with the Chicago Daily News foreign news service from 1934 to 1945 and whose father, Paul Scott Mowrer, supervised the service throughout the 1920's and 1930's, staunchly believed

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<sup>84</sup>Moderwell to Dennis 18 April 1923, Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Dennis to Moderwell spring 1923, Ibid.

that the foreign correspondent 'reported, interpreted and explained the news as the subject warranted' even if the piece failed to reflect the ideas of the publisher. Tribune Berlin bureau chief Sigrid Schultz (1924-41) claimed that her proactive boss, Robert McCormick, never interfered with her reporting from Germany, while Richard Mowrer put it more bluntly: 'Dispatches were not slanted to please anybody.'<sup>86</sup> Thus, Schultz's and Mowrer's assertion of the "man on the spot" approach seems to apply to the Beer Hall Putsch story, although this practice was seriously challenged by management as the 1920's wore on.<sup>87</sup>

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The Beer Hall Putsch story was prominently displayed, (even appearing on page one of the provincially inclined Chicago Daily News), and also appeared extensively on each newspaper's back pages. Depth of coverage is another indication of a story's importance, since, unlike other types of reporting, publishing overseas news was expensive and time consuming. To illustrate: the New York Times spent five hundred thousand dollars solely on trans-Atlantic cable costs in 1926, equal to European Service director's Edwin James's 1922 estimate for running the paper's entire overseas operation.<sup>88</sup> Later, the Times even sought

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<sup>86</sup>Excerpts from S. Schultz interview, Sigrid Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and R. Mowrer to the author 19 July 1995. Heald plausibly argues that the spirit of Schultz's claim is undermined by her alleged practice of 'self-censorship' 'by foreseeing what he [McCormick] wanted'. Heald to the author, 9 May 1996. William Shirer shared this assessment in his memoirs; Shirer, *My Journey*, P.362. Jon Bekken, a Chicago press historian, offers a similar view with regard to the CDN; Bekken to the author, 24 September 1996.

<sup>87</sup>For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Heald, *Vistas*, Chapter 5 as well as Chapters 2,3, and 4 of this work.

<sup>88</sup>Desmond, *Crisis and Conflict*, pp.296-97.

reduced coverage of the Reichstag Fire trial because the event coincided with a steep fall of the dollar against the German Reichsmark.<sup>89</sup> Newspapers were at the mercy of wire and wireless services such as Western Union, which by 1940 was charging approximately twenty cents a word for overseas transmissions.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, it is safe to assume that newspapers spent more than this (i.e. twenty cents) per word during the 1920's and 1930's since the entire period was characterized by falling but still high cable costs.

Hence, the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Daily News implemented various measures to reduce transmission costs. Foreign correspondents were required to write their stories in a crude, skeletal short-hand before cabling them to a receiving office in New York (another cost-cutting measure in the case of the Chicago papers). There, telegrams would be deciphered and then relayed to the foreign editor and his staff in the Home Office where further editing and publication decisions would be made. In 1923, The Chicago Daily News established a 38,000 monthly word quota for its European service, a 10,000-word drop from the previous year.<sup>91</sup> However, the Berlin allotment of six thousand words per month equalled that of London and Paris, an indication of the general importance attached to German news.<sup>92</sup> Tribune foreign editors consistently criticized even their best reporters for sending

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<sup>89</sup>James to Birchall 15 Nov. 1933, James #6-1571, NYT Archive.

<sup>90</sup>Desmond, *Crisis*, P. 297.

<sup>91</sup>Heald, M., *Vistas*, P.111 & Shirer, *My Journey*, P.284.

<sup>92</sup>P. Mowrer to Binder 11 Nov. 1930, Binder Papers, Newberry Library.

*too much* news rather than too little.<sup>93</sup> Managing Editor E.S. Beck suggested that correspondents should 'carefully edit out unimportant items... without wrecking the color in a really big outstanding story'.<sup>94</sup> Even the editors of the voluminous New York Times prodded their correspondents to keep their word counts down.<sup>95</sup>

All three papers encouraged their correspondents to use the slower, but far cheaper mail system for more elaborate and less urgent feature stories. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that Lawson relegated foreign news to page two because much of it consisted of dated mail articles.<sup>96</sup> European service chiefs were also encouraged to evaluate and select news stories before transmitting them across the Atlantic. During blockbuster events all three Home Offices attempted to restrict the cable output of the unaffected bureaus. The Times issued such an order during the London Conference (1930), the Tribune during the Manchurian Crisis<sup>97</sup> and the Daily News during the Ruhr Crisis.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>See for instance, Wales to bureau chiefs 19 Feb. 1923, Pierson to Schultz 26 Aug. 1926, Beck to Schultz 1 April 1927, Beck to Schultz 17 June 1930 and Scharschug to Schultz 8 July 1931, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>94</sup>Beck to Schultz 17 June 1930, Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>For instance, Birchall to Berlin 8 May 1930 James#5, James to Enderis ?June 1931 James #6-0212, Ibid. ?April 1932 0590, Phillip to Birchall 4 Oct 1932 #0900, NYT Archive.

<sup>96</sup>Lawson to Dennis 17 Feb. 1922 and Lawson to Smith 22 April 1922, Box 75, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>97</sup>Wales to bureau chiefs 19 Feb. 1931, Box 4, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>98</sup>For example, see O'Flaherty to Dennis 16 Jan 1923, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

Despite these budgetary efforts, transatlantic reporting remained costly. Foreign correspondents often ignored the pleadings of their superiors in the Home Office, perhaps more afraid of not cabling a story than sending it. And for good reason; although reporters had been dismissed for not sending a story, there is no record of any bureau correspondent being fired for sending one. This holds true for the quota-oriented Chicago Daily News. For instance, in the October 1930 cable budget report, the Rome bureau exceeded its allotted quota by two-fold, the Berlin bureau by three-fold and the London bureau by four-fold, far exceeding the paper's cable and wireless budget for 1930.<sup>99</sup>

The failure to control word volume also underscored the fact that the receiving editors in New York were far too few in number to process the flood of incoming cables for the next day's edition. Consequently, many European news articles were either printed after they had lost some of their freshness or were never published at all because time did not permit them to be deciphered and edited.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, it appears that the threshold for these omissions was unusually low. According to Chicago Daily News editor Charles Dennis, just one cablegram of over five hundred words 'dislocates the whole service on the day it is received'.<sup>101</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that management tried to ease this situation by hiring additional receiving editors. Instead, home offices attempted to control

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<sup>99</sup>P. Mowrer to Binder 11 Nov. 1930, Binder Papers, Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Dennis to O'Flaherty, 8 December 1924, CDN Papers, Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer 11 December 1924, Ibid.



costs by instructing their European correspondents to 'save [their] tolls for the big smashes'.<sup>102</sup>

Thus, logistics acted as a barrier against the depth of the Beer Hall Putsch story in two ways. First, managements' efforts to keep cable wordage to a minimum as a result of high costs limited the overall quantity of overseas news. Second, because these efforts in large part failed, foreign news was subjected to a more intense selection process than were other types of news. In effect, foreign correspondents were forced to pit their cablegrams against one another for an opportunity to compete against the more easily obtained and edited national, regional and local news.

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The evidence strongly suggests that the Home Offices of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Daily Tribune placed a high priority on the Beer Hall Putsch story. In the spring of 1923 McCormick had established a news network throughout Germany for the purpose of monitoring fascist and monarchist machinations.<sup>103</sup> Later that fall McCormick dispatched roving reporter Larry Rue to Munich to assist John Clayton and Sigrid Schultz in Berlin. Rue was trained by Floyd Gibbons and became noted for his ability to obtain exclusive stories in an unconventional fashion. As we have seen, Rue's "nose for news" was in fine form during the Putsch. In September 1923, the

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<sup>102</sup>Scharschug to Schultz 20 December 1932, Box 4, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>103</sup>Van Anda to Brown 27 September & 12 November 1923, James #5-1148 & 1160, NYT Archive; McCormick to Clayton 16 June 1923, Box #4, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Times dispatched Paris correspondent P.J. Phillip to Bavaria in anticipation of a possible coup in Munich. Throughout November and early December, Daily News Berlin correspondent Hiram Moderwell enjoyed a 'favored position' among the paper's correspondents 'in the matter of getting dispatches printed promptly'. Although acknowledging the 'astonishing nature of the German situation' the Home Office also advised Moderwell to 'shorten the details of his dispatches without losing anything significant to the dispatch' -- thus illustrating that business constraints were placed upon foreign correspondents even in cases of "blockbuster" stories.<sup>104</sup>

Many U.S. newspapers, however, had committed additional resources and correspondents to the story. The Philadelphia Public Ledger dispatched Dorothy Thompson and the New York Herald Tribune sent H.R. Knickerbocker to Munich in November 1923. Although the prospect of a fascist/monarchist coup attracted a major press gathering to Munich, it also facilitated extensive coverage of the breaking story because the mechanisms for large scale reporting were already in place. Thus, although not a cause of the prominence and depth of the Beer Hall Putsch reporting, the Home Offices' commitment of personnel and resources prior to the event was a necessary precondition for its "blockbuster" status.

Thus, the Beer Hall Putsch story overcame a myriad of obstacles rooted in differing editorial traditions and budgetary constraints to become the top news event of its day. But why? The following pages will address this question with the hope

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<sup>104</sup>Dennis to Moderwell, 18 December 1923, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

that we can gain insight as to the qualifications of a "big story" in the context of the 1920's.

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The Beer Hall Putsch story appealed to the American press because the event was viewed as internationally significant, sensational and negative. The story's international importance satisfied Adolph Ochs's criteria of publishing "all the news that's fit to print" as well as that of the more provincial Victor Lawson. The German situation, fraught with potential dangers, appealed to the American public's desire to read about the morbid, moribund and morose. Some press historians even believe that the fascination for the sensational reached its peak in the U.S. during the 1920's when "yellow sheets" such as the Daily Graphic thrived.

Another underlying reason behind the prominence of the Beer Hall Putsch story was the U.S. press's fascination with monarchism and, to a lesser extent, fascism. Prior to 1923, Adolf Hitler had already achieved some notoriety (albeit minor compared to his political contemporaries) among large segments of the American press corps. Both the New York Herald Tribune and the Chicago Daily News published extensive feature stories about the Nazis in 1922. However, an examination of George Witte's exposé reflects the emphasis that the Daily News placed on publishing news which directly appealed to the American reader. This explains why the paper's Berlin bureau chief (until 1923) concentrated more on the growing threat of the Nazis to the Weimar Republic and the American role in the movement than the personality of its leader or the party's

ideology. Specifically, Witte argued that the 'Bavarian Fascisti' were planning a coup financed by the Krupps and organized by a native Texan, Andrea Ellendt, whom he characterized as a self-styled 'Joan of Arc' of Bavaria. Witte's interview with Hitler, a mere four sentences in length, appears to have been inserted as an afterthought.<sup>105</sup> One month following Witte's series, the Home Office assigned the more capable and more sober<sup>106</sup> Vienna correspondent, A.R. Decker, to write about the growth of fascism in central and eastern Europe. Although he characterized the Bavarian Fascists as a 'force which must be considered', Decker failed to provide information about any members of the party leadership, including Hitler.<sup>107</sup>

Both Witte's and Decker's articles were probably inspired by Mussolini's takeover in Italy and may have been the brain-child of the Daily News's de facto European service chief, Edward Price Bell. The evidence suggests that during the early 1920's, Bell sought to educate the American public about the fascist phenomenon, of which they had only 'the shallowest conception', although he was less interested in informing the readership about fascist leaders, save Mussolini.<sup>108</sup> Thus, although Hitler was not the main focus of fascist coverage prior to the Beer Hall Putsch, he benefited by it, if only in a limited way.

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<sup>105</sup>See CDN November 2, 9, 13 & 15 1922.

<sup>106</sup>The evidence strongly suggests that Witte's alcohol problem was an important factor in his dismissal from the Berlin post and the subsequent appointment of Hiram Moderwell. See Dennis to Bell 26 Jan. 1922 & Bell to Lawson 26 June 1924, Bell Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>107</sup>CDN 7 December 1922.

<sup>108</sup>Bell to Lawson 17 Jan. 1924, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

Far greater than its fascination with fascism was the American press's fascination with monarchism or, more specifically, the prospect of a Wittelsbach restoration in Bavaria and a Hohenzollern one in all of Germany. The New York Times, Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Daily Tribune all devoted special attention to this aspect of German politics, in part due to the American obsession with royal intrigues but mostly because a return of monarchy to Germany was seen as a distinct possibility. Two weeks prior to the Putsch, newly appointed Berlin bureau chief Hiram Moderwell predicted that there would be 'a revolution and a seizure of the Reich government by the monarchists', a view shared by his Daily News superiors.<sup>109</sup> And though the notion of a revived monarchy lost credence among the staff of the Chicago Daily News (with the notable exception of Moderwell's replacement, Edgar Ansel Mowrer) soon after the failed Putsch, the concept appears to have actually gained impetus within the ranks of the Chicago Daily Tribune -- especially with Robert McCormick and his newly appointed Berlin bureau chief, Sigrid Schultz. In fact, the most noteworthy feature of Schultz's reporting throughout the 1920's and even the early 30's was her consistent monitoring of Germany's Crown-Prince-in-exile.

However, the most important reason for the prominence and extent of the Beer Hall Putsch coverage was the mainstream American press's belief that the coup was the culmination of a two-and-a-half week process that would destroy the fledgling Weimar Republic. Many American journalists were convinced that

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<sup>109</sup>Dennis to Moderwell 4 Sept. 1923 and Dennis to P. Mowrer 23 October 1923, Ibid.

the German government would not survive the fallout from the Ruhr crisis and the subsequent hyper-acceleration of an already runaway inflation rate. In this context, the Putsch story, as well as other events, were seen as symptomatic of German democracy's likely demise. The following headlines achieved front page status in the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News during the fifteen days prior to the Putsch:

- 22 October, 'PROCLAMATION OF THE RHINELAND REPUBLIC;  
BAVARIAN REICHSWEHR TAKE LOYALTY OATH TO VON KAHR'
- 23 October, 'COMMUNIST RISING IN HAMBURG'
- 24 October, 'FIGHTING IN THE RHINELAND'
- 25 October, 'COMMUNIST RISING IN BERLIN'
- 27 October, 'FOOD RIOTS IN THE RUHR'
- 29 October, 'LEFTIST GOVERNMENT IN SAXONY DEPOSED'
- 31 October & 2 November, 'CROWN PRINCE ATTEMPTS TO RE-ENTER  
GERMANY'
- 3 November, 'BAVARIAN ULTIMATUM TO BERLIN'
- 6 November, 'REICHSWEHR TROOPS SENT TO THURINGIA'

An examination of the Chicago Daily News's internal memoranda throughout the summer and fall of 1923 clearly indicates that both management and Berlin bureau correspondents were convinced that Weimar Germany was on the verge of collapse.<sup>110</sup> Upon his appointment as Berlin bureau chief, Hiram Moderwell noted that 'the fundamental situation is extremely serious and all nerves are on edge'.<sup>111</sup> Charles Dennis acknowledged that 'Germany was an important and complex situation' and astutely predicted in mid-October that 'great developments will follow with considerable rapidity'.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, the evidence suggests that Dennis considered a Nazi move in Bavaria to be one of these

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<sup>110</sup>Unfortunately, there is a lack of similar documentation for the New York Times and the Chicago Daily Tribune.

<sup>111</sup>Moderwell to Dennis, spring(?) 1923, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>112</sup>Dennis to Moderwell, 17 October 1923, Ibid.

prospective 'developments'. He approved the publication of pictures of Hitler's forces because they were 'unusually timely'.<sup>113</sup> Dennis also approved (and probably wrote) an editorial published on 24 October stating that 'monarchist and militaristic plotters need watching' and that there was a 'far reaching conspiracy afoot to overthrow the republican government'. Even after the failed coup, recently demoted George Witte observed that 'conditions in Germany had grown much worse since July'.<sup>114</sup>

By covering a possible German collapse the mainstream U.S. media implied that events in Germany mattered to the American public. Dennis echoed this sentiment, regarding Germany as 'one of the most interesting places on the face of the earth from a news point of view'<sup>115</sup> while Moderwell called it 'the biggest news story in Europe'.<sup>116</sup> Despite America's post-war psychological return to isolation, her internationally-minded journalists<sup>117</sup> recognized that Germany's stability was key to the United States' interests across the Atlantic.

Although having disengaged from Europe militarily, America renewed and strengthened economic ties with Germany. After 1924, the Weimar Republic so benefited from the influx of speculative capital from U.S. banks and corporations that much of its economy became dependent upon fluctuations on Wall Street. In addition, despite the Teuton-phobia prevalent among

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<sup>113</sup>Dennis to Moderwell, 20 October 1923, Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Witte to Dennis, 13 November 1923, Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Moderwell to Dennis, 27 September 1923, Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Moderwell to Dennis, 23 November 1922, Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>See Heald, *Vistas*, Chapters 1 & 2.

Americans during the Great War, a substantial effort was made to renew cultural ties.<sup>118</sup> Even segments of the American press community took part in this effort. Both the Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Daily News sponsored U.S./German boxing competitions in the "windy city" throughout the twenties and early thirties, with both papers refraining from xenophobic reporting of the event. German boxers were welcomed and praised for their ability and sportsmanship, an example of international good will in the athletic sphere that lasted until the 1936 Berlin Olympics boycott debate and the Joe Louis/Max Schmeling title fights.

Not only did the 1920's usher in a period of U.S./German cultural accord; the period also witnessed a new harmony between both intellectual communities. Whereas American historians had helped to foment anti-German feeling during the Great War, many reversed their positions in the so-called war-guilt debate following the cessation of hostilities. Revisionist historians Harry Elmer Barnes and Sidney B. Fay bolstered the German case, which probably helped ameliorate America's attitude towards the new Republic.<sup>119</sup> At the very least, the "war-guilt" debate kept Germany in the news. However, it is crucial to note that the "war-guilt" debate would not have reached this side of the Atlantic had it not been for America's financial stake in the post-war settlement -- specifically, the issues of reparations and inter-allied debts.

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<sup>118</sup>For a comprehensive analysis of German-American relations in the 1920's, see Costigliola, *F. Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe* (Cornell, Ithaca 1985).

<sup>119</sup>For an excellent discussion of the impact of revisionism on American public opinion, see Schoenthal, "American Attitudes", Chapter Nine.



Reparations and debts came to dominate U.S. press coverage of European affairs during the 1920's and early 30's, with Germany a continuous primary news source during the post-war years. Moreover, the U.S. press would take a comprehensive look at domestic developments in the Weimar Republic because of their possible impact on these larger issues and hence on U.S./German relations as a whole. We will later see how American journalists presented the Reichstag elections of May 1924 as a referendum on the Dawes Plan. Taken to its limits, therefore, the prominence and extensiveness of the Beer Hall Putsch story on the pages of the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and the Chicago Daily News gives credence to the growing importance of Germany to the U.S. position in the interwar world.

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The Beer Hall Putsch was the culmination of two and a half weeks of crisis for the Weimar Republic. And, except for the possible return of the Hohenzollern Crown Prince-in-exile, most segments of the American press concluded that Germany had successfully passed through a critical stage in its development. The New York Times and the Chicago Daily News agreed that Hitler's failed putsch strengthened the Weimar Republic, while the Chicago Daily Tribune remained ambivalent.<sup>120</sup> With the possible exception of the Chicago Daily News, the depth and prominence of German news immediately after the Putsch was inversely proportional to the perceived level of the Republic's stability. Hence, in 1924, the Hitler-Ludendorff treason trial

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<sup>120</sup>NYT editorial "Bavarian Opera Bouffe" 10 November 1923, CDN 10 November 1923 P.1, CDT Ibid.

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and the Reichstag elections of May and December would not receive the same level of attention as events during the tumultuous year of 1923. Not until the Hindenburg-Marx presidential election in the spring of 1925 -- when many American journalists believed the future of the Weimar Republic was again at stake -- would German news take precedence over other international stories.

## Chapter 2

### 1924: Germany's Return To "Normalcy"

For the Hitler/Ludendorff followers, the Munich debacle was not without "silver linings". First, a German court composed of judges who were anti-Republican holdovers from the Wilhelmine period tried and acquitted Ludendorff and imposed on Hitler a prison term of five years, which was subsequently reduced to seven months -- this, for committing high treason! Second, because the German press provided intense coverage of the proceedings, Hitler was able to evoke nationwide sympathy through his impassioned defence that his only crime was carrying out his patriotic duty against the "November criminals". Third, even with Hitler in jail, the Nazis (as part of a racialist coalition) made small, yet significant gains in the Reichstag elections of May 1924.<sup>121</sup> And although most of these gains were erased in the subsequent December elections, May's encouraging results (particularly the levels of Nazi support outside Bavaria), together with the disappointment brought on by the failed Putsch, taught Hitler that he could achieve power through legitimate means; the Nazis would now place their hopes in the ballot box, instead of at the point of a gun.

1924 was also a mixed year for the Weimar Republic. Optimists could point to the onset of political stability in Germany; the failed November coup would mark the last attempt to overthrow the Republic by force. In addition, 1924 witnessed an economic recovery, due mostly to a series of emergency decrees

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<sup>121</sup>For an analysis of the May and December 1924 elections see Childers, *Nazi Voter* pp.50-64. Maier, C. *Recasting Bourgeois Europe, Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade After World War One*, (Princeton 1975) pp.440-458 and Jones, L.E. "The Dissolution of the Bourgeois Party System in the Weimar Republic" in Bessel R. and Feuchtwanger E.J. *Social Change*.

which cut government expenditures, restricted credit and created a strong currency, thus ending the ravages of hyperinflation.<sup>122</sup> Germany also scored a diplomatic and psychological victory over France in the Ruhr crisis, thanks in large measure to American and British aloofness.<sup>123</sup> Germany's reparations were scaled down with the implementation of the Dawes Plan, an initiative put forward by a committee of bankers chaired by Brigadier General Charles G. Dawes, a native of Chicago and the 1924 Republican candidate for Vice-President.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, the Reichstag's narrow ratification of the plan in August facilitated an influx of American capital, thus fuelling further Germany's economic recovery.<sup>125</sup>

Notwithstanding these successes, the Weimar Republic still faced serious difficulties. The deflationary policies of Chancellors Stresemann and Marx also undermined public confidence in the republican system of government. For example, farmers, who had suffered relatively little from hyperinflation, were now hurt by the tight credit measures implemented during stabilization.<sup>126</sup> Even those Germans left substantially

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<sup>122</sup>See Childers, *Nazi Voter*, pp.52-53, Nicholls, *Weimar* pp.93-94 and Craig, *Germany* pp.452-456. See also Southern, D. "The Impact of the Inflation" in Bessel and Feuchtwanger, *Social Change*.

<sup>123</sup>For in-depth discussions of the impact of Ruhr crisis on the European balance of power, see Trachtenberg, *Reparation in World Politics*, Kent, *Spoils* and Marx, *Illusion*.

<sup>124</sup>See Nicholls, *Weimar* pp.94-96 and Childers, *Nazi Voter* pp.54-55. For a comprehensive discussion of the Dawes plan, see Kent, Marx *op.cit.* and Schuker, S. *The End of French Predominance in Europe: The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan* (Princeton 1978).

<sup>125</sup>For a highly critical view of the DNVP's campaign against the Dawes Plan and subsequent split over the issue see Eyck, *Weimar* (Volume One) pp.314-15.

<sup>126</sup>Besides Childers and Jones, see "The Dilemma of German Agriculture during the Weimar Republic" in Bessel and Feuchtwanger, *Social Change*.

unaffected by the policies of hyperinflation and stabilization came to hold the Weimar system in low regard because they viewed it as having brought economic and political chaos to the country. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the German National People's Party (DNVP, also referred to as the German Conservative Party), which advocated the abolition of the Republic and a return to Wilhelmine rule, would emerge as Germany's second largest political party. In fact, although the Nazis saw their electoral percentage cut in half, a closer examination of the December 1924 Reichstag election results reveals that only a little more than half the voters actually cast their ballots for parties which supported the Weimar system. Moreover, the unexpected election of Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg to the Weimar presidency four months later signalled an ominous electoral shift to the Right -- this, during a period of relative prosperity. That the Republic failed to gain additional adherents, even in the aftermath of successes at home and abroad, illustrates how popular support for the German democratic experiment remained extremely tenuous.

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Many journalists had believed that Hitler's coup signalled the end of the Weimar Republic. Conversely, his failure seemed to provide Germany with a much needed political respite and an opportunity to strengthen its democratic institutions. The failure of the Putsch also meant that the Weimar government was going to be around for a while. The implications of a revived democratic Germany for the United States -- namely, a renewed debate over the issues of debts and reparations and over

America's general role in the post-war world -- were not lost on the managements of the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News. All three newspapers seem to have formulated their 1924 editorials on Germany within the context of this debate. For publishers Adolph Ochs and Victor Lawson and their editorial chiefs, Rollo Ogden and Charles Dennis, the strengthening of Weimar democracy facilitated peaceful and equitable solutions (such as the Dawes Plan) to many of the problems which resulted from the Great War and the Treaty of Versailles. Moreover, the revitalization of Germany also provided America with a legitimate opportunity to return to the world stage. For Robert McCormick and his Chicago Daily Tribune, the prospect of a revived Weimar was troubling because he feared what Ochs and Lawson desired: an end to U.S. post-war isolation. Thus, it is only within this context that each paper's editorials and published news stories can be properly understood.

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The coverage of the Hitler/Ludendorff treason trial illustrates how editorial factors can affect news presentation. The New York Times and, uncharacteristically, the Chicago Daily News, published the verdicts on the front page. Their correspondents seemed to enjoy greater latitude in their news commentary on the trial than over other stories, especially in the case of Times correspondent T.R. Ybarra, who characterized the acquittal of the 'arrogant' Ludendorff as 'ridiculous' and Hitler's lenient sentence as a 'mere sop for the [Weimar]

Republicans'.<sup>127</sup> These sentiments were echoed by the Chicago Daily News's Edgar Mowrer, who called both verdicts 'preposterous'.<sup>128</sup> The Times, particularly disillusioned by the affair, published two editorials on 1 and 3 April which strongly suggested that Weimar's days were numbered, and that right-wing momentum was growing while democratic support was only 'skin deep'.<sup>129</sup> The Times even censured the German populace for equating 'treason against the Republic with honor and duty'.<sup>130</sup> The Chicago Daily News, however, refrained from criticizing the Weimar Republic. Although Mowrer admitted that 'Germany is honey-combed with anti-constitution, anti-republican, anti-entente and militaristic plots', he also stated that 'the preposterous trial may have been the means of keeping the German government in the hands of modern moderate-minded men'.<sup>131</sup> As I will show later in this chapter, Mowrer's misplaced "positive spin" on the story illustrates the Home Office's desire to promote the Dawes Plan by presenting the Weimar Republic in a positive light. In other words, Mowrer's front page story was in full accord with his paper's editorial policy: condemn those who threaten German democracy and promote those who advocate it.

Unlike the readers of the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News, the trial of Hitler and Ludendorff probably made little impression on Chicago Daily Tribune readers. Not only did the Tribune fail to publish extensive coverage of the event

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<sup>127</sup>NYT 1 April 1924, P.1.

<sup>128</sup>CDN 1 April 1924, P.1.

<sup>129</sup>NYT editorial, "Stresemann Joins the Junkers", 1 April 1924.

<sup>130</sup>NYT editorial, "Ludendorff Acquitted", 3 April 1924.

<sup>131</sup>CDN Ibid.

-- Sigrid Schultz's news story was a mere one third of a column in length -- the editors also "buried" the article in the paper's back pages.<sup>132</sup> As a result, it is probable that the average Tribune reader overlooked the story altogether.

What makes the matter all the more puzzling was that although Colonel McCormick ordered Berlin bureau correspondent Sigrid Schultz to Munich five weeks prior to the verdicts, her dispatches of 29 February, 10 March and 21 March were not published. McCormick printed only excerpts from Schultz's two cables of 1 April announcing the verdicts. We can only speculate as to why the publisher went to the expense of directing his correspondent away from the capital to reap only a limited reward. Perhaps Schultz's uninspiring dispatch of 29 February, which extensively quoted Ludendorff's testimony, left McCormick unimpressed. The same could be said of her brief account of General von Lossow's testimony of 10 March. However, Schultz's "hard-hitting" dispatch of 21 March, in which she accurately predicted virtual acquittals for Ludendorff and Hitler and which was more in accord with Tribune tradition, was not published either. Also unusual was that the Home Office condensed Schultz's 1 April dispatches by eliminating nearly all news analysis while retaining her aesthetic observations such as a description of Ludendorff's attire. The following sections of Schultz's dispatches of 1 April were never seen by Tribune readers:

Hitler's sentence was much more lenient than even the State's attorney dared recommend, who intimated that five years in fortress would not be too severe a sentence for trying to overthrow the government...

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<sup>132</sup>CDT 1 April 1924, P.11.



When the sentences were read out it was more or less understood that those sentenced would be paroled after serving six months of their sentence "if they behaved well"...

The decision of the Munich court has brought Ludendorff back into the political arena [and his party] will probably return to the Reichstag with much reinforcements since it is known that the German elections in May will greatly strengthen all the radical parties, be they conservative or communistic.<sup>133</sup>

With hindsight, McCormick's handling of the Hitler/Ludendorff treason trial did not conform with the paper's traditional editorial practices in presenting European news. Typically, McCormick played up the decadent aspects of European political life in order to justify American isolationism.<sup>134</sup> Logically, therefore, Ludendorff's acquittal and Hitler's "slap on the wrist" could have been used as ammunition against the Dawes Plan and future U.S. interventions in Germany. That McCormick abandoned this course in this instance leads me to believe that he was already in the process of changing his views of the Weimar Republic. An editorial published on 1 May 1924 suggests that McCormick had reversed his stance because he felt that the German government had abandoned its left-wing agenda. Ironically, he seems to have based this decision on an interview conducted by Edward Price Bell of the Chicago Daily News with German Chancellor Wilhelm Marx a few weeks earlier.<sup>135</sup> By 1925, the Chicago Daily Tribune stood firmly behind the Weimar Republic.

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<sup>133</sup>Unedited Proofs, 1 April 1924, Schultz Papers, Box #5, Folder #1, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>134</sup>This is a major thesis of Jerome Edwards's, *The Foreign Policy of McCormick's Tribune, 1929-41*.

<sup>135</sup>CDT ed. "Germany's Retreat From Socialism", 1 May 1924.

Much of the news and editorial analysis of the 1924 Reichstag elections from the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Daily Tribune focused on their relation to the prospects for the Dawes Plan. The results of the May balloting led all three newspapers cautiously to predict Reichstag consent to the initiative.<sup>136</sup> The New York Times even suggested that some members of the KPD might vote for the plan,<sup>137</sup> while the Chicago Daily News noted that German adherence to the Dawes Plan 'may prove both anxious and delicate'. The Chicago paper further contended that the success of the Dawes Plan depended on France's willingness 'to make substantial concessions, especially in connection with new sanctions to replace military and industrial control of the Ruhr'.<sup>138</sup>

Far more important for this study, however, is the way each newspaper assessed the German political landscape and characterized the German populace; the different viewpoints reflect upper management's ideological inclinations. The New York Times's optimistic predictions with regard to the Republic's future reveal the paper's tendency to minimize the domestic and international significance of the divisiveness within German politics. For example, despite the strengthening of the anti-French DNVP in the May 1924 Reichstag elections, the paper asserted that there would be 'no new obstacles [to long-term European stability] and that once the campaign atmosphere subsided, the business of working out the details of the

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<sup>136</sup>"Irreconcilables Beaten" CDN editorial, 6 May 1924, "France and the German Elections", NYT editorial, 7 May 1924, "France and Germany", CDT editorial, 8 May 1924.

<sup>137</sup>NYT Ibid.

<sup>138</sup>CDN Ibid.

settlement would begin'.<sup>139</sup> In another instance, the Times claimed that the debate between monarchists and republicans was largely 'academic' and a 'luxury' for the German voters to ponder.<sup>140</sup> As mentioned earlier, the Times's optimistic view of Germany's future appears rooted in its intense (though on occasion inconsistent) faith in the wisdom of the German people. In contrast to its characterizations during the Beer Hall Putsch treason trial, the paper reverted to its earlier view that the 'German people have a stronger political sense than they are usually inclined to claim for themselves' because 'the German people want peace abroad'.<sup>141</sup>

The Chicago Daily News editorial board described the Germans in a similar fashion, contending that 'as a people [they] are far too intelligent and practical to be greatly impressed by reactionary and vindictive slogans'.<sup>142</sup> However, unlike the New York Times, the management of the Chicago Daily News regarded 1924 Germany as a political mine-field whose stability was intertwined with that of Europe and, by extension, the United States. This view was reflected by the paper's editorial of 8 December which claimed that in the previous day's Reichstag elections, 'the existence of the Republic, and hence of Europe, was at stake'.<sup>143</sup>

The influence of editorial bias is evident in the Chicago Daily Tribune's coverage of the Reichstag elections of May and

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<sup>139</sup>NYT Ibid.

<sup>140</sup>NYT ed. "The New Reichstag", 9 Dec. 1924.

<sup>141</sup>NYT eds. "The New Reichstag" 6 May, 9 Dec. 1924.

<sup>142</sup>CDN ed. "Republicanism Wins in Germany" 8 December 1924.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid.

December 1924. In contrast to the New York Times, the Tribune printed crisis-like headlines such as 'NATIONALISTS SEEK TO UPSET GERMAN RULE; CLAIM VICTORY AT THE POLLS; REDS GAIN' and 'GERMAN PARTY LEADERS MOVE FOR MONARCHY'.<sup>144</sup> Not surprisingly, the paper also emphasized the strength of the KPD's gains in the May election. In his 6 May dispatch, Berlin bureau correspondent George Seldes suggested that Germany stood on the brink of communist revolution:

Already the threat of a Red revolution is heard. The Communists never dreamed they were so strong, and are now openly boasting that at the first misstep of the right-wing monarchist parties to make any new repressions of Communism they will retaliate by starting a revolt.<sup>145</sup>

The Tribune's "red scare" approach reflected the political views of its publisher. Robert McCormick echoed the sentiments<sup>146</sup> of the German foreign office, characterizing the KPD's electoral success as 'terrifying'.<sup>147</sup> The Colonel not only felt that Germany was vulnerable to communist intrigues but that America was as well. In fact, he once alleged that Marxist ideas had infiltrated the minds of Illinois elementary school children.<sup>148</sup> Such proclamations served to discredit McCormick but he rarely refrained from issuing bold statements and predictions. Occasionally, a McCormick prophesy came to fruition and his editorial of 8 May 1924 provides an ominous case in point:

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<sup>144</sup>CDT 6&7 May 1924.

<sup>145</sup>CDT 6 May 1924, P.1.

<sup>146</sup>It is important to note that although McCormick did not pen most of his paper's editorials, he carefully scrutinized each submission. See Edwards, *Tribune*, pp.23-24 as well as his interview with the author, May 1995.

<sup>147</sup>CDT ed. "France and Germany", 8 May 1924.

<sup>148</sup>Edwards, J., *Tribune*, P.60.

Nationalist students, addressing General von Ludendorff after his election, said they hoped to be alive on a day when he could lead them over the Rhine again. Not all Germans would say that now, but France knows that twenty years from now there would be few Germans who would not respond.<sup>149</sup>

McCormick also used the May Reichstag elections as a platform for his isolationist ideas. He described the League of Nations as 'an artificial structure as weak as its component human elements' and expressed his fear that U.S. participation in the international body would entail American military commitment abroad.

What human right has a senatorial graybeard to lay the future of a Kansas boy baby on the altar of chance? What will concern that boy, when mature enough to be a conscript, whether France has more or less territory? It might concern him greatly in a given instance and in another not at all. That is for the statesmanship of his time to decide.<sup>150</sup>

Despite McCormick's ideological biases, the Chicago Daily Tribune had strikingly similar perspectives on Germany's future to those of its ideological rivals, the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News, after the Reichstag election of December 1924 because of the Colonel's new-found optimism about the Weimar Republic. The Tribune expressed 'deep and sincere gratification at the increased political and economic strength of the German state'.<sup>151</sup> The German people appear to have gained credibility in McCormick's eyes because of the electoral defeats of the ultra-Right and especially of the Communists. As a result, the paper agreed with its rival, the Chicago Daily News, that it was incumbent on England and France to relieve 'the

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<sup>149</sup>CDT ed. "France and Germany", 8 May 1924.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>CDT ed. "Germany", 9 Dec. 1924.

moral strain placed upon [Germany]' which would in turn weaken 'the efforts of belligerent extremists of either the communist or nationalist brand'.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, like Ochs and Lawson, McCormick now felt that 'the skies are brightening over the German people, and therefore over central Europe and the world'.<sup>153</sup> However, this consensus would crumble a few months later following the unexpected death of Reich President Friedrich Ebert and the nomination of Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg. Once again, it would seemed to American journalists that the days of the Weimar Republic were numbered.

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Only the internal memoranda of the Chicago Daily News provide a detailed look inside the paper's editorial decision-making and its impact on news presentation. Contrary to the recollections of Paul, Edgar and Richard Mowrer, the "man on the spot" did not enjoy complete autonomy in overseas reporting in 1924.<sup>154</sup> The evidence suggests that after 1923 the Chicago Daily News Home Office tried to influence the tone and tenor of German reporting in order to coincide with its sympathetic editorial view towards the young republic. Management tended to exert pressure on the field correspondent prior to filing and also edited his copy in

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid. Most segments of the European press exhibited similar optimism. See the Literary Digest, 10 January 1925, pp.18-19.

<sup>154</sup>This upcoming episode provides a clear example of the unreliability of journalists' memoirs and recollections, especially those written and recalled many years later. For instance, Edgar Mowrer emphasized in his memoirs the 'freedom accorded him by CDN editors' (Heald, *Vistas* P.103). The documents from the 1920's and 1930's strongly suggest the opposite.

order to alter the meaning of overseas dispatches after filing (known in the trade as "chopping").

These efforts were directed towards Edgar Ansel Mowrer, who after his transfer from Rome became the Berlin bureau chief in January 1924. Like many of his contemporaries, Mowrer received his start in journalism with the outbreak of the First World War. Mowrer was an author, philosopher and moral crusader all rolled up into one. His colleague John Gunther described him as a combination of Lincoln, Shelley and Mohammed.<sup>155</sup> Unusually intelligent, Gunther also considered him the 'most educated American he had ever met' as well as 'the most engaging conversationalist' he had ever known. Early in his career, Mowrer used his position to promote his own political agenda. In 1915 he deliberately and consistently withheld information concerning Germany's Belgian relief efforts 'in order to heighten the appeal for American aid'.<sup>156</sup> After the onset of the Great Depression, Mowrer believed that he was on a mission to stop Nazism.<sup>157</sup> To what degree he let his strongly-held ideological beliefs undermine his objectivity in his reporting will be the subject of much discussion in this study. What is undeniable is that Mowrer's talents were clearly recognized by his colleagues and superiors.

Although new to the Berlin post, he quickly acclimated himself to his environs and actually improved upon the news

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<sup>155</sup>Gunther, J., "London Diary," December 1935, 7, Gunther Papers, New York City as cited in Heald, P. 242.

<sup>156</sup>Mowrer, E., *Triumph and Turmoil* as cited in Heald, *Vistas*, P. 34.

<sup>157</sup>Diana Mowrer Beliard (daughter of Edgar Mowrer) to the author, 11 July 1995.

network established by his predecessor, Hiram Moderwell.<sup>158</sup> Unlike some other American journalists in Germany, Mowrer spoke fluent German and thus was able to establish a great number of news contacts.<sup>159</sup> He would earn his reputation as a solid "beat reporter" with excellent writing skills. However, his 'temperamental',<sup>160</sup> 'spirited and mercurial personality'<sup>161</sup> as well as his rigidly held political and journalistic views conflicted with Daily News management, specifically, Charles Dennis, the overseer of the foreign news service.

Dennis was considered by some as 'the most meticulous editor of his era' and one 'who demanded a high degree of care on the part of all those who worked for him'.<sup>162</sup> Hal O'Flaherty (who later became the paper's European service head) recalled a legendary incident where Dennis's editing axed 297 words out of a 300-word piece written by one of his staff writers.<sup>163</sup> Edward Price Bell was more critical of Dennis. Although he 'liked him as a man', Bell thought that Dennis was 'ignorant of foreign affairs, prejudiced, slow and vacillating'.<sup>164</sup> Dennis, who ascribed intelligence, self-discipline and sagacity to the

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<sup>158</sup>E. Mowrer to Dennis, 10 January 1924 and Bell to Dennis, 7 April 1924, CDN Papers, Bell to his wife 24 March 1924, Bell Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>159</sup>Diana Mowrer Beliard to the author, 11 July 1995. Frederick T. Birchall, who took over the New York Times Berlin bureau in 1932, spoke no German.

<sup>160</sup>Norman Weisbaum (foreign auditor of the CDN 1931-?) to the author, July 1995. Weisbaum was struck by Mowrer's 'angry' demeanor.

<sup>161</sup>Heald, *Vistas*, p.34.

<sup>162</sup>O'Flaherty to Pryor, 19 August 1962, Paul Mowrer papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid.

<sup>164</sup>Bell to Strong, 20 September 1926, Bell papers, Ibid.



"German national character", tended to exaggerate greatly the strength of the Weimar Republic. Equally important, however, Dennis was schooled in traditional management with its formality and hierarchy. Unlike Edgar Mowrer, to Charles Dennis journalism was not a collaborative exercise; editorial decisions were handed down from the top and were not to be questioned.

Not surprisingly, it did not take long for Mowrer and Dennis to clash. In the spring of 1924, Mowrer complained to Dennis about the Home Office's attempt to tone down some of his dispatches, including Chicago's 'interpolation' of modifying expressions such as 'it seems' and 'it is alleged'. Mowrer specifically cited a section from the paper's front page coverage of the Ludendorff/Hitler treason trial which emanated from his dispatch entitled "For National Honor".

(An excerpt from Edgar Mowrer's original dispatch): Hitler's jingo stock in trade was furnished him by the Entente.

(edited and published version): Hitler's jingo stock in trade was drawn from his peculiar notions of the treatment of Germany by the Entente.<sup>165</sup>

Mowrer regarded Chicago's 'overcautious' handling of his copy as an unnecessary intrusion upon his rights as an on-the-scene observer. He firmly held that in instances such as this one (which he implied were frequent), the Home office should 'rely upon the judgement of the correspondent on-the-spot'. He reinforced his point by suggesting that if he sent a hypothetical dispatch stating that 'the French or Germans acted with great brutality, there [would be] no reason for changing it to read, "it is alleged they acted with great brutality"'<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>E. Mowrer to Dennis, 16 April 1924, CDN papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid.

Mowrer's dissatisfaction may be why he threatened to resign that June.<sup>167</sup>

Dennis's unusually forceful response seems designed to undermine the "man-on-the-spot" theory. He said 'the interpolations of "it is alleged" and "it seems"' were necessary on occasions where the Home Office believed that 'the correspondent was presenting his personal opinions as objective facts'.<sup>168</sup> Dennis contended that Mowrer committed such a violation by suggesting in his original text that Britain and France were to blame for Hitler's views. He advised Mowrer to limit his commentary to 'what was done or said at any particular place or time' without 'characterizing the deed or words' because 'the correspondent cannot afford to be both judge and executioner'.<sup>169</sup> Dennis seemingly wanted Mowrer to refrain from news analysis -- the long-standing *raison d'être* of the paper's foreign service: 'to explain to our readers not so much what has happened, as why it happened, what it means, and above all, what it may lead to.'<sup>170</sup>

But why? Although Dennis did not oppose the idea of news analysis per se, he asserted what he saw as management's right to present news in accord with the editorial interests of the paper. In a letter to Edgar's brother, European service head Paul Scott Mowrer, Dennis wrote:

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<sup>167</sup>Bell to his wife, 21 June 1924, Bell Papers, Ibid. Later in the decade, Rome correspondent, Carroll Binder had similar problems with Dennis and the Home Office. See Binder to his wife, 9 Aug. 1927, Binder to Dennis 24 Jan. 1928, Dennis to Binder 25 Nov. 1927, 1 April 1928, Binder Papers Ibid. as cited in Heald, *Vistas*, P.104.

<sup>168</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 6 May 1924 Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

<sup>170</sup>"Suggestions for Reorganizing the Foreign Service", Paul Mowrer memo, 6 May 1920, Paul Mowrer papers, Ibid.

We are doing our utmost to be fair to our correspondents and yet to be right as we see the right. *The question is whether we, in Chicago, are in a better position to judge these things than our correspondents in European capitals or whether we are not.* With the utmost faith in those correspondents, we cannot help thinking that they do not realize *certain modifying elements in the great questions with which they deal.* We are all, wherever we are, doing our best to be right, to be just and to serve the Daily News in the best possible manner. The thing for us to do is to get together on these matters and not to complain about one another... We are trying to advance the interests of the Daily News every day and are trying to be fair and just to our hard-working European correspondents, in whose ability and honesty of purpose, we have absolute faith [my italics].<sup>171</sup>

This passage suggests that Dennis was actually more concerned about overseas dispatches undermining management's editorial views than with the limits of a correspondent's discretion. For example, although Mowrer's negative portrayals of Ludendorff and Hitler went unquestioned by Dennis, his "For National Honor" excerpt was unacceptable to management because it could have been inferred that Hitler was justified in his beliefs due to England and France's post-war policies. As previously shown, Dennis held Hitler in low regard and it can be assumed that he had no intention of legitimizing his fascist ideas. Even more critically, Dennis may have feared that any condoning of Hitler undermined the prestige of the Weimar Republic.

Implicit in his view was that through its news and editorial coverage, the Chicago Daily News (or any newspaper for that matter) could influence the course of a foreign nation's domestic policies. Nor was this view a transient one. Two years after the "For National Honor" dispute, Dennis instructed Edgar Mowrer 'not to display unnecessary pessimism regarding the

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<sup>171</sup>Dennis to P. Mowrer, 31 Aug. 1926, Ibid.

German people's efforts to maintain a republican system of government and not to prophesy unnecessarily the early destruction of that government'.<sup>172</sup> One could speculate that Dennis's opposition to Mowrer's 1924 dispatch was rooted in the dubious notion that negative portrayals of England, France and Germany in the pages of the Chicago Daily News could create enough discord among those nations' peoples as well as in the United States to preclude a long lasting European peace.

Lawson and Dennis pinned their hopes for such a peace on the Dawes Plan. The Chicago Daily News mounted what can only be described as a small-scale public relations campaign promoting the Dawes Plan. The paper's editorial page spoke of the plan as 'an admirable expression of enlightened men who sought equity broadly across national boundaries with scrupulous regard for all interests'.<sup>173</sup> The Daily News also published a four-column front page cartoon which celebrated the results of the May 1924 Reichstag elections and erroneously predicted that the returns clearly indicated a German acceptance of the Dawes Plan.<sup>174</sup> In addition, management restricted the number of non-Dawes related overseas cables in order to focus its efforts on incoming news from Germany. Newly appointed Rome correspondent, Hiram Moderwell, lamented in the spring of 1924 that 'two cables a week on current Italian affairs would exhaust my quota'.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 8 September 1926, Ibid.

<sup>173</sup>CDN editorial, 2 May 1924.

<sup>174</sup>CDN 6 May 1924, P.1 The Reichstag actually ratified the Dawes Plan by a very slim margin.

<sup>175</sup>Moderwell to Dennis, 17 May 1924, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

The Home Office also exerted pressure on the Berlin bureau. In the autumn of 1924, Dennis praised Edgar Mowrer for his 'particularly important' pro-Dawes dispatches sent 'in compliance' with the Home Office's requests. Dennis then ordered Mowrer 'to send, between now and the [1924 U.S. presidential] election, any other significant developments demonstrating the enormous benefit which the Dawes Plan unquestionably would bestow upon Germany and the German people'.<sup>176</sup>

That the Chicago Daily News supported the Dawes Plan is no surprise, as most of the mainstream press supported it as well, even McCormick's isolationist Tribune.<sup>177</sup> The real question is why Dennis and Lawson fought for the initiative with such intensity. The answer seems to lie less in management's view of the plan's merits than in its possible international and domestic ramifications.<sup>178</sup> Specifically, the evidence strongly suggests that the paper's management envisioned the Dawes Plan as a springboard for a more interventionist American foreign policy, such as future participation in the World Court. On a deeper level, the Dawes Plan became a political litmus test in the internationalist/isolationist debate. The Chicago Daily News took the position that 'excessive fear of broils and entanglements had never prevented broils and entanglements and

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<sup>176</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 10 October 1924, Ibid.

<sup>177</sup>Literary Digest, 8 March and 13 September 1924. Most segments of the European press also supported the Dawes Plan. See the Literary Digest, 24 January 1925.

<sup>178</sup>In addition, the evidence loosely suggests that Dawes enjoyed the personal respect of both CDN management and staff. In fact, Dawes was asked to intervene in a labor dispute between the Home Office and the Foreign News Service by Edward Price Bell during the spring of 1924. See Bell to Dawes, 20 May 1924, Bell Papers, Newberry Library.

never will'.<sup>179</sup> In this context, a Wilsonian-minded editorial stated:

The effective work and the clarifying principles contributed by the American experts for the good of Europe and the peace of the world well illustrate the possibilities that lie in sincere co-operation by the American government in wisely devised agencies for the peaceful settlement of international problems. The American people are proud as they have a right to be, of the work of General Dawes and his associates. They should ask themselves why, at the behest of a few self-willed obstructionists in the United States senate, civilization should be denied similar services henceforth through the world court. Surely these obstructionists cannot point to acts of wisdom at home or abroad justifying the people's acceptance of them as political and moral leaders in the face of the people's own longing to be helpful in the cause of world peace.<sup>180</sup>

The evidence also suggests that management's intense interest in the passage of the Dawes Plan could be traced to the paper's fear that negative coverage of the plan might undermine political stability at home. Lawson and Dennis's fear centered on the rise of Robert LaFollette, a senior senator from neighboring Wisconsin. The mainstream press of the 1920's characterized him as a radical socialist as did the Chicago Daily News. LaFollette's popularity had risen among large segments of the German-American population because of his opposition to U.S. participation in the Great War and to the Versailles settlement. The Wisconsin senator had become a growing thorn in the side of the Republican establishment, and posed a chronic threat to break away and form a viable third party (in fact, he ran as an independent candidate in the 1924 presidential election). The critical moment for LaFollette came during the 1924 Republican national convention. Sympathetic to

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<sup>179</sup>CDN editorial, "America and the German Peril", 25 Oct. 1923.

<sup>180</sup>CDN editorial, 2 May 1924.

Germany's post-war ills as well as to his own constituency, LaFollette actively campaigned against the reparations adjustment plan of Charles Dawes, the 1924 Republican Vice-Presidential nominee.

Dennis regarded LaFollette's anti-Dawes campaign as a 'matter of determining importance in the 1924 presidential election' because the Wisconsin senator was attempting to trigger a 'far reaching revolt [against] the old parties' by bringing 'the Dawes Plan [and Dawes himself] "by hook or crook" into as much discredit as possible'. To counter 'the considerably effective effort to turn German-American voters to LaFollette', Dennis wrote his Berlin bureau chief that he knew 'no better way of overcoming the falsehoods now so widely circulated than to give in convincing detail the facts regarding the benefits, already received or in prospect, that Germany is getting from the Dawes Plan'.<sup>181</sup> In sum, Dennis's actions reflected his belief that a failed Dawes Plan would undermine the nation's two-party system and benefit a man whom the editor regarded as an extremist.

This examination of the editorial policies and practices of the Chicago Daily News also raises questions concerning the formulation and objectivity of news stories. The paper's managing editor, Henry Justin Smith, had even argued that 'truth and interest do not present any contradiction in terms'<sup>182</sup>, the cynical yet prevailing view among many journalists of the 1920's and 1930's because of their manipulation by European and American government press agencies during the Great War. No

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<sup>181</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 10 October 1924, CDN papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>182</sup>As quoted in Lou Pryor's unpublished manuscript on the CDN, Paul Mowrer Papers, Ibid.

longer did the "facts speak for themselves" because reporters now questioned the validity and objectivity of "the facts". Moreover, that most European governments, including Germany, maintained their own press agencies following the war in their efforts to "win the peace" only served to heighten the suspicions of U.S. foreign correspondents during the 1920's. Nevertheless, newspapermen relied heavily on government sources for information. In one study, Silas Bent demonstrated that 147 out of 255 news items from a 1926 issue of the New York Times emanated from government spokespersons, while in another study, Peter Odegard estimated that fifty percent of national and international stories from the 1920's originated in public relations work.<sup>183</sup>

The Great War not only revolutionized the way many journalists obtained information; it changed the way they presented it. European-based correspondents in particular believed that a mere regurgitation of "official accounts" was no longer satisfactory to keep the American public informed about foreign events. Furthermore, they believed that dispassionate objective reporting should be jettisoned in favor of subjective news analysis. Walter Lippmann, one of America's first columnists and a staunch advocate of this view, bluntly stated, 'show me a man who thinks he's objective and I'll show you a man who's deceiving himself'<sup>184</sup> while Raymond Gram Swing, who served as the Berlin bureau chief for the New York Herald Tribune in the early 20's believed that:

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<sup>183</sup>As cited in Schudson, M., *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York 1978) P.144.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., P.149.



If European news is to be comprehensible at all, it has to be explained. If it is explained it has to be explained subjectively. There is no getting around it, the man in Europe who is of the most value to his newspaper is the man who expresses opinions in his writings. That goes against the ethics of the profession, but it is absolutely essential to understand that.<sup>185</sup>

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Despite their different perspectives regarding Germany, both Edgar Mowrer and Charles Dennis saw their roles as something far greater than mere recorders of events. Mowrer sought to alert the American public to the fact that the Weimar Republic was not devoid of de-stabilizing influences, even to the point of exaggerating the threat of the radical Right, while Dennis's pro-Dawes Plan campaign reflects how the management of the Chicago Daily News sought to use the press not only to disseminate information but also to facilitate political change. Dennis's authority was somewhat mitigated by his adversarial and self-righteous Berlin bureau chief who sought to "buck" his superiors by asserting his "man-on-the-spot" rights. Despite the Home Office's strong riposte, Dennis played management's trump card only if a dispatch entailed editorial significance -- not for the sake of asserting a philosophical right nor even as a method of keeping his subordinate in line. This episode also illustrates the struggle between editor and reporter in the shaping of news. Dennis's attempt to reconcile his 'utmost faith' in his field reporters with management's responsibility to shape the destiny of the paper -- 'to be right as we see the right' -- underscores the sensitivity of this issue. What we can conclude is that the final news product, more often than not, represented the outcome of a clash of wills between

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<sup>185</sup>Ibid. P.147.

observer and overseer, the former convinced of his journalistic autonomy and the latter of his journalistic authority.

The acceptance of the Dawes Plan failed to reduce the friction between the Chicago Daily News Home Office and the Berlin bureau. In fact, the election of Hindenburg in 1925 served only to exacerbate these tensions. The influence of this uneasy state of affairs on the paper's German coverage will be a prominent feature in the next chapter.

### Chapter 3

## The Hindenburg Election and its Aftermath, 1925-28

Historians have often referred to the period of German history from the election of Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg in April 1925 to the Wall Street crash in October 1929 as the Weimar Republic's "golden era" and "years of illusion".<sup>186</sup> Such labels illustrate the disparity between a rosy view of German life and its more sober, problematic reality. Following Hindenburg's victory, most segments of the mainstream American press including the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News tended to highlight the former while de-emphasizing the latter.

Between 1925 and 1929, the Weimar Republic experienced its greatest stability since the Great War. Unlike the continual state of unrest which characterized its early years, the Germany of the latter half of the 1920's enjoyed an unprecedented period of political tranquillity. In the only Reichstag election held during this period (1928), the Nazis fared even worse than they did in 1924, garnering a mere 2.6% of the vote, while the staunchest supporter of Weimar democracy, the German Social Democratic party (SPD), increased its vote to 30%, nearly double that of its closest numerical rival, the Catholic Centre Party. Many sectors of the German economy also rebounded. In 1928 industrial production exceeded pre-war levels for the first time.<sup>187</sup> Moreover, whereas Germany began 1925 as a net importer

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<sup>186</sup>See for instance, Marks, *Illusion* Chapter 4 and Childers, *Nazi Voter*, Chapter 3.

<sup>187</sup>Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, Table #7, P. 276.

of goods, she ended 1929 with a favorable balance of trade.<sup>188</sup> Cultural life, too, flourished during these years as Berlin competed with Paris as Europe's leading tourist attraction. Germany's domestic tranquillity also facilitated a period of detente with her neighbors. Following the passage of the Dawes Plan, Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann signed the Locarno treaties, paving the way for German entry into the League of Nations in September 1926. In the spring of 1929, Germany's efforts to reduce her reparations burden resulted in the more lenient Young Plan.<sup>189</sup> Collectively, these events contributed to a reversal in the mind-set of many American journalists. Whereas in the first half of the 1920's many correspondents believed that Germany was on the brink of disintegration, by 1928 most felt that the Weimar Republic had outgrown its troubled beginnings and was well on its way to becoming the best that western democracy had to offer.<sup>190</sup>

However, these signs of stability coincided with indications to the contrary. Hindenburg's presidential election victory provided evidence that despite Germany's defeat in the Great War, the prestige of her anti-republican German military remained untarnished.<sup>191</sup> Likewise, the narrow defeat of parliamentarian Wilhelm Marx not only reflected Hindenburg's personal popularity -- it also indicated a growing feeling of

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<sup>188</sup>Ibid., Table #10, P.279.

<sup>189</sup>See Marks, *Illusion*, op. cit. For a less anti-German and more balanced view of the reparations issue, see Kent *Spoils*.

<sup>190</sup>For a detailed discussion of other segments of the U.S. press, see Schoenthal, "American Attitudes", Chapter 11.

<sup>191</sup>See Carsten, F.L. *The Reichswehr and Politics, 1918-1933* (Oxford 1966) pp.249-50.

disillusionment among the German electorate with the Weimar system in general.<sup>192</sup> And although many observers believed that the rejection of the political extremes in the Reichstag elections that followed three years later legitimized social democracy, a closer examination of the balloting reveals trends which seem to contradict this view. In fact, the percentage of votes garnered by political parties loyal to the Weimar Republic fell to its lowest level since the hyperinflation/stabilization election of May 1924.<sup>193</sup> Instead of recapturing votes lost in the 1924 elections, the "system" parties lost out to an eclectic collection of special interest groups. And whereas their individual constituencies and agendas differed greatly, these anti-Marxist middle-class parties of discontent shared the belief that the Weimar Republic should be abolished. Not surprisingly, the Nazis were able to draw a great deal of support from these groups in their breakthrough election of September 1930.<sup>194</sup>

Economically, although German heavy industry rebounded during these "Golden Years", other economic sectors such as agriculture and small business never fully recovered from their immediate post-war ills. The 1928 per capita income of farmers fell 44%

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<sup>192</sup>Jurgen Falter has even argued that Hitler's electoral constituency of 1930-32 was virtually identical to that Hindenburg's 1925 coalition. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that Childers has shown that the social composition of Nazi support varied between 1930 and 1932, thus somewhat undermining Falter's contention. See Falter, J. *Hitler's Wähler* (Munich 1991).

<sup>193</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, Table 3.1, P. 125.

<sup>194</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 125-27, See also Jones, L. "The Dissolution of the Bourgeois Party System in the Weimar Republic" in Bessel & Feuchtwanger *Social Change*, and Stürmer, M. "Parliamentary Government in Weimar Germany, 1924-1928" in Nicholls, AJ & Matthias, E. *German Democracy and the Triumph of Hitler* (London 1971). Childers, Jones and Stürmer make convincing cases that Weimar democracy was imperilled prior to the success of the Nazis.

below the national average while the number of retail bankruptcies actually rose between 1924 and 1928.<sup>195</sup> Even more important, Weimar's economic success was still predicated on a continuous influx of short-term U.S. loans -- a fact that became quickly apparent after "Black Tuesday" on Wall Street. Even Germany's cultural revival was a mixed blessing. Far from appreciating the opportunities afforded to them by the Weimar system, many artists and intellectuals used their new-found freedom to mock the fledgling republic.<sup>196</sup>

Most ominous, however, was the social penetration of the Nazis into mainstream aspects of German life. This was most evident among the intellectual and student populations. Despite receiving a paltry 2.6% of the 1928 electoral vote, the Nazis became one of the most popular extracurricular clubs on Germany's university campuses. In addition, a disproportionately high percentage of secondary school teachers and college professors supported the rabid nationalism and anti-modernism of Hitler's party. Finally, the pseudo-scientific rationale behind Nazi racial theories found a noticeable number of adherents in Germany's medical community.<sup>197</sup> Thus, despite the various stabilizing trends between 1925 and 1929, the political,

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<sup>195</sup>Childers, *Ibid.*, pp.143-45. See also Gessner, D. "The Dilemma of German Agriculture During the Weimar Republic" in Bessel and Feuchtwanger, *Social Change*.

<sup>196</sup>Craig, *Germany* pp. 479-97. See also Gay, P. *Weimar Culture: the Outsider as Insider* (Westport, CT 1968).

<sup>197</sup>For an excellent discussion of the attitudes of the German medical and scientific establishments during the Weimar and Nazi eras see Burleigh, M. & Wippermann, W. *The Racial State* (Cambridge 1991). For an analysis of National Socialist appeal to German students see Steinberg, M.S. *Sabers and Brown Shirts: The German Students' Path to National Socialism, 1918-1935* (Chicago 1977) and Zorn, W. "Student Politics in the Weimar Republic", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 5, (1970) pp.128-143.

social and economic foundations of the Weimar Republic were well on their way to being undermined prior to the Great Depression.

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This chapter will seek to explain why the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune tended to highlight the successes of the Weimar Republic during this period while ignoring many of its disturbing trends. As in the cases of the Beer Hall Putsch and the Hitler/Ludendorff treason trial, the archival documentation on the Hindenburg election and its aftermath varies from publication to publication. Most notable is the complete lack of relevant papers in the New York Times archive. The situation concerning the Tribune is slightly better, although many of the documents tend to raise more questions than provide answers. As noted in the first two chapters, the Chicago Daily News has the most internal correspondence pertaining to the mid-1920's. However, these documents address the coverage of the 1925 campaign only indirectly.

Nevertheless, one may conclude that the support for the Weimar Republic among all three newspapers after the December 1924 Reichstag election was stronger than after the initial shock of Hindenburg's 1925 victory. Germany's image benefited from an increase in anti-French sentiment.<sup>198</sup> More important, however, the lack of systemic change following Hindenburg's victory indicated the Republic's ability to withstand yet another seemingly irresistible assault on its parliamentary foundations.

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<sup>198</sup>Schoenthal, "Attitudes", Chapter Eleven.

Consequently, the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Daily Tribune were able to provide a credible rationale for their ever-growing faith in the fortitude and resiliency of the Weimar Republic. The poor showing of the ultra-Right and ultra-Left in the 1928 Reichstag elections confirmed their views. This optimistic evaluation of Germany's status may explain why each newspaper failed to acknowledge the growing popular discontent with the Weimar Republic and the penetration of the Nazi movement into Germany's social spheres after Hindenburg's victory. Although there were exceptions, the pattern of asymmetry that had developed in 1923 between the press's forebodings and what actually happened was reinforced by the frenetic nature of the Hindenburg/Marx campaign coverage.

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At the end of 1924, most segments of the American and the European press regarded Germany as 'definitely out of danger' because the Weimar Republic had withstood challenges from both the ultra Right and Left in that year's December elections.<sup>199</sup> While the unexpected resignation of Chancellor Wilhelm Marx's cabinet one week later failed to alter this view, the new ministry of Dr. Hans Luther did create some anxiety among American newspapermen, not because the incoming leaders wanted to reorient policies, but rather because of the ministry's large conservative contingent. The Manchester Union (NH) contended that the new cabinet was 'designed to be merely a bridge over which the Monarchists could march to a restoration' while The Evening World (NY) characterized the Luther government as 'the

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<sup>199</sup>See Literary Digest 10 January 1925, pp.18-19.



first monarchistic, reactionary regime Germany had had since the Republic's founding in 1918'.<sup>200</sup> Much of the American press's anxiety, however, centered upon the Luther cabinet's prospects for longevity or lack thereof. James Cox's Dayton News (Ohio) doubted whether Dr. Luther's 'weak and tame' cabinet was 'destined for a long term in public office'. In sharp contrast, the New York Times led the forces of optimism by claiming that Luther himself 'would tolerate no effort on the part of the reactionaries to undermine the German Republic'.<sup>201</sup>

Only the most pessimistic of journalists posited that the inauguration of the Luther ministry on 19 January signalled the *immediate* end of parliamentary democracy in Germany through a restoration of the Hohenzollern or Wittelsbach monarchies. The unexpected death of Reich President Friedrich Ebert one month later, however, touched off an editorial debate on the viability of the Weimar Republic. Now, 'autocracy has been given a great opportunity' wrote the Richmond Times-Dispatch. The Cleveland Plain Dealer contended that the monarchic and reactionary elements were stronger than they had ever been despite their poor showing in the Reichstag elections three months earlier.<sup>202</sup> The pessimism of these newspapers was rooted in their belief that Ebert had established himself as the linchpin upon which German democracy rested. The Evening World claimed that Ebert would go down in history as 'Germany's Lincoln' because of his 'courage, genius for conciliation, consummate tact, superiority to purely party considerations, audacity and devotion to

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<sup>200</sup>Ibid. 7 February 1925, pp. 12-13.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid. Cox was also the Democratic presidential nominee in 1920.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid. 14 March 1925, pp.14-15.

democratic institutions, as well as his untimely death after 'piloting his country through the raging seas of reconstruction'. 'As long as Ebert was president', the Cleveland Plain Dealer stated, 'there was a wholesome influence for honesty and sanity at the top of German affairs; now there is distressing uncertainty'.<sup>203</sup>

These ominous messages were countered by more reassuring ones from an eclectic collection of publications which included Ochs's internationalist New York Times and Hearst's isolationist New York American. The Schenectady Union-Star's (NY) view that Germany's worst days were behind her captured this optimistic spirit:

During the bloodless revolution in government, Germany endured unemployment. It saw its currency debased. Its people were impoverished. It was victimized by the few who profited at the expense of many; but the ideal of self-government prevailed. It will not be overthrown. There will be no return of monarchy. The Deutsches Reich will stand. It has seen sound currency restored. It has passed the critical point. Henceforth, it will rise. The storm and stress period has passed.<sup>204</sup>

The optimism of the Times and others was partially rooted in the erroneous belief that 'the monarchic Right lacked any outstanding figure'. While Joseph Shaplen of the New York Herald Tribune (who will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five) conceded that the upcoming presidential campaign would 'be a bitter one', T.R. Ybarra, his rival at the Times, suggested that the only scenario that would result in a right-wing victory would be a split within the Republican bloc between the Socialists and the moderates. On 3 March Ybarra argued that the

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<sup>203</sup>Ibid.

<sup>204</sup>Ibid.

advanced age of the pool of World War One military leaders from which the conservatives might launch a candidate precluded elderly men such as von Mackensen, von Tirpitz and most important, von Hindenburg, from running for office.<sup>205</sup> This assumption probably led the London Sunday Times(UK) to predict that the conservatives would nominate the far less formidable Hans Luther. Finally, unlike those publications that expressed the belief that Ebert's death 'revived the ambitions of the monarchists', the New York Times claimed that a Republican success at the polls would be made 'more likely by the general sympathy in Germany for Ebert's memory'.<sup>206</sup>

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The death of President Ebert on 28 February 1925 unofficially inaugurated a two-month period of campaigning and political manoeuvring. The presidential campaign received almost daily attention in the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News. As in the case of the Beer Hall Putsch, the election's media appeal was multifarious in nature -- it seemed to offer something for everyone. Germany's first presidential election featured two ballotings (29 March and 25 April), a colorful slate of candidates (which included Erich Ludendorff and Clara Zetkin from the political extremes) and unexpected developments, most notably von Hindenburg's entry into the race on 8 April. Notwithstanding these elements, the campaign's overriding theme was the fate of the Republic. Much of the analysis of the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and

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<sup>205</sup>NYT, 3 March 1925, P.1.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid.

Chicago Daily News centered on the possibility that Weimar Germany would give way to the forces of reaction and monarchy.

'Where is a man willing to be president of Germany and strong enough to save the country from the tidal wave of monarchism threatening the Republic?' questioned John Clayton, the Chicago Daily Tribune's chief Berlin bureau correspondent, shortly following President Ebert's death. For all three newspapers, the answer lay in ex-Chancellor Wilhelm Marx, whom Edward Price Bell of the Chicago Daily News compared with Goethe and Schiller.<sup>207</sup> Marx's poor third place showing behind Dr. Karl Jarres (the nationalist candidate who later vacated his nomination to von Hindenburg) and Otto Braun (the socialist candidate) in the first balloting held on 29 March failed to undermine their confidence; in fact, each newspaper had predicted the correct outcome days before the election. Undeterred by Marx's performance, Thomas Ybarra, the New York Times's recently appointed chief Berlin bureau correspondent, along with Edgar Mowrer of the Chicago Daily News, maintained the results 'showed that the supporters of the German Republic will defeat the monarchists four weeks hence' as long as they back one candidate 'which will almost certainly be ex-Chancellor Marx'.<sup>208</sup>

Prior to Hindenburg's entry, the predictions from the New York Times and the Chicago Daily Tribune for a Marx triumph appear to have been rooted in a quantitative analysis of the March 29 vote: the collective totals of the pro-Republican bloc narrowly exceeded that of the collective totals of the right-

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<sup>207</sup>Bell to Dennis, 27 March 1924, Bell Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>208</sup>CDN 30 March 1925, P.2, NYT Ibid.

wing parties. However, their forecast of a Marx victory following the announcement of Hindenburg's candidacy seems based on dubious logic and wishful thinking. It may surprise the reader that both the New York Times and the Chicago Daily Tribune characterized the venerated war leader's nomination as 'a confession of weakness' by Germany's right-wing coalition which would ultimately 'injure its chances of victory'.<sup>209</sup> The Times's T.R. Ybarra added that 'Hindenburg's chances for victory will be greatly reduced by voters afraid of international complications' as well as 'by the skepticism of some voters to lend support to a seventy-seven year old man'.<sup>210</sup> Times management concurred; on the eve of the final balloting, the paper predicted that Hindenburg's military experience would act against him, arguing that 'the field marshal though a hero, is after all, a hero of a lost war'.<sup>211</sup>

The stance taken by the New York Times and Chicago Daily Tribune towards the Hindenburg candidacy reflected the minority of press opinion. H.L. Mencken's Baltimore Sun reflected the general consensus that the nomination of the Field Marshal 'is by no means as stupid as it appears at first glance' because the move would probably bolster the Bavarian vote and may detach the more radical elements from the republican bloc to the communist camp.<sup>212</sup> The Minneapolis Tribune asserted that 'the German people regard Hindenburg much as American southerners regard Robert E. Lee', both of whose reputations emerged untarnished despite

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<sup>209</sup>CDT, 7 April 1925. P.5.

<sup>210</sup>NYT Ibid.

<sup>211</sup>"The German Election", NYT editorial, 25 April 1925.

<sup>212</sup>Literary Digest, 25 April 1925.

defeats in war.<sup>213</sup> In a similar vein, the Columbus Ohio State Journal equated Hindenburg's popularity with the more broad-based appeal of Ulysses S. Grant prior to his 1868 presidential victory.<sup>214</sup> 'Simply put', in the opinion of the Brooklyn Eagle, 'Paul von Hindenburg is the most popular figure in Germany and the strongest candidate the Nationalists could have put forth'.<sup>215</sup>

Hindsight confirms the majority view of the American press regarding Hindenburg's nomination and exposes the flawed arguments of the New York Times and Chicago Daily Tribune. Certainly von Hindenburg was a far stronger conservative candidate than Karl Jarres, the victor in the balloting of 29 March. It is interesting to note that all three newspapers foresaw the dumping of Jarres despite his victory in the first election,<sup>216</sup> although the Tribune was far more consumed with the prospective candidacy of the Crown Prince-in-exile and even that of his seventeen year old son.<sup>217</sup>

The New York Times and Chicago Daily Tribune's *underestimation* of Hindenburg's appeal could probably be traced to their *overestimation* of the German voters' loyalty to the Weimar Republic. John Clayton described the aged field marshal as the 'plaything of [conservative] politicians who speaks like an automaton' while the New York Times commented that Hindenburg

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<sup>213</sup>Ibid.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid.

<sup>215</sup>Ibid.

<sup>216</sup>See for instance, NYT 31 March 1925 and the CDN 6 April 1925.

<sup>217</sup>For a discussion of how other newspapers played this angle, see Schoenthal, "American Attitudes", P.218.

would 'not be equal to the duties of the office which he seeks'.<sup>218</sup> Both newspapers viewed Hindenburg as nothing more than a symbol behind which lay the intrigues of his monarchistic handlers and assumed that German voters would think likewise; hence, 'the stronger must be the impulse of the masses who believe in a republic to work together to insure its maintenance'.<sup>219</sup>

The "chill of apprehension" that fell across Europe and America immediately following Hindenburg's victory on 26 April must have been icy for the New York Times and Chicago Daily Tribune since they had predicted a defeat for the field marshal with a stronger degree of certainty than other publications. The New York Times, having placed the most confidence in a Marx victory, expressed unmitigated dismay at the results. Its editorial, "Germany Takes the Plunge" indicted the so-called German character. Instead of following the 'sound arguments' against electing Hindenburg -- he was 'too old to discharge the duties of his office with vigor' and 'too much under suspicion of royalist leanings' -- the Times alleged that the German people acted with 'impulsive and unreasoning enthusiasm' in their choice.<sup>220</sup> Whereas the Times had praised the character of the German people during republican triumphs such as the failed Beer Hall Putsch and the 1924 Reichstag elections, the paper now reverted to its stance taken in response to Ludendorff's

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<sup>218</sup>CDT 18 April 1925, "The New Hindenburg Line", NYT editorial, 6 April 1925.

<sup>219</sup>NYT Ibid.

<sup>220</sup>"Germany Takes the Plunge", NYT editorial, 27 April 1925.

acquittal; namely, the German mentality was 'notoriously swayed easily by sentiment'.<sup>221</sup>

The motives behind the unusually strident "Germany Takes the Plunge" may have been more self-serving than sincere, for if Rollo Ogden and the rest of his editorial board were convinced that a vote for Hindenburg reflected a collective "German mentality", prone to impulsive and irrational tendencies, why then did management believe that a Marx victory was virtually assured? Lacking pertinent internal memoranda, the answer is open to speculation. Nonetheless, blaming the German people seems to have provided a convenient rationale for the paper's faulty prediction. Moreover, the New York Times offered a similar explanation for the German citizenry's electoral support of the Nazis in the 1930's. Finally, the paper uncharacteristically expressed pessimism concerning the future of Germany and Europe.

The fact cannot be concealed that Germany has chosen to run an enormous risk, that she invites unsettlement at home and abroad and that the German people will have to begin over again their struggle to convince the world that they believe in the new order and that they can be trusted in their promises and purposes.<sup>222</sup>

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On election eve the Chicago Daily Tribune had also forecast a Marx victory, partly because it believed that 'the German voters do not want a military figure in the president's chair'.<sup>223</sup> McCormick may have relied upon the optimistic analysis of John Clayton, his chief Berlin correspondent, instead of Sigrid

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<sup>221</sup>Ibid.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid.

<sup>223</sup>"The World Watches Germany", CDT editorial, 25 April 1925.



Schultz, Clayton's deputy. Schultz had argued that 'the nationalists would have a better chance of electing their man in the second election than either the Socialists or the Socialists and center parties combined'.<sup>224</sup> To be noted is that McCormick reassigned Clayton to the Tribune's Rome bureau before the year ended. Although McCormick emphasized to Clayton the importance of Italy as a news center, his decision should be considered a demotion, especially in light of Clayton's attempts to transfer Schultz to the same post.<sup>225</sup> The evidence suggests that McCormick may have grown dissatisfied with Clayton's performance despite his good work in 1923.<sup>226</sup> Clayton's mistaken forecast regarding the 1925 presidential election may have been the final straw.

What is clear is that other overseas journalists felt that Clayton had delegated many of his administrative responsibilities to Schultz. Charles S. Smith, a London-based Associated Press correspondent, described Schultz's promotion to Berlin bureau chief as a 'change in title alone' for she had been 'the man behind the guns for a long, long time'.<sup>227</sup> Schultz's ability to forecast events accurately may be part of the reason why she held her position in Berlin for sixteen years, longer than most of her contemporaries.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup>Schultz to McCormick, 13 March 1925, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>225</sup>McCormick to Clayton, 25 November 1925, Ibid.

<sup>226</sup>McCormick to Clayton, 16 June 1923, Ibid.

<sup>227</sup>Smith to Schultz, 23 Feb. 1926, Ibid.

<sup>228</sup>As an important aside, the evidence indicates that McCormick's sexist views -- he once wrote Schultz, 'you are a woman doing a man's job' but 'I will treat you as a woman' -- did not diminish his high regard for her and her views, particularly those on a possible restoration of the Hohenzollern monarchy. Except for the instance cited above, the available correspondence between the two does not show any explicit or implicit references to gender. See McCormick to Schultz, 31 January

Unlike the New York Times, which throughout the campaign consistently maintained that a Hindenburg government would have deleterious effects upon Germany and the world, the Chicago Daily Tribune clearly modified its view following the field marshal's victory on 25 April 1925.

**Editorial, 10 April:** To thrust Hindenburg forward for the presidency of the German Republic is to wave a red flag in the face of every enemy of Germany in Europe, reinvigorate the parties and leaders most hostile to her in every country, give new life to the accusations of German belligerency and bad faith and rouse distrust in well disposed America.<sup>229</sup>

**Editorial, 27 April:** It remains to be seen what the Nationalists will do when they are no longer making election speeches, but are faced with responsibility for their acts... It would be a mistake to presume that Hindenburg's election will prove catastrophic either for Europe or for us... Those who think that Hindenburg's election will be followed inevitably by a general European conflict are unduly alarmed...<sup>230</sup>

What can be gleaned from these changes in McCormick's editorial positions? As in the case of the New York Times, the issue is open for speculation. However, a Tribune editorial published one day before Hindenburg's victory entitled "America and the German Election" may have provided an explanation when it stated that 'America and Americans have no legitimate interest in Germany's internal affairs... *if the consequences of this election were confined to Germany we could view it with indifference*'.<sup>231</sup> Moreover, in McCormick's post-election analysis, he said that Germany might face wholesale domestic

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1928, Ibid.

<sup>229</sup>"Hindenburg's Nomination", CDT editorial, 10 April 1925.

<sup>230</sup>"The German Election", Ibid. 27 April 1925.

<sup>231</sup>"America and the German Election" CDT editorial, 24 April 1925.

changes (i.e. a monarchic restoration) *but without international complications*. This outlook seems too conveniently predicated on his desire to keep America disengaged from events in Europe. By his initial effort to sensationalize the Hindenburg story, McCormick may have undercut his own isolationist aims regarding America's role in Europe. Thus, McCormick's unusually mild reaction to Hindenburg's victory may have had less to do with his political analysis of Germany and more with his foreign policy goals for the United States.

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Compared to the Chicago Daily Tribune and the New York Times, the Chicago Daily News gave the most balanced appraisal of Hindenburg's electoral chances. As in the case of the Tribune, the Chicago Daily News Home Office appeared to rely upon the analysis of its chief Berlin bureau correspondent for its editorial views, a practice which would become rare by the end of the decade.<sup>232</sup> However, unlike John Clayton, Edgar Mowrer acknowledged the breadth of Hindenburg's appeal. Said Mowrer, 'Hindenburg would attract a large number of Germans who were proud of his patriotism and war record' and therefore to 'look for a close election'.<sup>233</sup> Nor was the field marshal's appeal limited to veterans and militarists. 'Germany's greatest leader at her greatest time seems to attract the favor of womankind,

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<sup>232</sup>"Tomorrow's Election in Germany", CDN editorial, 26 April 1925.

Dennis once wrote to Carroll Binder, an editorial writer, 'It is my *infrequently* [my italics] expressed desire that our editorial writers keep in close touch with our own special news dispatches, and whenever it is possible, refer specifically to them.' Dennis to Binder, 29 September 1930, Binder Papers, Newberry Library. As I will show in Chapter 4, Dennis failed to "practice what he preached".

<sup>233</sup>CDN 9 April 1925, P.2.

from little girls to old ladies' because 'German politics is largely emotional'.<sup>234</sup> Based on this reasoning, Mowrer could only 'venture to guess that Marx [would] win by a small plurality'.<sup>235</sup> Charles Dennis and the Home Office concurred with Mowrer's assessment of the race through election eve, agreeing that the issue was whether the people of Germany 'wanted the monarchy restored or desired to continue living under a republic'.<sup>236</sup> After Hindenburg's victory, however, the long-standing ideological rift between Dennis and Mowrer surfaced once again.

The Home Office and the Berlin bureau held opposing views regarding the impact of Hindenburg's victory. Lawson and Dennis were extremely optimistic about the future of the Weimar Republic, stating that international complications would not result from the field marshal's election. It would not even 'defeat or unduly delay the proposed European security compact (Locarno) or the entry of Germany in the League of Nations'. Thus, the Chicago Daily News editorials went further than McCormick's Tribune. Moreover, a monarchical restoration was unlikely because 'the Reichstag and the people of Germany are aware of sinister [right-wing] intentions and will be able to prevent retrogressive steps'.<sup>237</sup> Privately, Dennis 'could not believe that serious minded Germans with their great industrial masses would permit themselves to return with any degree of

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<sup>234</sup>Ibid. It is interesting to note that many journalists of the interwar era equated irrational thought processes with female voting patterns.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid. 25 April 1925.

<sup>236</sup>"Tomorrow's Election in Germany", CDN editorial, 26 April 1925.

<sup>237</sup>Ibid.

permanence to monarchy and militarism'.<sup>238</sup> The paper concluded that 'nothing is to be gained by making gloomy prophecies regarding the official actions of Field Marshal von Hindenburg'.<sup>239</sup>

Edgar Mowrer's position, however, reeked with 'gloomy prophecies'. His dispatches immediately following the election seemed to indicate that he initially met management half-way, stating that the future for Germany was 'uncertain'.<sup>240</sup> Privately though, Mowrer assessed Hindenburg's election as 'a terrible mistake such as only the Germans were capable of'.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, the archival evidence is convincing of his belief that the Hindenburg presidency spelled impending doom for the Weimar Republic -- a view that he maintained through 1927 and perhaps longer.<sup>242</sup>

As was argued in the previous chapter, the Chicago Daily News mounted a small-scale public relations campaign in 1924 in order to promote the Weimar Republic. The campaign's immediate goals centered on securing public support for the Dawes Plan and discrediting Robert LaFollette, an effort that continued into the second half of the 1920's. As in 1924, the Home Office persistently attempted to bring its Berlin chief "into line". Mowrer, however, exhibited fierce individualism in his dealings

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<sup>238</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 25 November 1925, CDN Papers, Ibid.

<sup>239</sup>Ibid.

<sup>240</sup>CDN, 26 April 1925, P.1. Another possibility is that Mowrer's dispatch may have been "softened" by Home Office editors.

<sup>241</sup>E. Mowrer to Dennis, 27 April 1925, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>242</sup>See for example, Dennis to O'Flaherty, 13 April 1925, Dennis to E. Mowrer, 20 November 1925 and 8 Sept. 1926, Dennis to P. Mowrer, 31 August 1926, Ibid.

with management, often making comments that most of his contemporaries would consider disrespectful. Edgar Mowrer's job, however, never appeared to be in jeopardy, perhaps due to the influence of his brother, Paul Scott Mowrer, the paper's European service head. Finally, Edgar Mowrer's journalistic talents were recognized by other publications. He frequently contributed free-lance pieces to magazines and later wrote his first book, aptly entitled, *Germany Turns the Clock Back* (New York 1932). Although these works lay outside the strict editorial scrutiny of the Home Office, they met with more than a passing glance from Dennis. His reaction to one article typified his general attitude towards Edgar Mowrer:

I note a tendency on Edgar's part to deal cynically with German subjects. He recently wrote an article for The Nation, of New York, that has caused us to receive protests from friends of Germany and in his correspondence for us we find indications that he is not exactly constructive in what he writes. I feel that there is something wrong with his psychology in Berlin and his correspondence suffers in consequence.<sup>243</sup>

The Dennis/Edgar Mowrer clash intensified at the end of 1924 when Chicago Daily News management renewed a long-standing effort to shift the emphasis of overseas reporting from political stories ("hard news") to exclusive feature stories ("soft news").<sup>244</sup> The Home Office's initial bid to reorient news policy was sidetracked by the Great War and its peculiar aftermath. Moreover, its efforts met with determined resistance from Edward Price Bell, the paper's senior foreign correspondent, and Paul Scott Mowrer, the paper's European

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<sup>243</sup>Dennis to O'Flaherty, 13 April 1925, CDN Papers, Ibid.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid., 18 November 1924. For a comprehensive discussion of Home Office/Foreign Service relations, see Heald, *Vistas*, Chapter 5.

service head, both of whom specialized in political and international affairs. Paul Mowrer considered 'erroneous', 'management's idea that people who are not interested in foreign affairs can be so interested by our writing "entertainment" instead of serious information and opinion'.<sup>245</sup>

Furthermore, Mowrer and Bell interpreted the Home Office's directive as part of a coordinated effort to undermine the de facto autonomy of the paper's foreign news service. Their fears were heightened by management's demand that overseas reporters keep a meticulous accounting of company expenses incurred in their news gathering.<sup>246</sup> Bell took the matter quite personally and even threatened to resign. In a scathing letter to Lawson he stated that the paper's policy amounted to nothing more than 'fruitless scrutineering [sic]' which 'depresses ambition, stifles initiative and puts a premium on indolence'.<sup>247</sup> Indeed, Paul Mowrer relinquished his post in disgust (though he stayed on with the paper) on 31 May 1924. His departure, along with Lawson's unexpected death fifteen months later, led to a renewed effort by Charles Dennis and the Home Office to exercise even tighter control over its foreign news service.<sup>248</sup>

Dennis filled the resulting power vacuum by appointing Hal O'Flaherty as the new director of the Chicago Daily News's

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<sup>245</sup>P. Mowrer to Bell, 15 April 1920, Bell papers, Ibid.

<sup>246</sup>There are many references in the archives concerning this issue. See for instance, Bell to his wife, 12 May 1924, Ibid. and Dennis to P. Mowrer, 12 March, 11 April, 19 May 1924, CDN papers, Ibid.

<sup>247</sup>Bell to Lawson, 11 May 1924, Bell Papers, Ibid. See also Bell to his wife, 12 May 1924, Ibid.

<sup>248</sup>P. Mowrer to Lawson, 31 May 1924, Ibid. The bitterness of Mowrer's statement to Lawson leaves no ambiguity: 'Please do not believe that the humiliating and demoralizing incidents of the last few months are wholly responsible for this decision.' See also, P. Mowrer to all correspondents, 21 August 1924, CDN papers, Ibid.

European service. Although O'Flaherty was highly regarded by the staffs on both sides of the Atlantic,<sup>249</sup> he sided with management on the "hard news"/"soft news" issue. He believed that the implementation of the Dawes plan in the Autumn of 1924 'closed the book' on the Great War and signalled the opening of a 'new epoch in news gathering'.<sup>250</sup> 'Discursive political stories in which the public on both sides of the Atlantic have lost interest' should be avoided, while 'news stories that are exclusive and of real interest' should be emphasized.<sup>251</sup> Although O'Flaherty acknowledged that 'we might find some of our men unwilling to change their style or adopt [sic] themselves to these new conditions', he was confident that 'our men in Europe will automatically cut out the political dispatches and turn to more readable news'.<sup>252</sup>

The Chicago Daily News's "soft news" initiative was fuelled by business considerations. Management had hoped to expand its readership in the face of stiff competition from the more "scoop" oriented Chicago Daily Tribune and Hearst's Chicago American.<sup>253</sup> Lawson had felt that 'overseas political stories no longer appealed to the interest of Chicago readers as did news stories of a more striking nature'.<sup>254</sup> He had refused to publish

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<sup>249</sup>Nicholas Shuman to the author, 10 June 1995. Shuman claimed that 'it was impossible to have a quarrel with O'Flaherty'.

<sup>250</sup>O'Flaherty to Dennis, 22 December 1924, CDN Papers, Ibid.

<sup>251</sup>Ibid.

<sup>252</sup>Ibid.

<sup>253</sup>Management's "soft news" strategy extended into the domestic sphere as evidenced by Lawson's expansion of the paper's sports coverage. See Lawson to Dennis, 21 May 1925, Lawson Papers Ibid.

<sup>254</sup>Dennis to O'Flaherty, 18 November 1924, Ibid.



Clemenceau's memoirs in March 1925 because 'the American reading public taken as a whole is not now interested in Clemenceau'.<sup>255</sup>

Management's initiative made its strongest impact on foreign correspondents' mail articles. Unlike a cable dispatch, which contained breaking news and was usually politically-oriented, a mail article afforded the reporter an opportunity to intensely analyze his country's overall state of affairs. When Paul Mowrer headed the European news service, management felt that a number of mail articles were nothing more than political elaborations heaped upon previously sent politically-oriented cable dispatches. After Mowrer's resignation in June 1924, the Home Office brought direct pressure upon each bureau chief to de-emphasize the political aspect of mail articles and to focus more on "human interest" features. Those correspondents who resisted the new approach met with caustic ripostes from Chicago. Dennis's scolding of Constantine Brown, who served in the Constantinople and Paris bureaux, provides one such example:

You have undoubtedly paid too much attention to politics and too little attention to the human element in news... The earnest and persistent work of a correspondent who seeks always for important news and is satisfied with nothing less is bound to be more profitable to the newspaper than the work of a correspondent who is satisfied with surface material and his *own philosophical reflections upon the political situation in his country* [my italics].<sup>256</sup>

Management's policy indicated that the paper had expanded its definition of "newsworthy information" to include virtually any story that in their view would pique the reader's interest. This market-driven philosophy of journalism changed the way the

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<sup>255</sup>Lawson to Pickering, 12 March 1925, Lawson Papers, Ibid.

<sup>256</sup>Dennis to Brown, 6 October 1925, CDN Papers, Ibid.

Chicago Daily News's foreign service reported events in Europe. Correspondents were directed to venture outside their country's respective capitals so as to provide the reader with a tourist's perspective. Although the subject matter of "soft news" varied from nation to nation, the Home Office encouraged its correspondents to cover the doings of royalty, a topic which fascinates Americans to this day.<sup>257</sup> Management's "soft news" policy had far-reaching repercussions for the paper's German coverage. 'Frightful and gruesome criminal trials' were now placed on an equal footing with 'important political developments'.<sup>258</sup> In fact, Dennis's instruction to Edgar Mowrer was to 'steer clear of politics, which is, after all, a surface matter and not very interesting except during times of crisis'.<sup>259</sup> This directive may be why even the pessimistic Mowrer provided extensive commentary on the disturbing trends that led to the increase in Nazi popularity in his free-lance pieces *but not* in the pages of the Chicago Daily News.<sup>260</sup>

The "soft news" strategy of the Home Office was considered less likely to alienate diverse segments of the paper's readership. Lawson and Dennis were acutely sensitive to the views of Chicago area residents. Dennis's notion that 'a good editorial should be a fairly reliable reflection of public opinion and public sentiment *in the community where the newspaper is published* [my italics]' illustrates management's

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<sup>257</sup>Ibid.

<sup>258</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 11 December 1924, Ibid.

<sup>259</sup>Ibid.

<sup>260</sup>As I will discuss in upcoming paragraphs, meticulous editing from the Home Office may also account for this discrepancy. See Dennis to P. Mowrer, 31 August 1926, Ibid.

awareness of this issue.<sup>261</sup> Understandably, the international views of many Chicago residents were shaped by their respective cultural heritages. The "Windy City" had large and growing Irish, Polish, Italian and German-American communities (a fact of particular importance for this study). The changing demographic composition of the Chicago market was not lost on Daily News management.

Lawson and Dennis feared possible reader backlash against overseas articles which might portray "the old country" in a negative light. With this mind-set the Home Office instructed its foreign correspondents 'to give every nation in Europe a fair show because every nation in Europe has among our readers thousands of representatives who are quick to demand for it a fair show'.<sup>262</sup> Moreover, the evidence suggests that management especially feared backlash from Chicago's German-American community. Spurred by the Revolution of 1848, Bismarck's Kulturkampf and the Depression of 1873, most of the German emigration to the United States occurred between 1850 and 1885. By the 1920's, many Germans (especially those who were second and third-generation Americans) had achieved middle class status. The demise of the German-language press following its suppression during the Great War removed the last remaining obstacle to the emergence of a large English-speaking literate German-American readership.<sup>263</sup>

The paper's fear of offending these new customers was evidenced by management's lukewarm response to an attempt by the

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<sup>261</sup>Dennis to Stafford, 18 May 1925, Ibid.

<sup>262</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 20 November 1925, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>263</sup>See Wittke, C., *The German-Language Press in America* (NY 1957).

French to mount their own press campaign through a syndicated service complete with articles penned by Raymond Poincaré. Dennis suggested editing the former French leader's pieces while Lawson took an even sterner view: 'We will use this service only insofar as it may be free from the criticism that it is racially hostile and bitter toward Germany. Please tell Mr. Chapell (the foreign editor) to kill the [Poincaré] cables whenever he finds them objectionable.'<sup>264</sup> After only two months of operation, the paper discontinued the service.<sup>265</sup> Lawson also took a special interest in his paper's presentation of prominent German figures. In a 1922 story, for instance, the publisher questioned whether the paper's characterization of Wilhelm II as 'an imperial scapegoat' would be 'misunderstood by the average German-American reader to imply ridicule' towards the ex-Kaiser.<sup>266</sup>

Edgar Mowrer, however, remained unfazed by management's attempts to steer him towards presenting positive portrayals of Germany. Despite the stability after Hindenburg's election, Mowrer maintained that 'some steps toward the restitution of the monarchy have been made' and that there is a chance that the reactionary spirit in Germany will again retain the upper hand'.<sup>267</sup> Dennis countered by stating that 'the German republic has not fallen but, on the contrary, continues to grow stronger... If I am wrong in this matter, please give me

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<sup>264</sup>See Lawson to Dennis, 20 January and 31 March 1925, Lawson Papers, Newberry Library as well as Dennis to Lawson 21 January 1925, Ibid.

<sup>265</sup>Lawson to Pickering, 12 March 1925, Ibid.

<sup>266</sup>Lawson to Dennis, 22 September 1922, CDN papers, Ibid.

<sup>267</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 20 November 1925 and 9 August 1926, Ibid.

specific proof of it'.<sup>268</sup> Dennis felt that their antithetical viewpoints concerning Germany's future 'constituted the chief point of difference' between management and its Berlin bureau chief and he was 'anxious to arrive at a clear understanding' with Mowrer. Dennis's 'efforts to prevent [Mowrer's] prophesies from appearing' in the pages of the Chicago Daily News (e.g. editing) can be seen as one tactic employed to bring about this 'understanding'; namely, Mowrer's capitulation to the Home Office's more optimistic view of Germany.<sup>269</sup>

Dennis's wish was never realized as Edgar Mowrer remained obstinate despite increasing Home Office pressure.<sup>270</sup> Indeed, Mowrer fired some transatlantic shots of his own. On one occasion he directly accused Dennis of letting 'partisan feelings' undermine the paper's objectivity<sup>271</sup>: 'It seems that the German spirit against which we fought in the war has now become so sacred that it may be but criticized even to the benefit of the new and formally triumphant subsequent [sic] German spirit'.<sup>272</sup> On another, he sent a series of dispatches on 'the reawakening of German nationalism' and the 'recrudescence of German imperialism' while in Dennis's words, 'the world was

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<sup>268</sup>Ibid.

<sup>269</sup>Ibid.

<sup>270</sup>It is important to note that Mowrer did not always maintain a consistently pessimistic position regarding Weimar's prospects for survival, although he was generally skeptical. For example, in an article written for Harper's Weekly in December 1928, he stated that despite Germany's problems, it was 'a foregone conclusion that the German Republic will stand'. Mowrer, E. "Germany After Ten Years" (Harper's Weekly, 158, December 1928), as cited in Heald, *Vistas*, P.92.

<sup>271</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 9 Sept. 1926, CDN Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>272</sup>Dennis to P. Mowrer, 31 August 1926, Ibid. Dennis responded to Edgar Mowrer's poorly phrased indictment, 'I have no conception of what Edgar means'. Ibid.

rejoicing over the success of the Locarno conference'.<sup>273</sup> When the Home Office refused to publish Mowrer's pieces on the grounds that they were 'untimely', the Berlin correspondent retorted that 'suppressing the unpleasant does not seem to me to be in entire accord with our best tradition'.<sup>274</sup> Nor were Mowrer's reactions isolated outbursts. Three years of trans-Atlantic skirmishing led Dennis to conclude that the Berlin bureau chief had 'lost confidence in the editorial judgment of the editorial management of the Daily News'.<sup>275</sup>

The evidence also suggests that the Home Office pressed Mowrer to send more "soft" pieces as one way of reducing the number of negative presentations emanating from Berlin. But even here, Dennis desired pieces that reinforced positive images of Germany. He instructed Mowrer to send '*sympathetic* descriptive material about the economic and social conditions in the Weimar Republic' in conjunction with '*sympathetic* descriptions of those elements which stand for republicanism and against Kaiserism and militarism [my italics]'. In some instances, the Home Office edited or eliminated sections of Mowrer's pieces which in its view 'portrayed the German people as laboratory specimens rather than as human beings' or when the '[general] tone of his articles was unsympathetic to the difficulties faced by the German people'. Finally, management urged Paul Mowrer to exert influence on his younger brother to

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<sup>273</sup>Dennis to E. Mowrer, 20 November 1925, Ibid.

<sup>274</sup>Ibid.

<sup>275</sup>Dennis to P. Mowrer, 31 August 1926, Ibid.

tone down the pessimistic spirit of his dispatches and mail articles.<sup>276</sup>

As the summer of 1926 drew to a close, it appeared that Chicago Daily News management and Edgar Mowrer had reached an uneasy *modus vivendi*. The Home Office edited those pieces that 'failed to do justice to republican sentiment in Germany'.<sup>277</sup> In exchange, Mowrer retained his post and was grudgingly allowed to contribute dissenting free lance pieces to publications such The Nation and Harper's Weekly. The most significant aspect about this unusual state of affairs, however, is that management departed from its normal practice of basing editorial policy on the opinions of its bureau correspondents. The press's dubious but widely accepted pronouncement of Germany's economic recovery after Hindenburg's victory served only to further discredit Mowrer and legitimize management's overseas strategy. 'I cannot see how we could be justified in prophecising [sic] blue ruin for German Democracy [sic] while German Democracy continues to rule Germany', wrote Dennis in 1926.<sup>278</sup> His view would not be seriously challenged until 14 September 1930, the day Hitler's Nazis became the second largest political party in Germany.

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American press reaction to the German presidential election of 1925 illustrates how some major journalists dealt with incidents that they neither expected nor desired. The New York

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<sup>276</sup>See Dennis to O'Flaherty, 13 April 1925 and Dennis to E. Mowrer 8 September 1926, Ibid.

<sup>277</sup>Ibid.

<sup>278</sup>Ibid.

Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News were placed in a difficult defensive position as a result of Hindenburg's victory. Each newspaper's method of rationalizing the outcome seems rooted more in the dynamics of the publication's particular political, journalistic and corporate philosophy rather than in an objective analysis of Germany's state of affairs. The Times's condemnation of the German people appears to have been employed as a self-serving tactic to reestablish the paper's credibility. The Tribune's about-face seemed designed to further its publisher's isolationist viewpoint. And the documented clashes between the Chicago Daily News Home Office and its European service provides glaring evidence that, for some journalists, the newspaper business was first and foremost, a business.

After Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg's election in April 1925, the Weimar Republic enjoyed its highest level of political and economic stability, yet paradoxically witnessed the continued erosion of German democracy. This theme of continuity and change could also be applied to the state of the organizational structures of the New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune and Chicago Daily News during the same period. Soon after the election, the Times and the Tribune appointed new Berlin bureau chiefs: Lincoln Eyre replaced T.R. Ybarra (transferred to the paper's London bureau) while Sigrid Schultz replaced John Clayton (grudgingly transferred to the Tribune's Rome bureau). The Chicago Daily News saw the death of its publisher, Victor Lawson, and because he left no heirs, the paper he founded was put up for sale. Each of these developments, however, were "in-house" moves, providing a large



measure of continuity. Eyre had served as a reporter for the Times during the Great War; Sigrid Schultz had been Clayton's deputy in Berlin; and Walter Strong, the new publisher of the Daily News, had served as the paper's business manager under the Lawson regime. The impact of these personnel changes upon each newspaper's coverage of the Nazi victory in the Reichstag elections of September 1930 will be examined in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### **The Roof Caves In: Germany, 1929-30**

The prosperity and tranquillity which characterized Germany in the mid-twenties came to an abrupt end in 1929 with the Wall Street stock market crash and the onset of a world-wide depression. Indeed, 1929 would prove to be a watershed year in the history of the Weimar Republic -- thereafter, successive governments would be plagued by economic and political turmoil on a scale even greater than the crises of 1919 and 1923. Moreover, the inability of Germany's leaders to maintain public confidence, coupled with the opposition parties' efforts to capitalize upon the nation's predicament for self-serving and short-sighted political gains, would lay the groundwork for the Nazi party's electoral breakthrough in the September 1930 Reichstag elections.

The roots of this parliamentary disaster can be traced to the political fallout from the previous Reichstag election held in May 1928. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the percentage of votes garnered by an eclectic collection of small special interest parties increased dramatically at the expense of the moderate German Democratic party (DDP) and the German People's party (DVP). More alarmingly, they grew at the expense of the traditional party of the conservative Right, the German Nationalist People's party (DNVP), whose electoral percentage dropped to 14% from a previous high of 20.5% achieved four years earlier. Usually intra-party strife, especially at the leadership levels, follows election day defeats and the DNVP proved to be no exception. Its chairman, Count Kuno von Westarp, who had steered the party in a moderate direction, was

discredited by the 1928 results and replaced by the uncompromising Alfred Hugenberg, a newspaper mogul who had led the radical anti-Republican wing of the party.

Hugenberg sought to reverse the ill fortunes of his party by exploiting Germany's bitterness towards the Versailles settlement. Many Germans opposed the Young Plan (a reparations initiative introduced in 1929 which would have scaled down the payments originally designated by the Dawes Plan), feeling that they should not be held liable for the cost of the Great War since their nation was not responsible for its outbreak. In the spring of 1929, Hugenberg hoped to capitalize on this sentiment by introducing the "Freedom Law", a referendum which even contained a provision that would have allowed for the prosecution of government supporters of the Young Plan (including the Reich President) on the charge of high treason. This provision may explain why the "Freedom Law" was soundly defeated on 22 December 1929.

That Hugenberg's campaign failed would have been of little consequence had he not enlisted the support of Adolf Hitler's Nazis. Although the National Socialists surprised many observers by their vote totals in a series of regional elections in 1929, the chief obstacle they faced was their inability to establish national credibility -- a problem most fringe parties fail to overcome. By marching alongside the traditional party of the German Right, the Nazis acquired an air of respectability that neither a million election leaflets nor hundreds of impassioned Hitler speeches could engender. In stark contrast, Hugenberg's strategy of employing Hitler as a junior partner in the campaign against the Young Plan in the fall of 1929

completely backfired. Not only did the Conservatives fare even worse in the 1930 Reichstag elections than they had in 1928; many of their former supporters actually voted Nazi. Hugenberg's attempt to manipulate the Nazis for his own political gain would later be emulated by other mainstream German political leaders with similar results for the Weimar Republic.

What made matters even worse for supporters of German democracy was that Hugenberg's deputizing of Hitler coincided with the nation's economic collapse following the Wall Street crash in late October 1929. As the influx of capital from the United States came to an abrupt halt, Germany's latent economic woes became acute. Between June 1928 and May 1930 industrial production dropped 31% while unemployment levels reached three million, a 200% increase, during roughly the same period. As a result, Germany's tax base shrank and her national debt mushroomed.<sup>279</sup>

These seemingly intractable problems forced the resignation of Chancellor Hermann Müller's cabinet in March 1930, the last Weimar ministry to be based on a parliamentary majority. Müller was replaced by Heinrich Brüning, a leader of the Catholic Centre party (Zentrum), who possessed strong monarchist leanings. Because he lacked a Reichstag mandate for his policies, Brüning was forced to rely upon the good will of President Hindenburg by implementing policies via Article 48 of the Weimar constitution -- rule by emergency decree. In the summer of 1930, when the Reichstag attempted to undermine Brüning's powers by amending Article 48, the Chancellor

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<sup>279</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, pp.130-31.

dissolved the body and called for new elections to take place the following autumn.<sup>280</sup>

In retrospect, Brüning would have been better off provoking a constitutional crisis rather than taking a gamble with only a faint hope of obtaining parliamentary support for his policies. Instead, the election of 14 September 1930 marked the first time in the short history of Weimar Germany that the anti-Republicans' tally clearly outnumbered that of their pro-Republican rivals. The Nazis were the chief beneficiary of this development, garnering 18.7% of the electoral vote, making them Germany's second largest political party. The future of Hitler's movement looked bright. The country's economic decline continued through 1931 with many Germans believing that there was no end in sight to the Great Depression. Moreover, the strong showing of the Communists (KPD) played into the Nazis' hands since Goebbels' propaganda efforts were designed to establish the party as the nation's bulwark against Marxism. By the end of 1930 many began to question whether the Weimar Republic could survive.

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Most segments of the American press exhibited buoyant optimism regarding the political, economic and social conditions in Germany throughout 1928 and 1929. Neither the Wall Street crash nor the resignation of the Müller cabinet the following March seriously undermined the confidence of U.S. newspapermen in the stability of the Weimar Republic, although many of their

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<sup>280</sup>Ibid.

European counterparts were far more pessimistic.<sup>281</sup> However, by the close of 1930 many American journalists questioned whether the Weimar Republic would give way to some form of dictatorship.<sup>282</sup>

To some degree the views of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune reflected this general consensus. A closer examination also reveals a clear difference of perception, especially in the cases of the Times and the News, between each newspaper's field correspondent and his respective home office, the latter being far more optimistic about Germany's future than the former, even after the Nazi electoral victory in September 1930. It appears that the fortitude the Weimar Republic exhibited in the face of the crises of 1923 and 1924, along with the unexpected political and economic stabilization following Hindenburg's election in 1925, convinced the managements of each paper that Germany's position was invulnerable. It seems that the home offices of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune interpreted the developments of 1928-30 with this predisposition. More important, however, the internal memoranda of each newspaper illustrate how organizational factors such as centralized and decentralized decision-making structures shaped the presentation of news about Germany during this period.

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<sup>281</sup>For a sample of European press opinion see Literary Digest 16 May 1925, 26 March and 11 June 1927, 16 June 1928, 1, 22 June, 2, 23, 30 November 1929, 22 March, 2 August and 11, 25 October 1930.

<sup>282</sup>See Schoenthal, "American Attitudes", pp. 257-63.

Germany had enjoyed favorable coverage among most American newspapers throughout the latter years of the 1920's.<sup>283</sup> A salient feature of this treatment was the new portrayal of the Republic's president, Paul von Hindenburg. Prior to 1926, two images of Hindenburg, both negative, prevailed. Some journalists described the victor of Tannenberg as an omnipotent political opportunist who wished to exploit his war-hero status in order to overthrow the Weimar Republic, while others saw him as a 'lifeless automaton' behind whom lay the anti-Republican machinations of his reactionary supporters.

Both assessments, however, dissipated largely because the expectation of "doom and gloom" for German democracy had not come to fruition. No longer a "political puppet", Hindenburg was now depicted as a 'block of granite': 'a man of ruggedness' who 'has turned his mind's eye to the oath to the Republic to which he swore and has stood firm'.<sup>284</sup> Hindenburg had also become a "kinder and gentler" leader -- a 'man of character, genuiness [sic] and solidity which made men instinctively trust him'.<sup>285</sup> Some newspapers ordained him 'the Old Man of the Wilhelmstrasse' who 'walks with his dog at early morn, doubtless musing on past campaigns and on the peace for which he would willingly barter the cares of official life'.<sup>286</sup> The threat of monarchism was now derided as 'a fine spun theory'.<sup>287</sup> Instead, many journalists predicted that 'there will be no deviation from the narrow path

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<sup>283</sup>For a comprehensive discussion of this topic, see *Ibid.*, Chapter 9.

<sup>284</sup>Literary Digest 30 July 1927.

<sup>285</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup>*Ibid.* 11 February 1928.

which the old warrior has set himself to tread'.<sup>288</sup> This new image would help account for the optimistic belief of some segments of the American press that Hindenburg would be able to extricate the Weimar Republic from the depths of the Great Depression.

The mainstream U.S. press's confidence in the German republic extended to the economic and social spheres as well. 'Not in many decades have the German people been as happy as they are today' wrote the Literary Digest in September 1927.<sup>289</sup> 'They are not only able to live and to dress better, but they dress more brightly and move about as if they were enjoying freedom'.<sup>290</sup> This air of contentment appeared to be partially rooted in the performance of the German economy. Most press dispatches proclaimed that the nation's economy 'is prepared for steady progress' and that 'there are no basic grounds for regarding a descent from the height now scaled as having begun or as being inevitable'.<sup>291</sup> These factors led one correspondent to predict that 'time seems to be on the side of the Republican idea' in Germany.<sup>292</sup>

The confidence of the American press continued through the May 1928 Reichstag elections. Although a few newspapers such as the German-language New York Staats-Zeitung and the New York Völkszeitung expressed misgivings about the strong showing of the KPD and anti-republican small special interest parties, most

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<sup>288</sup>Ibid. 30 July 1927.

<sup>289</sup>Ibid. 10 September 1927.

<sup>290</sup>Ibid.

<sup>291</sup>Ibid. 14 January 1928.

<sup>292</sup>Ibid.



editorial observers described the election as a 'sweeping victory for the moderate political parties of the Reich and their program of peace' and 'a "kick on the shins" for Germany's sabre-rattling monarchists'.<sup>293</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal reflected the views of many American journalists that 'brighter days' lay ahead for Germany.

Rapprochement with France has gone forward, Germany as a member of the League of Nations has retrieved its national self-respect, a beginning has been made to evacuate the Rhineland, international cartels have furthered industry, the commercial treaty with France has spurred trade, and above all, the Dawes plan has opened the way to a definite solution of the reparations problem. Germany, in spite of its unemployment, is in a healthy economic state, and this situation, it is generally conceded, will keep the nation in the middle of the road.<sup>294</sup>

The optimism of the U.S. press reached its apex in the summer of 1929 with the introduction of the Young Plan. In the opinion of many editorial writers, the Young Plan effectively ended the Great War by resolving the reparations dilemma. Drew Pearson of the Baltimore Sun believed that the initiative would 'renew confidence in Europe and increase European prosperity', which would in turn stimulate 'American loans and exports' while Paul Mowrer of the Chicago Daily News predicted that the Young Plan would 'successfully remove reparations as an obstacle in international relations'.<sup>295</sup> Most of the media's reservations centered on whether the plan would lead to a cancellation of Allied war debts. The New York Evening Post also noted that 'in both France and Germany there will be vigorous opposition to the accord on the part of the extreme nationalists'; however, the

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<sup>293</sup>Ibid. 2 June 1928.

<sup>294</sup>Ibid.

<sup>295</sup>Ibid. 15 June 1929.

paper also posited that 'there is every reason to believe that both official and public opinion in the two countries strongly favor acceptance of the proposed terms of settlement'.<sup>296</sup>

After the Wall Street crash the following October, the U.S. press's coverage of the Young Plan diminished sharply. Hugenberg's anti-Young campaign received minimal attention among most American newspapers with the notable exceptions of the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News. However, even their coverage paled in comparison to that of the European press.<sup>297</sup> Most U.S. newspapers focused more upon domestic economic and political news than foreign news. A cursory examination of an array of publications shows that Hugenberg's campaign was largely ignored. Instead, the organization of the London Conference, along with the Chinese civil war, dominated news from overseas at the end of 1929 and in the opening months of 1930.

The American press's peculiarly sanguine view of the ramifications of the Wall Street stock market crash also played an indirect role in bolstering the already high level of confidence it had in Germany's future. Mainstream and financial publications such as the New York World, New York Herald Tribune and the Chicago Journal of Commerce expressed the view that the Wall Street debacle would not trigger a long-term recession, let alone a worldwide depression. For instance, although the Guaranty Survey expected that 'industrial and commercial activity would be affected to some extent by the decline in stock prices, it also asserted that 'the experience of recent

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<sup>296</sup>Ibid.

<sup>297</sup>Ibid. 23 November 1929.

years justifies the hope that any recession resulting from the action of the stock market would not be violent or of long duration. The New York World echoed this belief stating that 'there is nothing in the general situation to suggest more than a slight retardation of activity', thus, 'whatever adverse effects may follow the recent events on Wall Street should be short-lived'.<sup>298</sup>

Some publications such as the Newark News, Boston Post, Washington Star, Commercial and Financial Chronicle and New Republic even characterized the crash as a salutary experience, forever purging the trading floor of irresponsible speculators. The New York World shared this view, describing the crash as the 'by-product of the country's return to the normal economic condition which is essential to healthy business and a firmly rooted prosperity'.<sup>299</sup> Just as most segments of the American press were slow to acknowledge the severity of the Wall Street crash, they were equally slow to recognize its impact on Germany. In fact, it was not until the summer of 1930, when the Weimar Republic's unemployment figure topped three million, that the American press's confidence in Germany began to waver.

Although many American journalists were late in recognizing the deteriorating conditions in Germany, they were not surprised by the strong showing of the Nazi party in the 1930 Reichstag elections. In the weeks preceding the balloting, Hitler's fascists were seen as 'the driving force' behind a predicted series of 'drastic changes in Germany'.<sup>300</sup> The Literary Digest

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<sup>298</sup>Ibid. 16 November 1929.

<sup>299</sup>Ibid.

<sup>300</sup>Ibid. 6 September 1930. See also 2 & 30 August 1930.

also predicted that the diversity of the Nazi movement's constituency, coupled with the inherent contradictions within Hitler's economic platform, would become a serious problem once the Party came into power.<sup>301</sup> However, many journalists acknowledged the uniqueness of the Nazi party -- 'a comparatively young political organization whose methods and means of political struggle are entirely different from the traditional customs of the older German political parties'.<sup>302</sup> After the Nazi victory, the Digest conceded that 'Hitler may be the exception to the rule that the best way to tame extremists is to give them office'.<sup>303</sup> In fact, much of the press had designated Hitler as the latest menace on the world political scene who 'might bring about a catastrophic upheaval not only in his own country but in all Europe'.<sup>304</sup>

In the opinion of some American journalists, the impressive Nazi electoral victory seemed to be based on the irrational and impulsive judgments of Germany's women and young people. 'Germany's inflamed youth' flocked to the Nazis because they desired 'vehemence and action, regardless of the practical',<sup>305</sup> whereas German women voted for 'handsome Adolf' because they 'admired his good looks, his tall and handsome figure with his lock of dark hair that waves coquettishly over his brow and his

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<sup>301</sup>Ibid. 6 September 1930.

<sup>302</sup>Ibid.

<sup>303</sup>Ibid. 25 October 1930.

<sup>304</sup>Ibid.

<sup>305</sup>Ibid. 1 November 1930. See also Unedited Proofs, ? November 1930, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

neatly carved mustache'.<sup>306</sup> It should be noted that the Nazis did enjoy early support from women and Germany's youth (middle-class students in particular). However, most studies show that although Hitler's party remained fluid, its electoral backbone was male and middle-aged.<sup>307</sup>

Despite their misgivings about the judgment of Germany's women and young people, most segments of the American press maintained that average Germans (i.e. males over the age of thirty) were intelligent, thoughtful and rational and therefore would refrain from voting Nazi. This assumption, that only irrational Germans would support the Party, reinforced the negative portrayals of Hitler found in most American newspapers, images further underscored by Hitler's poor relations with the international press. As mentioned in Chapter One, many journalists were displeased by the Nazi party's attempt to extract money in exchange for information. A Hitler interview, in particular, did not come cheap and when the fascist leader did grant a press conference, he disappointed reporters by 'answering one question and then speeling [sic] on and on'.<sup>308</sup> Journalists told the American people that 'Germany's would-be Mussolini' was an 'ex-house painter, a woman-hater, a victim of an inferiority complex' and 'not even German'.<sup>309</sup> Such mocking depictions probably contributed to the underestimation of the potency of Hitler's movement by many American observers. Thus,

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<sup>306</sup>Literary Digest, 18 October 1930.

<sup>307</sup>See Childers, *Nazi Voter* and Hamilton, I., *Who Voted for Hitler?* (Princeton 1982).

<sup>308</sup>Schultz interview with Alan Green, 12 February 1971, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>309</sup>Literary Digest, 11 and 18 October 1930.

despite the Nazi electoral victory, some journalists expressed fervent hope that the Weimar Republic would survive the fascist threat.

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An examination of the Chicago Daily News's coverage of events in Germany reveals a contrast in perceptions between those on the editorial page and those emanating from the Berlin bureau. Such an observation supports the view that the conflict between Charles Dennis and Edgar Mowrer continued between 1928 and 1930 even though their friction-filled correspondence came to an unexplained and abrupt end during the autumn of 1926. Moreover, a product analysis of the paper's coverage of the 1930 Reichstag elections suggests that Paul Scott Mowrer, who was dispatched to Berlin on 12 September to substitute for his ill brother, also may have been unable to convince Dennis and his editorial staff to reassess their rosy predictions for Germany's future. Finally, the disparity between the tone of the paper's editorial coverage and its news coverage seems to reflect the internal chaos within Chicago Daily News management as a consequence of Victor Lawson's death in 1925. However, the following analysis of the Chicago Daily News will be limited to a certain degree by a lack of archival documentation.

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'Although Germany votes tomorrow for an entirely new Reichstag, a visitor from Mars would have a hard time in discovering just what it was all about... the explanation is that there are almost no real issues', commented Edgar Mowrer on

the impending Reichstag elections of May 1928.<sup>310</sup> The normally pessimistic Mowrer was quite optimistic about the chances of the pro-republican parties. 'My own guess is that the democrats and socialists will win enough seats to allow a Great or Center coalition to exist within the Reich as it now exists within Prussia; hence, this might mean a real consolidation of the democratic republic', posited Mowrer on the eve of the balloting.<sup>311</sup> Not surprisingly, the Berlin correspondent took credit when his forecast came true. Interesting is the even more optimistic tenor of Mowrer's dispatch of 22 May as compared to that of the previous day.

The whole election was characterized by the reaction towards unfulfilled promises and disgust with the entire parliamentary system as it exists under proportional representation.<sup>312</sup> (21 May 1928)

The most democratic government Germany has known since 1920 is the final result of the German elections and pacifists everywhere can rejoice.<sup>313</sup> (22 May 1928)

It is plausible to conclude that the absence of negative commentary from Mowrer's dispatch of 22 May may have had its origins in Chicago rather than Berlin -- it seems too coincidental that his news story mirrored that of the paper's editorial, "Germany's General Election", on the same day. In it, Dennis stressed that the 'reassuring moral of the election was that the German nation has accepted the Republic and the policies of reconciliation and international amity'.<sup>314</sup> And, in

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<sup>310</sup>CDN 19 May 1928, P.2.

<sup>311</sup>Ibid.

<sup>312</sup>Ibid. 21 May 1928.

<sup>313</sup>Ibid. 22 May 1928.

<sup>314</sup>Ibid. "Germany's General Election".

direct contrast with Mowrer's assessment of the German electorate on 21 May, "Germany's General Election" characterized the country's domestic problems as being of 'secondary importance' and instead reflected the citizenry's 'determination to remain republican, free, normal and pacific'.<sup>315</sup>

Despite the scant attention devoted to the story, a more pronounced divergence of views is evident in the Chicago Daily News's coverage of Hugenberg's anti-Young plan campaign. Whereas Edgar Mowrer called the referendum's rejection a 'moral victory'<sup>316</sup> for the Nationalists and suggested that Hugenberg would remain a central figure in the reparations debate, the editorial page too called the result 'gratifying and reassuring', but one that 'should put an end to the mischievous and futile agitation which sensible and forward-looking Germans have deplored'.<sup>317</sup> And although management acknowledged that 'the Young Plan may have to be revised in the future', they were quick to note, in contrast to the Berlin bureau's view, that the plan would 'not be revised under pressure from hot-headed factional agitators'.<sup>318</sup>

The fall of the Müller cabinet and the appointment of Heinrich Brüning as the new German Chancellor in late March 1930 did not result in the publication of an editorial on the matter. However, a comparison of Edgar Mowrer's articles of 28 and 31 March provide strong evidence of editorial influence on the paper's presentation of the story -- unless of course Mowrer

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<sup>315</sup>Ibid.

<sup>316</sup>Ibid. 23 December 1929, P.2.

<sup>317</sup>Ibid. "Common Sense Wins In Germany", editorial, 24 December 1929.

<sup>318</sup>Ibid.



himself had had a complete change of view within the span of 72 hours -- a highly unlikely possibility.

Mowrer's story of 28 March took a balanced view of Brüning's accession to power. He provided a short biographical sketch of Brüning which praised his heroism as a soldier and his devotion to parliamentary democracy.<sup>319</sup> However, Mowrer wondered if Brüning would be able to achieve his goal of lightening 'the financial burdens on capital and business by reducing expenses for social purposes such as unemployment doles' because the new Chancellor's cabinet did not command the support of a Reichstag majority.<sup>320</sup> Hence, he concluded that the success of Brüning's initiatives 'remains to be seen'.<sup>321</sup> Three days later, however, Mowrer seemed to become far more optimistic. The published article of 31 March suggested that Mowrer now believed that because Brüning could count on Socialist support in foreign affairs and Nationalist support for internal measures, his ministry would bring forth a 'sane budgetary policy without further deficits, a reestablishment of the confidence of capital and a general stock market increase'.<sup>322</sup>

Although there is no direct evidence that Mowrer's copy was altered to promote the new German government, the contrast between his articles of 28 and 31 March is very suspicious. Moreover, that there is no evidence from the entire inter-war period suggesting that Mowrer had softened his bias against the

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<sup>319</sup>Ibid. 28 March 1930. Although as I have previously noted, Brüning possessed monarchist leanings.

<sup>320</sup>Ibid.

<sup>321</sup>Ibid.

<sup>322</sup>Ibid. 31 March 1930.

Germans serves to support the theory that the tone and tenor of his original dispatch may have been changed by the Home Office. Edward Price Bell reinforced management's earlier assessments of Mowrer by accusing him of 'indulging in certain flippancies which needlessly and deeply have hurt the feelings of our German readers' because of his 'egotistical, opinionated and sometimes extremely foolish nature'.<sup>323</sup> Thus, the Chicago Daily News's coverage of Brüning's appointment is probably another example of how management can shape the presentation of news to conform to its editorial biases.

The ever-worsening economic crisis, coupled with an increase in political street violence between the Nazi brown shirts (SA) and SPD and KPD paramilitary groups, drew the focus of the international press on the upcoming Reichstag elections scheduled for 14 September 1930. The Chicago Daily News was no exception. The paper's campaign coverage began over a week before the balloting, a preview equalled only by that of the Hindenburg/Marx election in 1925. Unlike its coverage of other German campaigns, however, the Chicago Daily News (like many of its media counterparts) devoted particular attention to Hitler's Nazis. And after the NSDAP's huge victory, the Chicago Daily News regularly covered Hitler in its reporting of German news.

Edgar Mowrer, like most observers, recognized the increasing popularity of the Nazis in the weeks preceding the election. He too predicted success for Hitler's group at the polls but

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<sup>323</sup>Bell to Knox, 31 August 1931 and Bell to Saito 15 March 1934, Bell Papers, Newberry Library.

nowhere near the actual extent of the Party's victory.<sup>324</sup> Mowrer echoed the conventional wisdom of the time that the base of Nazi support came from Germany's impulsive youth, which was vulnerable to the Party's 'direct emotional appeals and excellent theatricals'.<sup>325</sup> The Chicago Daily News's Berlin bureau chief also shared the view of his rival at the Chicago Daily Tribune, Sigrid Schultz; namely, that the political fortunes of the NSDAP were on the rise because it had been endorsed by some prominent Germans including the ex-Crown Prince.<sup>326</sup> Mowrer even characterized the Nazis as 'the most aristocratic party in Germany', supplanting Hugenberg's DNVP. Although he recognized the growing strength of the Nazis, Edgar Mowrer did not foresee the crushing blows dealt to the traditional center and right parties, the DDP, DVP and the DNVP (which he even predicted would gain a mild victory). As a result, he still held out the prospect that the non-socialist parties might 'achieve a common program' without the aid of the SPD.<sup>327</sup>

Paul Scott Mowrer, who may have been sent to relieve his ill brother, was more pessimistic about the chances of the pro-republican forces. He criticized Brüning's unpopular economic program of austerity for failing to curb Germany's spiraling unemployment rate, and as such shared the view of many commentators that 'government parties will not win a higher

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<sup>324</sup>CDN, 12 September 1930.

<sup>325</sup>Ibid.

<sup>326</sup>Ibid. 6 September 1930.

<sup>327</sup>Ibid. 8 September 1930.

proportion of seats than they have now'. And although Paul Mowrer thought that the prospect of an imminent dictatorship was 'far from a possibility', he stressed the urgency for the pro-republican forces to implement solutions to Germany's economic and political crises and to do so quickly. He believed, like most Americans, that the significance of this Reichstag election lay in the distinct possibility that:

'the results can fundamentally affect not only the internal economic situation, the future foreign policy and even the future form of government, whether a genuine republic or a more or less declared dictatorship in Germany itself, but through Germany it may influence the economic situation and the interior political situation and the international outlook of most other European countries'.<sup>328</sup>

Paul Mowrer made no attempt to "sugarcoat" the election results. 'Hitler was the real victor' while 'Brüning's government and all that it stands for has been crushingly [sic] defeated' wrote the paper's senior European correspondent.<sup>329</sup> He further argued that 'unless the representatives of the remaining 60% of the German people agree to forget their multiple differences and stand together against the rising tides of extremism, parliamentary government may prove impossible and the fate of the Republic itself will be jeopardized'.<sup>330</sup>

In contrast to his brother's pre-election analysis, Paul Mowrer traced the Hitlerian vote principally to Germany's 'disgruntled middle class and over-indebted farmers who have lost confidence in the ability of the [Weimar] system to improve

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<sup>328</sup>Ibid. 13 September 1930.

<sup>329</sup>Ibid. 15 September 1930.

<sup>330</sup>Ibid.

their situation'.<sup>331</sup> Whereas Paul Mowrer's theory has been generally borne out by over a half century of scholarship<sup>332</sup>, it is important to detect Mowrer's implicit message that the Nazi appeal may have been more rational than previously thought. This is not to suggest that Paul Mowrer considered the Nazis a mainstream political organization -- in fact, on several occasions he referred to them as a band of 'fire-eating, Jew-baiting, reactionary extremists'<sup>333</sup>-- but rather that he felt it was possible for the "average German" to support Hitler. Paul Mowrer's view, however, represented the minority of U.S. press opinion. The majority of journalists believed that Nazi voters were immature, impulsive, gullible, and incapable of rational thought.

None of Paul Mowrer's assessments of the Reichstag election were shared by Charles Dennis and his editorial staff. Instead, management downplayed the results to a perverse extreme in its attempt to maintain its long-held policy of presenting Germany in a positive light. Its editorial, "German Republicans Get A Warning", argued that the balloting 'may prove a blessing in disguise to German republicanism and German prosperity' because 'sober second thought [on the part of German voters] will cause many of them to give their confidence to leaders who stand for constructive progress and to oppose emotional architects of

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<sup>331</sup>Ibid.

<sup>332</sup>See Childers, *Nazi Voter*, and Hamilton, *Who Voted?* et al.

<sup>333</sup>CDN, 15 September 1930.

disaster'.<sup>334</sup> Moreover, although the editorial noted how party divisions plagued Germany, it also asserted that there is no good reason why [the moderate parties] should not waive their disagreements, which actually are minor in nature, and unite to safeguard the Republic and the peace of Europe'.<sup>335</sup> In short, Dennis seemed convinced that the Nazi electoral breakthrough 'most assuredly did not justify dismay on the part of sincere friends of governmental progress and popular rule'.<sup>336</sup>

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The disparity between the views expressed in the editorials of the Chicago Daily News and Berlin bureau dispatches was neither a coincidence nor an aberration. In fact, the incongruity reflected a general discordance between the editorial board in Chicago and the paper's European news service. Although the first half of the 1920's witnessed a see-saw struggle between the Home Office and the foreign news service, the latter half of the decade saw a decisive shift in power from Europe to Chicago. Management itself had experienced a major restructuring, of which Charles Dennis was the primary beneficiary. As a result, the foreign news service of the Chicago Daily News ceased to influence the editorial policies of the paper between 1926 and 1930.

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<sup>334</sup>"German Republicans Get A Warning", CDN, 17 September 1930.

<sup>335</sup>Ibid.

<sup>336</sup>Ibid.

This new state of affairs can be traced to Paul Scott Mowrer's resignation as the paper's European service head and Edward Price Bell's recall to Chicago in 1924. Their departure left the foreign service staff without the prestigious leadership which had profoundly influenced the paper's editorial positions. Mowrer's replacement, the far weaker and more malleable Hal O'Flaherty, along with his foreign bureau chiefs, were often unable to resist the incursions of the Home Office on the content of their dispatches. The death of the paper's publisher, Victor Lawson, dealt another debilitating blow to the foreign service.<sup>337</sup> Although Lawson's interest in his overseas organization had diminished markedly in the years prior to his death, his position as the supreme authority of the paper had allowed for credible recourse for those dissatisfied by the actions of Charles Dennis.<sup>338</sup> Lawson's successor, Walter A. Strong, however, lacked the credibility, determination and self confidence to effectively challenge the *de facto* control exercised by Dennis and his editorial board.

Walter Strong was not a newcomer to the Chicago Daily News. As the former business manager under the Lawson regime, Strong was acutely sensitive to the financial status of the paper. His earliest memos to senior management stressed the importance of increasing gross revenue and net profits by reducing costs through the 'elimination of all the extravagances in the

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<sup>337</sup>See Heald, *Vistas*, pp.100-102.

<sup>338</sup>The evidence shows that Paul Mowrer and Edward Price Bell dealt with Lawson directly when they were frustrated by Dennis and others. See Chapter 2 for the corresponding citations.

editorial expense, advertising promotion expense and circulation program'.<sup>339</sup> Strong criticized 'Lawson's failure to establish a definite policy' to manage costs.<sup>340</sup> In contrast to his predecessor, Strong required that 'all contracts be submitted to the publisher's office'<sup>341</sup>-- an unusual instruction given the sheer size of the Chicago Daily News operation. Although he expressed a desire to launch a Sunday edition,<sup>342</sup> the centerpiece of Strong's strategy was the construction of a modern production facility to replace the ill-equipped plant the paper had maintained since the mid 19th century.<sup>343</sup> Strong accomplished this goal with the opening of the paper's new plant in 1930.

When he first became publisher of the Chicago Daily News in 1926, Strong took little interest in news and editorial policy. He appeared to lack a desire to impose his political and journalistic ideology on his staff, if, indeed, he possessed a clear vision at all. Strong's revamped management structure clearly reflected his desire to transform the business aspects of the paper while steering clear of the news and editorial departments. The new publisher established two governing bodies, the "Executive Committee" and the "Executive Council"; together they contained only one member from the news

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<sup>339</sup>Confidential Memo, Strong to Dennis, 17 May 1926, Dennis Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>340</sup>Ibid.

<sup>341</sup>Ibid.

<sup>342</sup>Strong to Bell, 15 February 1927, Bell Papers, Ibid.

<sup>343</sup>Strong to Dennis, 17 May 1926, Dennis Papers, Ibid.



department, Henry Justin Smith, the paper's managing editor.<sup>344</sup> Strong assigned Smith the role of day-to-day management of the foreign news service, a post previously held by Dennis in cooperation with Paul Mowrer. Strong's move was not designed to diminish Dennis's power. To the contrary, Strong placed Dennis 'in entire (my emphasis) charge of editorial policies'; thus abdicating a right usually reserved for the publisher.<sup>345</sup> In addition, Strong delegated to Dennis the authority to intervene in the affairs of the foreign news service 'where the text of overseas dispatches involves editorial policy'.<sup>346</sup> Moreover, Strong failed to entrust authority to Hal O'Flaherty and his foreign news service, thus depriving the overseas staff of a *de jure* check on the Home Office's power. As a result, Dennis exercised near-absolute control over editorial and overseas news policies without being burdened by the mundane responsibilities normally associated with such power. The evidence suggests that Dennis exploited his favorable position and that his forcefulness displeased members of the foreign service as well as the publisher himself.

As early as December 1928, Strong expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of Dennis and to a lesser extent, Smith. He stated that it was now 'necessary... to build up the editorial staff' and 'to bring about a closer cooperation and better understanding in the administration of the foreign

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<sup>344</sup>Strong's organizational plan, (probably 1926), Strong Papers, Ibid.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid.

<sup>346</sup>Ibid.

service'.<sup>347</sup> Strong may have been influenced by complaints from his overseas staff, particularly those of Carroll Binder, the paper's Rome bureau chief.

Binder, who began his career by covering local stories for the Chicago Daily News, was frustrated by management's habit of ignoring the content and analysis of its own foreign news dispatches in its editorials. He characterized the paper's editorial writers as a bunch of 'unqualified non-specialists' in the area of international affairs, who sat insulated in the Chicago office. Moreover, Binder was infuriated by the editorial board's practice of echoing the conclusions reached by the Chicago Daily News's rivals, the New York Times and Chicago Daily Tribune. For example, he cited a Daily News editorial on British tariff policy as yet 'another instance of a flat-footed contradiction of our own foreign service cable of the day before' and further claimed that 'the writer of this editorial evidently read a slovenly prepared account in the New York Times or the Chicago Daily Tribune'.<sup>348</sup>

Binder's allegation that his paper's editorials took their lead from the New York Times deserves closer examination with particular attention to its German coverage. The evidence suggests that Binder may have had a valid claim. Although there is no clear correlation between the *foreign dispatches* of the New York Times and the editorials of the Chicago Daily News,

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<sup>347</sup>Strong to Binder, 20 December 1928, Binder Papers, Ibid. See also Ibid. 16 February 1931.

<sup>348</sup>Binder to O'Flaherty 15 September 1930, Ibid. See also Ibid. 4 June 1929 and 18 October 1930. For an additional discussion of Binder's ideas, see Heald, *Vistas*, pp.103-4 & 140-45.

there is a striking similarity in the editorial views of both papers. A comparison of excerpts from each paper's editorial coverage of the 1930 Reichstag elections illustrates this resemblance:

The outcome of the Reichstag elections more than bears out the predicted gains for the extremists of the Right and Left, but falls noticeably short of being a disaster for the moderate parties... Were it not indeed for the extraordinary showing of the Fascists, one might say that the constitutional bloc had done pretty well... Events would seem to compel a renewal of the partnership of the moderate elements under whose guidance Germany has gone back to strength and prestige.<sup>349</sup> -- {New York Times editorial, 16 September 1930}

Disquieting as are some of the results of the German national election, they most assuredly do not justify dismay on the part of sincere friends of governmental progress and popular rule... The moderate and constitutional parties and groups will have to adjust their differences and work together in an open alliance for the welfare of the nation... The election may prove a blessing in disguise to German republicanism and German prosperity.<sup>350</sup> -- {Chicago Daily News editorial, 17 September 1930}

Binder harbored aspirations beyond that of editorial watchdog. He wanted to completely overhaul the decision-making apparatus of the editorial department as it existed under Dennis in order to shift the control of foreign editorial formulation from the Home Office to the overseas staff. The salient feature of Binder's proposal was the creation of the "Foreign Editor" -- an enlightened person with overseas experience (with himself in mind) who would 'be independent and answerable only to the publisher'.<sup>351</sup> 'Where editorials concern themselves exclusively

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<sup>349</sup>"The German Elections", NYT editorial, 16 September 1930.

<sup>350</sup>"German Republicans Get A Warning", CDN editorial, 17 September 1930.

<sup>351</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 23 July 1929, Ibid.

with interpretations of particular situations and did not commit the paper to a pronounced editorial stand on a particular issue, the special competence of the Foreign Editor *should be such as to obtain acceptance of his editorials without revision by non-specialists'* [my italics].<sup>352</sup> Binder stopped short of empowering the Foreign Editor with total authority, arguing that overall editorial positions involving such issues as the League of Nations and debts and reparations 'should be formulated jointly by the editor, publisher, chief of the editorial page, foreign editor and the head of the foreign service'.<sup>353</sup> In essence, Binder's proposal was designed primarily to undermine Dennis's near-autocratic control of editorial policy.

Strong, greatly impressed by Binder's intellect and provocative ideas and hoping he could deftly ease Binder onto the editorial board without alarming Dennis, invited him to join the editorial staff.<sup>354</sup> However, Strong was ambivalent regarding Binder's reorganization plan because the publisher was clearly intimidated by his editor-in-chief's imposing status. Here is Strong's rationalization to Binder about his plan:

Mr. Dennis is a man of very fixed habits and convictions... I think that you with your logical and honest mind will come to the correct conclusion of the values represented in that

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<sup>352</sup>Ibid.

<sup>353</sup>Ibid.

<sup>354</sup>Strong to Binder, 13 February & 20 December 1928. For additional praises of Binder see P. Mowrer to Binder, 29 January 1929, O'Flaherty to Binder, 28 October & 16 Dec 1927, 9 & 12 January, 13 & 23 March, 1928, 11 & 13 March 1929 and Dennis to Binder 20 December 1927, 15 March 1928 and 17 September 1930, Ibid.

name and that [as such] you will be willing to accept the situation as it is.<sup>355</sup>

Strong seemed to lack the resolve and stamina necessary to impose his will on Dennis. The more Binder pressed the Chicago Daily News publisher to reform the editorial department, the more Strong resisted. In fact, Strong remained equivocal two years after he himself expressed a desire to make managerial changes. Although he informed Binder that it was still his 'intention to build up the editorial department and that you [Binder] are eventually to have the position of editor', the publisher maintained that it would 'take many years to solve the present equation';<sup>356</sup> in essence admitting that he was not "up to the challenge" of revising the status quo. Early in his reign, he responded to Binder's pleas for editorial reform by arguing that 'we cannot give up old things even if they are founded merely on traditional acceptance by faith *and expect to substitute new ones without a struggle* [my italics]'.<sup>357</sup> By February 1931, Strong appeared to have "thrown in the towel".

I do not pretend to be infallible [especially] under the stress of this responsibility and work. I have no doubt overlooked the necessity to reassure you [Binder]... Your letter raised some disappointing irritation in my mind and some feeling of hopeless fatigue.<sup>358</sup>

Strong's allusion to his poor physical health turned out to be prophetic. On 9 May 1931, three months after he conveyed his

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<sup>355</sup>Strong to Binder, 16 February 1931, Ibid.

<sup>356</sup>Ibid.

<sup>357</sup>Strong to Binder, 26 December 1929, Ibid.

<sup>358</sup>Strong to Binder, 16 February 1931, Ibid.

sense of impotence to Binder, Strong died suddenly of a heart attack. He was only forty-eight years old.

Strong's failure to exercise the usual authority of a publisher clearly influenced the manner in which the Chicago Daily News presented events occurring in Germany. That he allowed Dennis to run the editorial page as if it were his own fiefdom, accountable to no one, may help explain the difference between the perceptions and opinions of the paper's overseas correspondents and those of the paper's editorial writers. Moreover, it is plausible that Edgar Mowrer's "flip-flops" in his coverage of the 1928 Reichstag elections and the Müller/Brüning transition in 1930 can be traced to Strong's decision to allow Dennis editorial discretion over foreign news service dispatches. In a general sense, the upheaval following Lawson's death in 1925 illustrates the dilemma faced by any new publisher who believes he lacks the credibility to impose his will on the established bureaucracy even when he recognizes the necessity for hierarchical changes. This episode also demonstrates that in such circumstances the political and journalistic ideology of a newspaper need not always be traced to the publisher. Interestingly enough, the New York Times experienced a phenomenon similar to that of the Chicago Daily News, which will be the topic of the next section.

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A greater degree of accord existed between the New York Times's news and editorial departments in their coverage of German developments from 1928 through 14 September 1930 than

between those departments at the Chicago Daily News. Nevertheless, Times editorials tended to magnify the optimism expressed by the paper's Berlin bureau in their assessments of the 1928 Reichstag elections, the appointment of Brüning as German Chancellor and the defeat of Hugenberg's "Freedom Law". Moreover, despite the Nazi electoral breakthrough in September 1930, Times management (through its editorial page) maintained its confidence in the Weimar Republic even though its own news department began to question the prospects for survival of German parliamentary democracy.

'The German general public continues to display scant interest and enthusiasm over the forthcoming Reichstag election' wrote Lincoln Eyre, the New York Times Berlin bureau chief in his 1928 campaign coverage.<sup>359</sup> 'Even the flamboyant torchlight processions headed by blaring bands have failed to stimulate any real excitement among the voting populace', noted Eyre, who like most of his contemporaries forecast a strong showing for the Socialists.<sup>360</sup> Eyre's prediction did, in fact, come true although he cited the electoral gains made by the Communists and even the trivial ones of the extreme right. The editorial department, however, unabashedly celebrated the Socialist victory and the corresponding Conservative defeat, stating that an SPD-dominated government 'would be far from a loss for European peace and continued reconstruction'.<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>359</sup>NYT, 19 May 1928, section one.

<sup>360</sup>Ibid.

<sup>361</sup>"The German Election", 22 May 1928, NYT editorial.

The New York Times editorial page continued to magnify and even distort the positive assessments of the Berlin bureau staff. The defeat of Hugenberg's anti-Young plan referendum provides a good example. Whereas the Times's unnamed Berlin reporter<sup>362</sup> called the "Freedom Law" 'a complete failure',<sup>363</sup> the Home Office asserted that the 'foolish Fascist referendum symbolized the last large scale attempt by mischief makers to deflect the German nation from the road along which it had traveled since the Dawes plan toward renewed well-being'.<sup>364</sup> Moreover, management took the opportunity to praise what it saw as the 'seasonal spirit of goodwill' demonstrated by the German people.<sup>365</sup>

The first clear differences between the editorial and news coverage of Germany within the New York Times can be observed in their interpretations of the collapse of the Müller government and the appointment of Brüning to the Reich Chancellery in March 1930. Published Berlin dispatches suggested that the ministerial change was an indirect consequence of the ever-widening Depression. Moreover, the Berlin bureau was quite pessimistic concerning Brüning's ability to form a stable government. For example, a 29 March published dispatch stated that it was doubtful whether Brüning 'could organize a cabinet

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<sup>362</sup>Most likely the person in question was Guido Enderis, although the anonymity of the author is itself a story which I will address later.

<sup>363</sup>NYT 23 December 1929.

<sup>364</sup>"The German Political Discipline", 25 December 1929, Ibid.

<sup>365</sup>Ibid.



which would have a fighting chance in the Reichstag'.<sup>366</sup> That Brüning would be able to form only a minority government led the Berlin bureau to conclude that the Catholic Centre party leader's accession to power would merely 'perpetuate a condition of latent crisis'.<sup>367</sup>

No negative sentiments, however, were to be found in "The Upset in Germany", the paper's editorial on the ministerial transition. Disregarding its own news department's reports, the editorial board maintained that 'despite the temporary depression, there was no cause for pessimism concerning the economic future of Germany'. It also doubted whether Germany's unemployed numbered as many as three million.<sup>368</sup> According to this editorial, Brüning's task would be made easier 'once business improved and unemployment declined'.<sup>369</sup> It is interesting to note that the paper's underestimation of Germany's depression corresponded to its unrealistic perception of America's economic woes. In fact, the New York Times editorial board did not acknowledge the severity of Germany's financial problems until the following September.<sup>370</sup>

The New York Times's coverage of the 1930 Reichstag elections represented a microcosm of the paper's reporting of events in Germany throughout the previous three years -- an expanding gulf

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<sup>366</sup>NYT, 29 March 1930.

<sup>367</sup>Ibid. 30 March 1930.

<sup>368</sup>"The Upset in Germany", 29 March 1930, Ibid.

<sup>369</sup>Ibid.

<sup>370</sup>"The German Elections", 12 September 1930, Ibid.

between the editorial board and the Berlin bureau. The tone of the paper's 1930 election reporting, conducted by newly appointed Berlin bureau chief, Guido Enderis, changed dramatically as election day came and passed. At first, Enderis seemed unconcerned about the prospect of electoral polarization, a possibility which many observers feared. In fact, the Berlin correspondent did not even mention the Nazis in his first preview of the election on 2 September. And although his published dispatch of 12 September did acknowledge the growing appeal of the Nazis, (claiming that they stood a good chance of gaining forty or fifty seats in the new Reichstag), he assured supporters of the Republic that 'while Herr Hitler is nightly drawing crowds of 15,000 on his stumping tour, the significance of each attendances [sic] shrinks to a trifle when it is computed that four such audiences represent the vote required for one seat in the Reichstag'.<sup>371</sup> Enderis further downplayed the significance of a possible Nazi victory, claiming that even in the event of a Hitler win, his party would be 'automatically eliminated from consideration' in the formulation of any prospective coalition government.<sup>372</sup>

Enderis's tune quickly changed after the unexpected margin of the Nazi electoral gain. Like Paul Mowrer, Enderis admitted that 'republicanism suffered a heavy blow and Chancellor Brüning's reform cabinet a decisive defeat when 13,000,000 out of 36,000,000 votes went into the balance against the young

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<sup>371</sup>Ibid., P.1.

<sup>372</sup>Ibid.

Republic and its champion'.<sup>373</sup> He also concluded that 'the sensational gains of Adolf Hitler's Nazi party constituted one of the most upsetting developments in German post-war politics'.<sup>374</sup> As far as the future of the Weimar Republic was concerned, Enderis now conceded that 'the situation is fraught with considerable gravity because of the impotency of the bourgeois parties' and that the prospects for the season of political tranquillity required to administer the Reich's domestic and foreign affairs appears none too bright'.<sup>375</sup> Enderis attributed the Nazi success to the party's 'adroit manner with which it exploited the post-war social and economic deprivation of the middle and non-Socialist working class'<sup>376</sup> as well as Hitler's 'sonorous, penetrating tenor, which combined with his histrionic ability, made him especially effective with audiences of young men and women'.<sup>377</sup>

In contrast to its news coverage, the New York Times's editorial coverage of the election maintained a remarkable consistency, even after the huge Nazi victory. Although management had agreed with the pre-election consensus that the fascists and the communists would make some gains, it had predicted a 'working majority for the Brüning government made up of a coalition of middle parties' because 'the decisive majority

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<sup>373</sup>Ibid. 14 September 1930.

<sup>374</sup>Ibid. 15 September 1930.

<sup>375</sup>Ibid., 16 September 1930.

<sup>376</sup>Ibid., 15 September 1930.

<sup>377</sup>Ibid.

of German people stand for order at home and cooperation abroad'.<sup>378</sup> Moreover, though the paper's headline of 14 September decried that 'the fate of parliamentary rule is at stake', an editorial published the same day expressed little concern, characterizing the election as 'one of those consultations of the people forced by a parliamentary tangle and the necessity of clearing the air, rather than by any revolutionary change in the basic situation', and reiterated its earlier prediction that although extremist parties would gain, there will be a 'safe majority' for the moderate parties.<sup>379</sup>

The divergence of views between the Berlin bureau and the editorial department reached its widest point immediately after the election. 'The outcome of the Reichstag elections', according to the paper's editorial of 16 September 'falls noticeably short of being a disaster'.<sup>380</sup> Whereas the Berlin bureau expressed alarm at the 13,000,000 anti-Republican vote tally, the editorial board expressed relief because it considered the figure to be *low*.<sup>381</sup> Furthermore, although "The German Elections" editorial correctly noted that the Nazis had secured a number of votes at the expense of the Conservative party, its assertion that the constitutional parties emerged unscathed was not borne out by electoral statistics which were.

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<sup>378</sup>"The Reichstag Campaign", 6 September 1930, Ibid.

<sup>379</sup>Ibid.

<sup>380</sup>"The German Elections", 16 September 1930, Ibid.

<sup>381</sup>Ibid.

available at the time of publication.<sup>382</sup> So taken was the editorial board with its belief that its piece of 16 September actually claimed that 'were it not for the extraordinary showing of the Fascists, one might say that the constitutional bloc had done pretty well'!<sup>383</sup>

That a discrepancy existed between news and editorial coverage of Germany following the 1930 Reichstag elections is obvious. More problematic, however, is identifying the factors that shaped the Times's news and editorial presentations. Although the available evidence is far from incontrovertible, it does suggest that the New York Times's German reporting was influenced by both a series of organizational decisions based on circumstances similar to those of the Chicago Daily News and by the unique practices and traditions of the paper.

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By the 1920's, the international community regarded the New York Times as a bulwark of journalistic integrity. In an era where the majority of the U.S. press was characterized as "yellow" and "sensationalistic", the New York Times was among a select group of newspapers noted for its emphasis on accuracy, breadth and objectivity. A comprehensive intelligence report prepared by the British Library of Information for Whitehall entitled "Memorandum on the Press of the United States, 1922-32", a relatively detached evaluation of the U.S. press during the inter-war period, deemed the Times to be one of America's

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<sup>382</sup>Ibid.

<sup>383</sup>Ibid.

more reliable, yet colourless newspapers. Despite noting the paper's reputation for unbiased foreign news reporting, the memorandum criticized the New York Times's European coverage for its lackluster analysis, redundant news stories and uninspiring editorials. Moreover, the authors of the report implied that the tone of the Times's news articles and editorials tended to be slanted in an optimistic direction. They concluded that, '[The New York Times] rarely condemns either party in a dispute but welcomes any sign of peace'; (in some respects the paper's editorial stance towards Germany during the July Crisis gives credence to this appraisal).<sup>384</sup> Nonetheless, the report acknowledges the voluminous New York Times as the "newspaper of record" and perhaps America's most important.<sup>385</sup>

No understanding of the New York Times is possible without a discussion of the paper's most important publisher, Adolph S. Ochs, revered by his supporters and respected by his detractors. Many echoed Dr. Nicholas Butler's sentiment that the New York Times publisher was 'the mastermind of journalism in any land'.<sup>386</sup> When Ochs died in April of 1935, the Associated Press paid tribute to his memory by "going silent" for two minutes (compared to one minute for the slain President Kennedy 28 years later). As the guiding force behind the news and editorial policy of the New York Times, Ochs did not design his

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<sup>384</sup>Klein, "Reaping the Whirlwind" P.20.

<sup>385</sup> "Memorandum on the Press of the United States, 1922-32", PRO, FO Papers, FO 395/459.

<sup>386</sup>Faber, D., *Printer's Devil to Publisher*, (New York 1963) P.164.

paper as a vehicle for political or even financial gain,<sup>387\*</sup> nor did he wish the Times to be an instrument of social change. When the paper was financially strapped at the turn of the century, Ochs rejected a lucrative advertising offer from Tammany Hall even though most New York newspapers had entered into similar arrangements with the state's Democratic machine. Rather, Ochs strove to create a newspaper that behaved like a national and world information service, akin to an early century version of CNN.<sup>388</sup> The success of the Times, therefore, hinged on the paper's unblemished reputation, because a loss of credibility would result in it being seen as a tabloid and therefore shunned by its serious-minded readership.

One method Ochs employed to enhance the Times's credibility was to separate clearly editorial and news coverage -- a feature which distinguished the New York Times from nearly every other publication.<sup>389</sup> To reinforce this philosophy, he assigned each department to different floors. One of Ochs's last major staff appointments, the promotion of Rollo Ogden to editorial page editor in 1922, was one of his most crucial as far as German-related editorials were concerned. Ogden's messianic optimism (he was an ordained minister) impressed Ochs to the point where the publisher gave him 'unlimited freedom to advocate what

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<sup>387\*</sup>It is important to note, however, that Ochs brought the paper back from the brink of extinction to being a highly profitable enterprise though, as stated above, he did not view the NYT as primarily a business venture.

<sup>388</sup>Interview- Alex Jones and Susan Tift, authors of an upcoming biography on the Ochs and Sulzberger families 17 June 1994.

<sup>389</sup>John Oakes to the author, 23 June 1994.

principles and policies he felt were right'.<sup>390</sup> Although New York Times editorials went unsigned, it is almost certain that Ogden was a critical player in the formulation of the Times's rose-coloured view of the tumultuous events in Weimar Germany. Under the strong leadership of managing editors Carr Van Anda, Frederick Birchall and Edwin James, the news department also operated as a powerful autonomous unit. Not surprisingly, this state of affairs allowed for disparities between news and feature stories on the one hand and editorials on the other; hence, the differentiation between Berlin bureau dispatches and editorial views between 1928 and 1930.

However, these inconsistencies were not as frequent as one would expect, because of Ochs's hiring practices. Ochs wanted his correspondents to act as impartial observers, dispassionately recording events like 'an order of monks'.<sup>391</sup> Berlin correspondents made a practice of quoting extensively from politically diverse German newspapers such as the conservative Berliner Lokalanzeiger, the liberal Frankfurter Zeitung, the socialist Berliner Vörrwaerts and the Nazi Völkischer Beobachter. In fact, it was not uncommon to see entire news articles consisting primarily of long series of quotes, especially during Weimar election campaigns.<sup>392</sup> Moreover, Ochs was so committed to this journalistic ideal that he was

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<sup>390</sup>McKerns, J.(ed.) Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism (NY 1989) P.524.

<sup>391</sup>Interview- Jones and Tiffit 17 June 1994.

<sup>392</sup>See for instance, NYT: 10-17 Sept 1930, 10-20 March 1932, 25 July-5 August 1932.



more apt to hire a dispassionate, though pedestrian reporter than a creative one. In practice, this facet of his philosophy proved detrimental to the Times's coverage of the rise of Hitler between 1928 and 1930. For example, when his senior editors recommended against promoting Guido Enderis to the post of Chief Berlin Correspondent because he lacked creative imagination, Ochs turned the criticism on its head by stating there was 'such a thing as having too much imagination'.<sup>393</sup>

Ochs demanded diligence, reliability and humility from his staff, with little tolerance for flamboyant individualism, either at the office or in public. Conduct which cast the Times in a negative light usually resulted in a harsh reprimand or dismissal. Management's attitude became further entrenched during the 1920's as a result of actions by the paper's Moscow correspondent, Walter Duranty. Duranty's pro-Soviet viewpoint (he failed to report the deaths of millions of Russian peasants caused by Stalin's collectivization plan) and his questionable personal conduct (he was known for both his fascination with women and opium) became constant sources of embarrassment to Times management. Ochs, however, resisted firing Duranty because the Moscow correspondent had become very popular among the left-wing segments of the paper's readership, especially after he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1933.<sup>394</sup> Undoubtedly, the Duranty experience caused management to exercise greater caution in its hiring decisions. 'Safe and sane' became the

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<sup>393</sup>James to Birchall 28 May 1930, James#5-2250, NYT Archive.

<sup>394</sup>Salisbury, H. *Without Fear or Favor*, (New York 1963) pp.458-464.

often repeated criteria for a vacant foreign correspondent's position.<sup>395</sup> Consequently, the more energetic and usually more talented reporters were left out of consideration. Thus, despite the fact that the New York Times maintained the largest European staff of any newspaper, it failed to distinguish itself as the nonpareil of foreign reporting. As a result of Ochs's influence, the Timesmen understood their role and place, -- anonymous musicians in the world's most famous symphony orchestra.

The hiring of Guido Enderis in 1930 as the New York Times's Berlin bureau chief reflected many facets of Ochs's news philosophy. The bureau had been in a continual state of flux since the firing of Cyril Brown at the end of 1923. Brown was succeeded by Thomas R. Ybarra in 1924, who was promptly transferred to London in 1925.<sup>396</sup> Ybarra was in turn succeeded by Lincoln Eyre who had earned his reputation for fine reporting during the Great War. However, the evidence suggests that because of Eyre's drinking and other health problems, the bulk of German dispatches were penned by Paul Miller, the bureau's capable yet undistinguished "number two" man.<sup>397</sup> When Eyre died unexpectedly in 1928, the Times did not promote Miller. Instead, in 1929, it brought in Wythe Williams, one of the

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<sup>395</sup>See for instance, James #5/2184-86,93,97,2205, NYT Archive.

<sup>396</sup>It is important to note that some newspapers and news agencies frequently transferred their reporters in order to maintain their correspondents' objectivity. Associated Press historian Richard Schwarzlose to the author June 1995. However, there is no evidence which suggests that the New York Times engaged in this practice.

<sup>397</sup>Miller to Birchall, 1 October 1928, Williams to Birchall, 17 January 1929 and Birchall to James, 21 January 1929, James #5, NYT Archive.

paper's best field reporters, to provide stability to the bureau. However, Williams was fired after only a year of service.

Williams's dismissal reflected the criteria that management used to evaluate its foreign bureau chiefs. Williams was removed not because of his reporting, but rather for his lack of administrative skills.<sup>398</sup> Duranty lamented that the paper's chief correspondents -- ostensibly the bureaux's best writers, 'spent half their time on office detail'.<sup>399</sup> As a result, some dispatches signed by the bureau chief may actually have been written by a subordinate. Thus, it is not surprising that the paper's numerical superiority in correspondents failed to translate into a significant number of Pulitzer prizes in overseas reporting.

Ochs chose Enderis instead of the more journalistically qualified Joseph Shaplen, over the wishes of Frederick Birchall and Edwin James, the Times's acting managing editor and European service editor respectively. Ochs believed that Enderis's in-house experience, combined with his stint at the Associated Press, met the publisher's goal of objective, comprehensive, yet colourless reporting.<sup>400</sup> As it turned out, Enderis was

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<sup>398</sup>James to Birchall, 1 July 1932, James #6-0708 and "Memorandum on Mr. Enderis", October 1940, *Ibid.* Times management may have also discovered that Williams had taken several unauthorized excursions. On one such occasion in 1929, William Shirer of the Chicago Daily Tribune agreed to pen Williams's dispatches while the latter was in Geneva. See Shirer, *W. 20th Century Journey*, P.422.

<sup>399</sup>Hohenberg, J., *Foreign Correspondence* (NY 1964), P.279 and Duranty, W., *I Write As I Please* (NY 1935), pp.101-102.

<sup>400</sup>The fact that Shaplen was Jewish was an additional factor which will be discussed in the next chapter.

overmatched by the journalistic demands of the position -- he rarely "scooped" the competition nor did he dazzle the paper's readership with insightful news analysis. As the international media focused more detailed attention on Germany after 1930, the New York Times management, in an act of desperation, dispatched Fred Birchall to Berlin to act as the bureau's chief writer. Nonetheless, the paper retained Enderis through 1940 because of his office managing skills even though his written contributions had become negligible.<sup>401</sup>

Notwithstanding his intervention in the Enderis affair, Ochs's role in the daily decision-making of the New York Times diminished sharply throughout the 1920's and early 1930's because of his advanced age and a series of bouts of clinical depression. As a result, Ochs handed the reins of power to his son-in-law, Arthur Hays Sulzberger.

Like Walter Strong at the Chicago Daily News, Sulzberger was reluctant to execute the powers of the publisher's office, especially during the 1920's. His passivity also can be attributed to his overall lack of credibility. Although employed by the Times prior to his promotion, Sulzberger was named publisher because the aging Ochs wished to ensure immediate family ownership upon his death. Moreover, he dared not disappoint his beloved daughter, Iphigene. This fortuitous circumstance was not lost on young Arthur, who quipped on many occasions that 'the key to success is to work hard and marry the

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<sup>401</sup>See James #5/2010, 19, 21, 37, 53 & 62 and "Memorandum on Mr. Enderis" October 1940, NYT Archive.

boss's daughter'.<sup>402</sup> Because he entered journalism soon after World War One, Sulzberger lacked the experience and the will to act decisively. His insecurity was not alleviated by the attitude of Edwin James who 'often regarded him rather scornfully and made no secret of it'.<sup>403</sup> Most important, Sulzberger refrained from exercising strong authority because he worked in the shadow of Adolph Ochs, both figuratively and literally. On one occasion where the heir apparent did assert himself, his father-in-law reminded him that he was 'not dead yet'.<sup>404</sup> Thus, Sulzberger's early regime was characterized by a lack of forcefulness and direction.

Sulzberger's impotence meant that the disparity between news and editorial analysis which had characterized the Times's German coverage between 1928 and 1930 was left unresolved. In fact, Ogden's grip on the editorial page was so tight that Sulzberger commonly was known to remark that he read his paper 'in order to find out what his opinions were'.<sup>405</sup> Hence, Ogden's unmitigated confidence in humanity's ability to overcome its many predicaments was left unchecked. Catastrophic events such as the Great Depression were depicted as minor problems. Moreover, the editorials of the New York Times concerning German developments even through Hitler's accession to power were unrealistically optimistic and reassuring.

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<sup>402</sup>John Oakes to the author 23 June 1994.

<sup>403</sup>Catledge, T., *My Life and the Times*, (New York 1971) P.159.

<sup>404</sup>Talese, G., *The Kingdom and the Power* (New York 1966) P.12.

<sup>405</sup>John B. Oakes to the author, 23 June 1994.

Despite occasional interventions by Ochs, the New York Times operated without a fully empowered publisher during the Weimar era and consequently, the paper lacked clear direction from the top. Unfortunately, the emotionally distraught Ochs was incapable of providing daily leadership while the newly appointed Sulzberger felt constrained from doing so. The paper's news and editorial policies in regard to Hitler's rise during the early Depression era, therefore, lacked a general cohesiveness because daily decision-making became more decentralized. Power now rested with a new generation of Timesmen: Birchall, Ogden, James and the staff of an ever-changing Berlin bureau. It would not be until 1932 that one would start to witness a general congruence between the editorial and news departments.

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The significance of the Chicago Daily News's and the New York Times's coverage of Germany lies in what was written, in contrast to the Chicago Daily Tribune's coverage, whose salient feature is how little was written. Between 1928 and 1930, Robert McCormick's newspaper devoted far less attention and prominence to major stories emanating from Germany than other newspapers that had maintained overseas bureaux. For example, the Tribune's coverage of the 1928 Reichstag elections was limited to two days, with its pre-election analysis appearing on the day of the balloting and buried on page 25. And although the election results made the front page, Berlin bureau chief Sigrid Schultz's published dispatch ran for less than three

hundred words.<sup>406</sup> Moreover, in contrast to the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News, the Tribune had no editorial on the event. In fact, McCormick maintained a conspicuous editorial silence on German matters throughout this period. The paper even relied on the Associated Press for its back-page coverage of the defeat of Hugenberg's "Freedom Law".<sup>407</sup> The Tribune continued this pattern even during the highly publicized 1930 Reichstag elections. Strangely, the paper's pre-election campaign coverage began and ended on 1 September, not to resume until election day (14 September).<sup>408</sup>

While the evidence is by no means conclusive, it does suggest several reasons which could have accounted for the de-emphasis of Germany by the Tribune's foreign news service -- a noticeable departure from the spotlight it had enjoyed during the first half of the decade.

One possible factor may have been financial. As the Depression worsened in America, newspaper owners reduced the number of pages in their dailies to lower paper costs. Overseas bureaux were particularly hard hit because despite the general economic deflation at home, cable transmission costs actually rose during the otherwise downward spiral. Sigrid Schultz and other European correspondents were ordered to keep their word counts low, especially in the reporting of mundane matters.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>406</sup>CDT, 20 & 21 May 1928.

<sup>407</sup>Ibid., 23 December 1929.

<sup>408</sup>Ibid., 1&14 September 1930.

<sup>409</sup>Beck to Schultz, 17 June 1930, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Nevertheless, the validity of this factor in explaining the dearth of German news coverage between 1928 and 1930 is mitigated by the fact that other newspapers, such as the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News still published extensive stories from the Weimar Republic. Furthermore, the Tribune saw fit to print dispatches from other nations. In the week preceding the 1930 Reichstag elections, for example, the paper ran banner headlines on a military coup in Argentina (8 & 9 September).<sup>410</sup> The Tribune also concentrated on military developments in the Far East throughout 1930 and 1931, especially those regarding the Sino-Soviet-Japanese conflicts in Manchuria.

A more plausible reason seems to be the perception of McCormick and his staff that German affairs had lost their news appeal. The monarchic restoration angle, which the Tribune had consistently played up during the first half of the 1920's, lost much of its credibility in the second half of the decade, although the paper did attempt to resurrect the spectre of a Hohenzollern return in its 1930 coverage.<sup>411</sup> Even the tremendous increase in political violence in the Weimar Republic was becoming stale news from the Tribune's point of view. By the end of 1930, George Scharschug, the paper's cable editor, was suggesting that Schultz play down her coverage of street clashes in Berlin because the 'riots were becoming almost a joke as they

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<sup>410</sup>CDT, 8&9 September 1930.

<sup>411</sup>CDT, 1 September 1930. See also Schultz to Pierson, 17 May 1926, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.



happened so frequently', although he rescinded this directive soon afterwards.<sup>412</sup>

Not only did German developments in the latter half of the 1920's appear to have lost their newsworthiness, the Tribune also felt they had lost their significance to the Chicago reader. Whereas McCormick viewed the 1923 Ruhr crisis and Beer Hall Putsch, the Reichstag elections of 1924, and Hindenburg's election in 1925 as events which would directly impact on America's diplomatic and economic position in Europe, he did not regard the election of 1928, the death of Stresemann and the Young plan vote in 1929, and to a certain degree the Reichstag elections of 1930, in the same light. In specific terms, the Home Office's directive to Schultz in 1927 was that 'if a story does not report a decisive event of American or international importance, let it be kept to less than one hundred words'.<sup>413</sup> Furthermore, despite Hitler's unexpected triumph in the 1930 balloting, the Home Office maintained that 'we do not think the internal politics which follow [the election] will be of much news interest over here'.<sup>414</sup> Undoubtedly, the onset of the Great Depression and the corresponding emphasis by the American media on domestic matters is a plausible explanation for this phenomenon. However, once again, it is important to note that foreign news still occupied a prominent position in the Chicago Daily Tribune, only its venue had changed.

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<sup>412</sup>Scharschug to Schultz, 10 December 1930, Ibid.

<sup>413</sup>Beck to Schultz, 1 April 1927, Ibid.

<sup>414</sup>Scharschug to Schultz, 18 September 1930, Ibid.

The steady de-emphasis of German news between 1926 and 1930 was facilitated by the tight editorial control that Colonel McCormick and Tribune management exercised over the Berlin bureau. Although the available evidence clearly shows that the Tribune was very pleased with Schultz's work, internal documents reveal her impotence in editing and publication decisions. In fact, while the Berlin bureaux of the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News maintained a tangible level of autonomy, it appears that despite Schultz's later claims to the contrary<sup>415</sup>, management dictated the scope and extent of her contributions.

The relationship between McCormick and his foreign service staff was best summarized by correspondent William Shirer:

'The aura of Colonel Robert Rutherford McCormick pervaded our office. Even the cynical, hard-boiled Henry Wales [the Tribune's London correspondent] spoke of him in awe -- and usually in whispers. The foreign service was the colonel's pet project. He ran it himself, rarely informing either his managing editor or his Napoleonic orders he sometimes peppered us with or his cryptic criticisms scrawled on the margin of our dispatches which came almost daily. Nor apparently did he bother to tell them of certain nonjournalistic assignments he would give us which often kept us away from our reporting for days or weeks.'<sup>416</sup>

McCormick utilized his foreign news service to give credence to his ideological beliefs and selected his reporters accordingly. However, he did not follow this practice with Schultz for reasons that are not altogether clear. Though Donald Day cabled vivid, (though often fraudulent) analyses of Soviet communism, Schultz was ordered to avoid speculation and

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<sup>415</sup>Schultz asserted in later interviews that she was never censored and was afforded a great deal of influence in editorial matters. However, the evidence does not appear to bear out her recollections.

<sup>416</sup>Shirer, *My Journey*, P.349.

editorializing in her dispatches.<sup>417</sup> In fact, a conspicuous feature of the Berlin bureau chief's published pieces was their brevity and usually there was a noticeable absence of thought-provoking analysis. Schultz's examination of the 1928 Reichstag elections was cursory and was also devoid of issues concerning Hindenburg's health, even though she had expressed to her publisher the intention of covering that aspect of the story.<sup>418</sup> Instead, the Tribune emphasized the gains of the Communists, reflecting McCormick's ideological and journalistic bent.<sup>419</sup>

Schultz continually pressed for publication of her cables and mail stories but was often rebuffed. A glaring example of this was her futile attempt to get her 2400-word preview of the 1930 Reichstag elections published. Schultz acknowledged the article's prohibitive length and requested that it be run serially or on Sunday because she felt that 'quite a number of our readers would like to know just what the different parties stand for'.<sup>420</sup> Instead, her pre-election coverage (1 & 14 September) totalled less than nine hundred words. Moreover, whereas the thrust of Schultz's unpublished mail story was primarily on the Nazis and the Communists as well as on the global significance of the election, much of her published work was limited to issues tangential to the balloting, e.g., over

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<sup>417</sup>Pierson to Schultz, 26 August 1926 and Scharschug to Schultz, 14 October 1930, Ibid.

<sup>418</sup>Schultz to McCormick, 3 November 1927, Ibid.

<sup>419</sup>CDT, 21 May 1928.

<sup>420</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 13 August 1930, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

one half of Schultz's 1 September preview was devoted to the return of the ex-Kaiser's wife amidst speculation of a Hohenzollern restoration.<sup>421</sup>

Management consistently attempted, however, to include a sensational dimension in its German articles. Throughout the 1920's, McCormick urged Schultz to find a "smoking gun" which would link the Allies to the German Left at the close of the Great War.<sup>422</sup> The evidence suggests that Schultz resisted at least some of management's attempts to get her to report unsubstantiated news as fact, if it qualified as a "major scoop". In 1926 the Home Office criticized Schultz for not cabling an unconfirmed story of a possible coup. Schultz's reply reveals that her professional standards may have been higher than those of her employer.

I am fully aware that Putsch [sic] stories are good reading, but I am certain that you would not approve of my sending a Putsch [sic] story if I were absolutely convinced that it were ninety percent fake as this was the case... I shall be delighted to "cry wolf" whenever there is danger, but in this case I was certain there was none, *and that you would not approve of my sending a sensational story that I knew was not entirely true* [my italics].<sup>423</sup>

The evidence also suggests that management pressed Schultz to dramatize the evil nature of the Nazis, even to the point of distortion. Particular attention was paid to psychological quirks of Party members as well as to the idiosyncracies of the

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<sup>421</sup>CDT, 1 September 1930.

<sup>422</sup>See for instance, McCormick to Schultz 14 February 1928, 18 September 1929 and 16 July 1930, as well as Schultz's mail proofs, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>423</sup>Schultz to Pierson, 17 May 1926, Ibid. See also Ibid. 13 January 1927.

Party's doctrines. Although Schultz held the fascists in very low regard, she still wanted to maintain her objectivity and preserve her credibility as a journalist.

One can make glorious creepy stuff out of the Hitlerites but I believe we are acting more in the interests of the paper if we stick to the facts as closely as we can and not strain for the glory of a big flashy story that sounds grand one day and makes you feel foolish the day after.<sup>424</sup>

Thus, the de-emphasis of German news in the latter half of the 1920's appears rooted in a complex web of factors, all of which center around the journalistic philosophy and the management style of publisher Robert McCormick. With hindsight, the Nazi electoral breakthrough in September 1930 invited renewed media attention to the plight of the Weimar Republic. By 1932, Germany was again at the forefront of the Tribune's overseas news coverage. However, in the autumn of 1930, it appeared that neither McCormick, nor to a lesser extent Schultz, envisioned the reemergence of Germany as a primary news source.

Although nowhere close to the divergence of views within the Chicago Daily News and the New York Times, there did exist some disparity between Schultz's muted analysis of the prospective impact of the 1930 elections and Robert McCormick's optimistic views expressed through his editorial page. Schultz maintained that the Nazis had won 'a smashing victory' and that Hitler now 'emerges as one of the most powerful men in Germany'.<sup>425</sup> She gloomily forecast that 'the next session of the Reichstag

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<sup>424</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, ? 1930., Ibid.

<sup>425</sup>CDT, 15 September 1930.

promises to be one of the stormiest in its stormy history'.<sup>426</sup> The Tribune's editorial coverage, however, was far more reassuring. Although conceding that the Nazi victory could 'hardly be a comfort to anyone who believes that what Europe and western civilization need is peace', the "German Election" also stated that because the fascist tally was really a 'protest vote' against the Treaty of Versailles, one should 'be inclined to discount radical inferences' from the results.<sup>427</sup> McCormick's editorial view appears based on his faith in the German people. 'The Germans are the most stable and orderly people of the continent, with a very high level of character and intelligence' and 'if any people in the world are fit for self-government and popular institutions, they are', he commented. McCormick's editorial page thus concluded that 'it is reasonable to believe that the [Weimar government] will unite moderate opinion' against the reactionaries.<sup>428</sup>

The irony of the "German Election" editorial is that it represented a reversal of McCormick's private views which he had held one year earlier. In a 1929 letter to Schultz he foresaw 'a fascist, royalist or aristocratic revolution' for Germany.<sup>429</sup> It is also not clear whether Schultz was able to influence the Colonel's views on the matter. One month prior to the publisher's dire prediction, Schultz had alerted him to the

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<sup>426</sup>Ibid.

<sup>427</sup>"The German Election", 16 September 1930, Ibid.

<sup>428</sup>Ibid.

<sup>429</sup>McCormick to Schultz, 18 September 1929, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

growing threat of the Nazis as well as the Communists (although she did not believe at that point that either party 'represented an acute danger to the German republic').<sup>430</sup> However, approximately one month following her gloomy 15 September 1930 prediction about Weimar's future, Schultz softened her view.

Hitler could be a very acute danger to Germany and Europe if it were not for one fact: the last man who gets to Hitler before he makes a speech can direct his whole trend of thoughts. Once started, he gets drunk on his own words and they are fiery words which get the masses, only he seesaws back and forth. His speeches run the whole gamut, from bloodcurdling threats to almost pacifistic promises of friendship for everybody, including the French. *The German voter is now beginning to wonder which is the real Hitler and if Hitler shifts around much more, the voter will break away* [my italics].<sup>431</sup>

It is not clear whether Schultz had expressed these more optimistic sentiments in her weekly correspondence with McCormick prior to the publication of the Tribune's editorial of 16 September 1930. If this were the case, one could plausibly argue that McCormick took his lead from Schultz. What is clear is that the Tribune's editorial reflects the publisher's views consistently held towards Germany throughout much of the 1920's; namely, that the nation had been mistreated by the Allies and her people possessed an admirable national character, much like that of the Americans.

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<sup>430</sup>Ibid., 18 August 1929.

<sup>431</sup>Ibid., 29 October 1930.

Most newspapers were slow to react to the sudden reversal of the Weimar Republic's political and economic fortunes between 1928 and 1930. As iterated, the mainstream American press downplayed the impact of the Great Depression on Germany as well as at home. The defeat of Hugenberg's "Freedom Law" in December 1929 seemed to vindicate the Young Plan and the perceptiveness of the German people. And although the fall of the Müller government in the following March caused consternation among some segments of the U.S. press, it was not until Hitler's victory in the 1930 Reichstag elections (the extent and impact of which was foreseen by none of the press) that the majority of mainstream publications began to worry about the future of the Weimar Republic.

Although the news coverage of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune resembled the pattern set by most U.S. publications, each paper's editorial coverage deviated from the mainstream media consensus by downplaying the seriousness of the Nazi victory in September 1930. However, the three papers did express distaste for Hitler and his ideas, a view shared by most of their counterparts. In fact, one of the most consistent features of the American press's coverage of Germany between 1923 and 1933 was the negative portrayal of the Nazis. And although the American reader was not left with the impression that the Nazis would perpetrate a European-wide genocide, he would certainly conclude that they were thugs.

Although the reporting of German news by the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune developed along different lines, the results were virtually identical: a



disparity between news and editorial coverage, a lack of concern regarding events preceding the Nazi electoral breakthrough, and a belief that the Weimar Republic would survive the Hitler triumph. Second, the consensus of editorial opinion among the three papers demonstrates an instance where each management's general political ideology was only a minor factor shaping the presentation of German news, especially in light of their differing foreign agendas. The New York Times and the Chicago Daily News supported the tenets of Wilsonianism -- the League of Nations, disarmament, and U.S. intervention throughout the world -- whereas the Chicago Daily Tribune was at the forefront of isolationist sentiment. Nevertheless, each paper's German coverage was not completely devoid of management's political bias. Some of Sigrid Schultz's articles, supporting the fears of her publisher, raised the spectre of communism, while Rollo Ogden overemphasized the importance of the "Freedom Law" defeat on the Times's editorial page in order to lend additional support to the Young plan.

Notwithstanding the influence of each management's political ideology, the nature and extent of German news was shaped in large part by each paper's journalistic philosophy and corporate dynamics -- a theme established in previous chapters. The examples of the New York Times and the Chicago Daily News illustrate how the personality of the publisher, as well as his departure, could affect the strength and autonomy of the Berlin bureaux and editorial departments, while the case of the Chicago Daily Tribune illustrates how a powerful, interventionist publisher could control a story's presentation. Above all, the

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German coverage of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune between 1928 and 1930 reveals that news reporting does not occur in a vacuum; the shaping of a particular news story may depend less on the events reported than on the internal dynamics within the news organization.

## Chapter 5

### The Nazis at High Tide: January-August 1932

On the morning after the Nazi victory in the 1930 Reichstag elections, George E. Gordon, the American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, cabled Washington that the result 'was another overpowering example of Germany's lack of political education and wisdom'.<sup>432</sup> He criticized the inability of the republican parties to 'run the parliamentary machinery smoothly and relieve the impact of the Depression' but stopped short of labelling the Nazi success a "knock-out blow".<sup>433</sup> Gordon believed, however, that Hitler's triumph 'constituted a grave danger to the republican order'. His fears were not alleviated four days later after meeting with a diplomatic intermediary from the Party.<sup>434</sup>

Gordon's concerns were well founded: the election results precluded a revival of a middle-party coalition. The unwillingness of Hitler or Hugenberg to join as junior partners in a Brüning government also prevented the Chancellor from securing majority support from the Reichstag. Hence, Brüning implemented most of his policies through the use of Article 48 of the Weimar constitution, rule by emergency decree.<sup>435</sup> Through the good graces of President von Hindenburg, the German Chancellor invoked Article 48 no less than forty times in 1931

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<sup>432</sup>FRUS, 1930, III, pp.76-77 as cited in Schoenthal, "American Attitudes", P.257.

<sup>433</sup>Ibid.

<sup>434</sup>Ibid.

<sup>435</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, P.192 and Nicholls, *Weimar*, pp.125-6.

and a record 57 times in 1932.<sup>436</sup> Although it is doubtful if Brüning could have governed without relying upon Article 48, his tactic blurred the lines between democracy and dictatorship, thereby facilitating a smooth transition to his successors, Franz von Papen, Kurt von Schleicher and most notably, Adolf Hitler.

From this position of weakness Brüning was forced to face Germany's economic, political and psychological crises caused by the Great Depression. The Weimar Republic's poor economic state prior to the Nazi victory in September 1930 continued on a downward spiral. Between 1930 and 1932 industrial production fell more than 33%. Heavy industries were particularly hard hit, iron and steel suffering declines in production of 60% and 50% respectively.<sup>437</sup> In 1932, joint-stock companies registered their first negative return on capital investment since the close of the Great War, (-10%).<sup>438</sup> In addition, Germany was plagued by a series of banking and monetary crises throughout 1931 and 1932. One such crisis prompted the closing of the Berlin stock market for seven months. The most serious consequence of the Great Depression, however, was the huge climb in Germany's unemployment rate. By the end of 1932, six million Germans, approximately 30% of the nation's labor force, were out of work. This figure, which was double that of 1930, is

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<sup>436</sup>For a detailed analysis, see Böldt, H. "Article 48 of the Weimar Republic: Its Historical and Political Implications" in Nicholls, ed. *German Democracy and the Triumph of Hitler* (London 1971).

<sup>437</sup>Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, Table 8, P.277.

<sup>438</sup>Ibid., Table 20, P.286.

considered by most historians to be a conservative estimate.<sup>439</sup>

Germany's unemployment problem had a three-fold effect. Economically, it reduced Weimar's tax base and hence its ability to provide relief to the nation's poor. Politically, it accelerated electoral polarization: most of those newly unemployed joined the ranks of the communist party (KPD), driving those who feared a "red" takeover into the electoral columns of the Nazis. And psychologically, many Germans attributed unemployment, as well as other problems caused by the Great Depression, to the ineffectiveness of parliamentary government in general, thus further undermining the credibility of the Weimar Republic.

Notwithstanding all of these symptoms associated with Germany's economic woes, Brüning (like many of his contemporaries) wished to avoid a repeat of the nation's 1923-4 bout of hyper-inflation. With this in mind, the German Chancellor imposed a series of deflationary measures by emergency decree which included wage and price controls as well as tax increases and reductions in government benefits such as unemployment insurance.<sup>440</sup>

Brüning also believed that his austerity program at home would bolster Germany's diplomatic position abroad. He advocated the formation of an Austro-German customs union and sought armaments equality with other European nations. However,

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<sup>439</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, P.193 and Berghahn, *Modern Germany*, Table 18, P.284. For a comprehensive account of the Depression in Germany, see James, H. *The German Slump, Politics and Economics 1924-1936* (Oxford 1989).

<sup>440</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, P.193 and Nicholls, *Weimar*, P.128. James contends that Brüning was secretly re-inflating the economy. Even if his theory is true, he neglects the fact that Brüning's policy appeared deflationary and hence, was unpopular.

the linchpin of Brüning's "nationalist" foreign policy was the ending of reparations to the Allies. The Chancellor hoped that by demonstrating fiscal responsibility to the Americans through his domestic economic program, he would provide the Republic with diplomatic leverage against the stubborn French. Not only did Brüning wish to lift a financial and psychological burden from the German taxpayer; more importantly, he assumed that a reparations triumph would bolster his own political position since he could then claim credit as the man who freed his nation from the "shackles of Versailles".

Despite achieving some of his goals, Brüning's two-pronged policy failed miserably. His economic initiatives were widely denounced (even by members of his own party). Whatever the long term benefits, most Germans essentially were being ordered to pay more for less -- hardly a prescription for political popularity. Moreover, most Germans found Brüning's cutbacks and tax hikes particularly hard to accept because some groups such as the Reichswehr and East Prussian estate owners actually benefited from the Chancellor's austerity budget. While German workers were coping with falling wages, Brüning succumbed to pressure from Hindenburg's conservative clique and ordered a grain subsidy at 25% above the world market price.<sup>441</sup>

Brüning's foreign policy was only a mixed success. On the one hand, his proposed customs union with Austria met with a rude rebuff from France, who along with her Eastern European allies proceeded to withhold short-term loans from Vienna's largest lending institutions, causing the collapse of the

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<sup>441</sup>Nicholls, *Weimar*, P.127 See also Gessner, "The Dilemma of German Agriculture", in Bessel and Feuchtwanger *Social Change*.

*Creditanstalt* and triggering a European-wide banking crisis. On the other hand, Brüning successfully continued Stresemann's policy of retooling the German army while presenting himself as a "poster-boy" for European disarmament. Most important, Brüning made substantial strides towards the goal of eliminating Germany's debts to the Allies. In June 1931 President Hoover proposed a temporary moratorium on reparations and war debt repayments, which laid the groundwork for a permanent cancellation of payments one year later. However, Brüning failed to accrue political capital from this achievement since the Hoover moratorium was viewed by most Germans as a symbol of American goodwill, not a consequence of the Chancellor's statesmanship.<sup>442</sup> Even if Brüning had been given full credit for his foreign-policy successes, his domestic position would have remained fragile at best. Despite Germany's widespread resentment of the Versailles settlement, Brüning's political fortunes, in fact, depended on his ability to steer Germany through the Great Depression by instilling confidence and hope among a disillusioned populace. As it turned out, Brüning behaved more like Hoover than Roosevelt in this regard. His unceremonious dismissal by Hindenburg at the end of May 1932 met with little popular outcry.

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The major beneficiary of Brüning's failure was Adolf Hitler. Thanks to a highly effective propaganda apparatus, the Nazis built upon their 1930 electoral success with a series of strong

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<sup>442</sup>Schoenthal, "American Attitudes", pp.246-7, Marx, *Illusion*, pp.114-5 and Nicholls, *Weimar*, pp.128-130.

showings in the various regional elections of 1931. And even though a Nazi-backed referendum to oust the Socialist-controlled Prussian Landtag failed in August of that year, the party clearly emerged as Germany's leading anti-republican alternative. In fact, between 1930 and 1932 Nazi party membership swelled from 293,000 to 1.5 million.

Hitler's own popularity was given an unintentional boost as a result of Hugenberg's attempt to revive the anti-Young plan coalition of 1929 and to push through a vote of "no confidence" against Brüning in the Reichstag. Dubbed the "Harzburg Front", the coalition launched its campaign in October 1931.<sup>443</sup> However, unlike the 1929 effort, Hitler, not Hugenberg, was the star attraction. And although the alliance would dissolve as a result of Hitler's decision to run against Hindenburg, the credibility of the Nazi leader in conservative circles was greatly enhanced.

A close examination of the voting patterns in the presidential elections of 13 March and 10 April reveals that much of the moderate German electorate had moved decisively to the right. Whereas Hindenburg ran as the anti-Republican candidate of reaction in 1925, most parliamentarians saw him as Weimar's strongest and last defender against Hitler. In fact, Hindenburg's hard-fought victories in 1932 were attributable largely to the votes of the Socialists and parliamentary moderates who had staunchly opposed his accession to power seven years earlier. Paradoxically, Hindenburg was abandoned by the very coalition of conservatives, nationalists and radical reactionaries that had brought him victory in 1925.

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<sup>443</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, P.195.



The Nazis remained unfazed by their leader's defeat. In fact, Hitler's failed presidential bid was not without a silver lining. It provided Goebbels' Nazi propaganda machine, the *Reichpropagandaleitung* (RPL) with an opportunity to refine many of its campaign tactics to be used in future elections. However, his direct confrontation with the venerated Hindenburg provided Hitler with an aura of legitimacy that he would not have enjoyed otherwise.

It did not take long for the Nazis to reap the benefits of the 1932 presidential campaigns. Later that spring the party made strong showings in Bavaria, Württemberg and Hamburg, while scoring outright victories in Oldenburg and Hessen. However, the most significant of these successes was achieved in April in Socialist-held Prussia in April, where the Nazis garnered an unprecedented 36% of the vote. It was this victory that set in motion a series of fateful decisions by newly appointed Chancellor Franz von Papen which would ultimately destroy Weimar democracy.<sup>444</sup>

The Prussian victory caught the attention of von Papen, who together with his defense minister, General Kurt von Schleicher, sought to dismantle the remaining vestiges of the Weimar Republic and replace them with an authoritarian regime in the Bismarckian and Wilhelmine mold. Towards this end, Papen crafted his policies to help the business and agrarian elites, and at the same time undermine the authority and popularity of the German Left. Although Papen refrained from including the Nazis in his "Government of National Concentration", the new Chancellor actively sought their blessing, in part because Papen

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<sup>444</sup>On the string of Nazi successes, see Childers, *Nazi Voter*, pp.196-201.

lacked a popular base of support. As a gesture of political goodwill, Papen rescinded Brüning's ban on the S.A. and S.S. on June 14 and then, exploiting the ensuing political violence, dismissed the pro-Republican Prussian government of Socialist Otto Braun via Emergency Decree.<sup>445</sup> With the SPD reeling after the Prussian fiasco and the strength of the moderate center parties at their nadir, Papen dissolved the Reichstag and called for new elections to be held on 31 July. The new Chancellor assumed that he could bolster support for his regime by drawing votes from the disparate elements of the German Right since his policies over the previous two months had been designed to appeal to them.

The Reichstag election results only partially vindicated Papen's strategy. The elections were a political victory for the German Right, but not for those parties that backed the regime, the DNVP and the DVP. Instead, Hitler's Nazis garnered 37.3% of the vote and emerged as Germany's largest political party by two-fold. Almost immediately, Hitler sought to undermine von Papen's position and pressed for the formation of a new cabinet with himself at the head. Although Hitler was initially rebuffed by Hindenburg, the prospect of a Nazi dictatorship appeared greater in the summer of 1932 than it had before, and ironically, it would do later.<sup>446</sup>

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The 1930 Reichstag elections fundamentally altered the nature and extent of American press coverage of Germany. As mentioned

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<sup>445</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, pp.202-5 & Nicholls, *Weimar*, pp.133-4.

<sup>446</sup>Nicholls, *Weimar*, pp.136-7.

in Chapter Four, some journalists quickly recognized that 'Hitler, ("the nervous little man with the Charlie Chaplin mustache"<sup>447</sup>) might bring about a catastrophic upheaval, not only in his own country but in all of Europe'.<sup>448</sup> As a result of this widely-held sentiment, Germany again was the center-piece of European news among many segments of the U.S. media.

Herrmann aptly demonstrated this phenomenon on a quantitative level in his study of American journalistic perceptions of the demise of the Weimar Republic. The twelve newspapers he examined: the Boston Daily and Evening Globe, Chicago Daily Tribune, Detroit Free Press, Los Angeles Times, New Orleans Times-Picayune, New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, San Francisco Chronicle, St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Washington Post generated 890 items about Germany between January and April 1932. Each newspaper published news from the Weimar Republic four days a week on average, a figure far exceeding that of the pre-Depression years. Moreover, collectively, nearly 20% of these news items made the front page. Thus, the reader of any of one of these prominent publications could expect to find Germany in the headlines more than once every ten days during this period.<sup>449</sup>

These figures, however, pale in comparison to those compiled by Herrmann for May to August 1932. In this period, the number of news items (1530) was nearly double that of the previous four

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<sup>447</sup>Literary Digest, 28 November 1931.

<sup>448</sup>Literary Digest, 25 October 1930.

<sup>449</sup>This and subsequent calculations in this chapter are based on the appendices in Herrmann, "American Perceptions".

months. Moreover, a remarkable 21.5% of these stories made the front page of Herrmann's broad sample. Thus, not only could each paper's readership expect to find news about Germany virtually every day but they would view it on the front page at least once or twice a week.

Hitler's presidential challenge to Hindenburg in February also shifted the focus of the American press within the context of its German press coverage. Whereas the bulk of German-based news stories centered on international issues such as reparations and disarmament throughout 1931, internal politics (of which the Nazis were a salient feature) accounted for approximately half of all news emanating from the Weimar Republic between February and August 1932, dwarfing all other subjects. Another important trend was the press's increasing emphasis on covering outbreaks of political violence in Germany. Although not unknown to the American reader, civil unrest remained a secondary focus of the press until the early spring of 1932. Herrmann's analysis indicates that from March through August 1932 (save May) the number of stories related to domestic unrest was exceeded only by those concerning internal politics, while international issues lost their prominence. For example, despite the meetings of the Lausanne and Geneva conferences in June, the collective number of news items on reparations, debts and disarmament as well as the proceedings themselves was barely half the number of news items concerning Germany's domestic politics.

Herrmann's statistical analyses suggest that between January and August of 1932 most American newspaper readers were inundated with information about the plight of the Weimar

Republic. It is important to note, however, that the issue of anti-semitism, whether in the context of Nazi ideology or S.A. violence against Jews, received negligible attention from the mainstream U.S. newspaper media. Fewer than one percent of the 2420 German-related news items in Herrmann's sample addressed the topic. Between January and August 1932, the Boston Evening and Daily Globe published the most stories about Nazi anti-semitism (5) while five of the twelve newspapers: the Detroit Free Press, New Orleans Times-Picayune, Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph and the Washington Post failed to publish a single story about the matter throughout the entire period. This is not to suggest that the American public was unaware that 'anti-semitism was an outstanding feature of Hitler's philosophy' (in fact, many journalists noted it during the Beer Hall Putsch), but rather that it was not the defining image of him or his party. Instead, the prevailing portrait of Hitler during this period was that of a radical nationalist and dangerous militarist similar to Mussolini.<sup>450</sup> One reason for the press's "downplay" of Nazi anti-semitism during this period may be attributed to Goebbels' post-1928 electoral strategy which stressed more popular issues such as anti-Marxism, nationalist resentment of the Treaty of Versailles and the Weimar system's inability to cure Germany's economic problems.<sup>451</sup> Not until the inauguration of Nazi anti-Jewish policies in March of 1933 would the American press focus its attention on this issue.

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<sup>450</sup>See Schoenthal, "American Attitudes", P.262.

<sup>451</sup>This is not to suggest that the German electorate was not aware of Hitler's rabid anti-semitic views but rather that it did not see it as the Party's central feature. There are a number of excellent studies regarding this issue. For a "grassroots" evaluation, see Allen, W.S., *The Nazi Seizure of Power: the Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-45* (Chicago 1965).

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Between January and August 1932 the extent, nature and tone of German news during this period was shaped by developments within the Weimar Republic itself. Even though there were important differences in the way some newspapers interpreted Weimar politics, a remarkable degree of consensus existed among a plethora of regionally and ideologically diverse publications (including those in Herrmann's sample). Throughout the spring and summer of 1932 most American journalists recognized the general political unrest which had gripped Germany since the onset of the Great Depression. Headlines such as 'GERMAN POLITICAL RIOTS TAKE BIG TOLL', 'NAZIS AND COMMUNISTS CLASH IN POLITICAL FIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE REICH' and 'RIOTS CONTINUE IN GERMANY' became commonplace, especially at election time.<sup>452</sup> Though most newspapers thought that the so-called moderate elements were not exercising effective control of the Weimar government, they stopped short of expressing the view that Germany was on the verge of civil war. The Review of Reviews voiced this sentiment: 'it is perfectly unmistakable that a German revolution, or a shift in German control to a Fascist dictatorship without violence, may and even will most likely occur'.<sup>453</sup> It should be noted that the number of stories from Herrmann's sample on internal stability in the month of August (152) was nearly double that of the average of the previous seven months. This sudden increase likely reflects the concern

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<sup>452</sup>Washington Post, 2 July 1932, Philadelphia Inquirer 4 July 1932, in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", P.33.

<sup>453</sup>Review of Reviews, January 1932, P. 36, Ibid.

of American journalists following the Nazi victory in the Reichstag elections of 31 July.

The American press's general unease about Germany's lack of internal stability coincided with its acknowledgment that the Nazis were a growing political force. With the exception of March and early April (when journalists euphorically celebrated Hindenburg's victories over Hitler), American newspapers expressed the prophetic fear that 'the German government would not attempt to resist Hitler's seizure of power' and might even bring him into power constitutionally'.<sup>454</sup> Their anxiety was further heightened by the strong Nazi showing in the Prussian elections in April which the Literary Digest took as 'proof that the star of Adolf Hitler, son of an obscure Austrian functionary, is still in the ascendant of its rise towards fascism in Germany'.<sup>455</sup>

Few journalists took the position that a Nazi takeover was inevitable. In fact, of Herrmann's sample, the number of news items which expressed the view that Nazi power had peaked following the July 1932 Reichstag elections far exceeded those which predicted that a Hitler dictatorship was in the offing. Frederick Kuh of the United Press wire service stated that the results of the elections had 'effectively frustrated the supremacy of the Right-Wing forces in Parliament so that Hitler's ambition to achieve lone mastery of Germany was balked'.<sup>456</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer was even more decisive -- 'the Reichstag election... ruined forever Adolf Hitler's

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<sup>454</sup>New York Sun (undated), as cited in Literary Digest 9 January 1932.

<sup>455</sup>Literary Digest 7 May 1932.

<sup>456</sup>Literary Digest, 13 August 1932.

ambition of ruling the Reich with an independent majority'.<sup>457</sup> However, the reader should note that the percentage of those news items which took a similar view to that of the Inquirer fell from 40% to 25% to 10% during the three occasions which sparked a certain measure of optimism: Hindenburg's first victory over Hitler on 13 March, Hindenburg's second victory over Hitler on 10 April and the July Reichstag elections. Because the Nazis had emerged as Germany's largest political party as a result of the July elections, it should come as no surprise that of the 133 news items generated about the Nazis in its aftermath, 102 expressed the view that Hitler was gaining strength.

Given the consensus among the mainstream American press that the Weimar Republic was in a general state of disorder, a condition perpetuated in large part by the Nazis, one might expect to find a similar pattern with regard to the prospects for the survival of Weimar democracy. However, no such consensus was reached until the end of April. Thereafter, American journalists became overwhelmingly pessimistic about the Republic's prospects of weathering the political and economic storm which had befallen it. Whereas a slim majority of Herrmann's newspaper sample opined that the Republic was in a strong position for future survival during the first four months of 1932, only three news items (all published in May) out of fifty-six were reasonably confident of the Republic's longevity in the succeeding four months.

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<sup>457</sup>Philadelphia Inquirer, editorial, 3 August 1932. For similar sentiments, see Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, 2 August 1932 and Washington Post, editorial, 14 August 1932 as cited Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Five.



Several factors may account for this relatively sudden change in attitude. Much of the American press was alarmed by the impressive electoral gains by the Nazis in the 24 April Diet elections, particularly in Prussia. Frank Simonds, a noted reporter and columnist, reflected this apprehension:

Stripped of all euphemistic disguises, the decision of the Prussian election places Europe and the rest of the world on notice that a majority of the German people have rejected the republican conceptions embodied in the Weimar constitution and the political policies expressed in the accord of Locarno.<sup>458</sup>

The Party's victory on 31 July only seemed to reinforce the pessimism of late April. However, it appears that developments in the intervening period also contributed to the American press's new state of mind. Hindenburg's removal of Brüning, who many journalists such as Walter Lippmann regarded as 'the best liked and most trusted man in Europe', seemed to signal the beginning of the end for Weimar democracy.<sup>459</sup> The appointment of Franz von Papen as Brüning's successor did little to restore the American press's confidence in the Republic. The Nation described Papen as 'everything that a German Chancellor should not be [my emphasis]' while the New Orleans Times-Picayune criticized Papen's cabinet for being 'crammed with ennobled aristocrats and devoid of parliamentarians'.<sup>460</sup> Moreover, the fact that Papen had been accused of spying against the United States in 1915 during his stint at the German embassy in

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<sup>458</sup>Detroit Free Press, 8 May 1932, as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Four.

<sup>459</sup>Los Angeles Times, 1 June 1932, Ibid.

<sup>460</sup>"The German Peril", Nation, 15 June 1932, Ibid. and New Orleans Times-Picayune, 2 June 1932.

Washington only served to taint further his image on the western shores of the Atlantic.

However, it was Papen's policies, especially his appeasement of the Nazis, which proved to be his greatest public relations detriment. Most journalists condemned his lifting of Brüning's ban on the S.A. and S.S. while his ousting of the democratically elected government of Prussia in July was viewed by many publications such as the Detroit Free Press and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch as indicative of 'Germany's rapid descent from bad to worse' and as 'a nullification of all the results of the post-war revolution that established Germany as a Republic'.<sup>461</sup> In sum, Papen's appointment signalled to the American press corps that militarism in the Junker mold had returned to Germany. In fact, Herrmann's newspaper sample generated 260 items on this subject from June through August -- all but five expressing the view that Wilhelmine-style militarism was either on the rise or that it had already supplanted Weimar democracy.

Nazi electoral successes, the fall of Brüning, the appointment of von Papen and his use of blunt dictatorial measures to suppress democratically elected bodies served to undermine the American press's faith in von Hindenburg, upon whom optimistic journalists had pinned their hopes of preserving the Weimar Republic. Hindenburg enjoyed his greatest popularity among American newspapermen during the presidential campaigns against Hitler. In the first four months of 1932, journalists often referred to him as 'a man of steel, 'the rock to which the

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<sup>461</sup>Frederick Kuh, Detroit Free Press, 21 & 22 July 1932, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Ibid.

Reich is tied' and an 'inveterate soldier and statesman'.<sup>462</sup> His victories of 13 March and 10 April were almost universally greeted with unabashed enthusiasm as well as a sigh of relief. Banner front-page headlines such as 'HINDENBURG SWAMPS HITLER', 'HITLER IS POOR SECOND IN GERMAN CONTEST' and 'CRUSHING DEFEAT ADMINISTERED HITLER' rang from the Atlantic to the Pacific.<sup>463</sup> The Literary Digest proclaimed that the 'triumph for the staunch, gray-haired President is proof positive of Germany's determination to follow a path of moderation in internal and international affairs' and one that 'offers the securest guaranty for American investments in the Fatherland'.<sup>464</sup>

However, the press's confidence in Hindenburg was shaken soon after. The media split on his dismissal of Brüning. Publications such as the Literary Digest believed that the Reich President's 'brusk' move only served to 'frighten the French, make some English editors distrustful and generally alarm Europe on the eve of the Lausanne Reparations Conference'.<sup>465</sup> The Associated Press wire service also denounced Hindenburg's decision as 'without parallel in the history of the German Republic'.<sup>466</sup> In contrast, Walter Lippmann justified the move, noting that 'it had been evident that Dr. Brüning was rapidly

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<sup>462</sup>Editorial, New Orleans Times-Picayune 16 February 1932. editorial San Francisco Chronicle, 12 March 1932, See also Washington Post, 16 February 1932, as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Three.

<sup>463</sup>Detroit Free Press & Philadelphia Inquirer, 14 March 1932, Ibid. See also New Orleans Times-Picayune 14 March 1932.

<sup>464</sup>"Hindenburg Making Germany Safe For Everybody", Literary Digest, 26 March 1932.

<sup>465</sup>Literary Digest 11 June 1932.

<sup>466</sup>Philadelphia Inquirer & Daily Globe, 31 May 1932, as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Four.

losing the civilian support which he had used so skillfully to hold the army in line'.<sup>467</sup> Furthermore, many American journalists blamed Hindenburg for von Papen's decision to dissolve the Reichstag on 5 June, a move regarded by many at the time as a first step towards dictatorship. And although the aged Hindenburg was praised for refusing Hitler's request for the German chancellory in the aftermath of the July Reichstag elections,<sup>468</sup> American journalists failed to rekindle their previous faith in the Reich President. In fact, unlike the prior seven years, Hindenburg ceased to be considered by mainstream U.S. newspapers as the linchpin on which the Weimar Republic rested. After August, the press shifted this burden onto another military man, General Kurt von Schleicher, not exactly the symbol of parliamentary democracy.<sup>469</sup>

The developments during the first eight months of 1932 disturbed most mainstream American journalists. Although the majority of them did not view a Nazi dictatorship as inevitable, they were clearly concerned about its prospect. At the very least, many of them had concluded that Weimar democracy was coming to an inglorious end. After the summer of 1932, the point of contention among most journalists was not whether the Republic would survive but what form of government would replace it.

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<sup>467</sup>Los Angeles Times, 1 June 1932, P.1, Ibid.

<sup>468</sup>Herrmann, "American Perceptions", P.100. See also Appendix H, P.236.

<sup>469</sup>Ibid.

With the exception of the New York Times and the Boston Daily and Evening Globe, the Chicago Daily Tribune published more news items on Germany between January and August 1932 (206) than the nine other major dailies that comprised Herrmann's sample. Excluding the New York Times (whose abundance of news items corrupted Herrmann's mean), McCormick's paper equalled or exceeded the average per month output of news stories of Herrmann's sample except for July. Even including the New York Times, the Tribune fares well, achieving numerical parity or superiority in five months out of the eight-month period.

The Chicago Daily Tribune's German coverage became the focal point of its European news coverage in 1931 and 1932, coinciding with Weimar's steady political and economic destabilization. The Home Office not only pushed its Berlin bureau chief, Sigrid Schultz, to send both cable and mail articles, but with respect to her cables, informed her that 'at times we have had to take liberties and blow your stories up to the space that they seemed to merit'.<sup>470</sup> The Home Office, now more secure with Schultz at the helm in Berlin (she was in her eighth year of service in Germany, a veteran by foreign journalist standards) 'tried to be very careful to be guided by the ideas outlined in [her] dispatches',<sup>471</sup>

To a large extent, the Chicago Daily Tribune's coverage of Germany in the first eight months of 1932 mirrored that of its mainstream counterparts. Consistent with Herrmann's sample, McCormick's daily published its greatest number of stories about

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<sup>470</sup>Scharschug to Schultz, 16 August 1932, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>471</sup>Ibid.

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Germany in June, July and August. This was due to Germany being central to international developments, such as the Lausanne and Geneva conferences, and internal events -- Brüning's dismissal, von Papen's appointment, the stormy prelude to the July Reichstag elections (especially the overthrow of the Prussian government) and Hitler's bid to become Chancellor in August. The only significant deviation from the overall reporting pattern occurred between January and February, when the number of items published by the Tribune increased by five, while Herrmann's sample fell by two stories on average during the same interval.

After January 1932, the Tribune, like other large mainstream American newspapers, focused more on German domestic politics and less on international issues such as reparations and disarmament. In fact, the percentage of news items that the Tribune devoted to these areas practically matched those of Herrmann's sample; forty-four percent were centered on internal politics and twenty-five percent on international issues.

Like most of the American press, the Tribune paid scant attention to Nazi anti-semitism. The paper published only three stories on this topic between January and August (which was actually three times the average of Herrmann's sample). All three stories described violence by Storm Troopers against Jews; stories about Nazi racial ideology were not published -- even though Schultz sent mail articles about the Nazi anti-Jewish department store campaign in June 1932. She also sent an unpublished story about Nazi racial attitudes on courtship and marriage. In it Schultz wrote:

Hitler's orators, editors and followers, aside from their anti-semitism and hostility toward black, brown, and yellow

peoples, have laid violent stress on the doctrine of the inherent superiority of the nordic strain over all the others of Europe. They inveigh against assimilation or even association with non-nordics.<sup>472</sup>

The Tribune understood that many facets of Nazi anti-semitic ideology were perceived by most Americans as excessive, but not shockingly deplorable. It is worth remembering that the 1920's and 1930's was a time when the Ku Klux Klan was at the height of its political power and when Jews were excluded from many aspects of American mainstream life, including professional and social clubs, businesses such as advertising as well as several Ivy League universities. McCormick himself did not hold any special sympathy for the plight of European (let alone, American) Jewry. George Seldes, who had preceded John Clayton as the paper's Berlin bureau chief in the early 1920's, recalled in his memoirs that the Tribune could never secure an interview with Albert Einstein because McCormick refused to accede to the physicist's request for a twenty-five dollar donation to a Zionist fund. McCormick's parsimony is surprising in light of the fact that the Tribune publisher had paid five thousand dollars for Isadora Duncan's letters and paid twenty-five thousand dollars to induce Sigmund Freud to visit him in Chicago.<sup>473</sup> One piece of evidence, however, indicates that McCormick wanted his news articles to be devoid of obvious racial bias. In December 1925 he criticized John Clayton for 'his excessive superior nordic attitude' reflected in his articles on Poland and ordered him to act as 'dispassionate

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<sup>472</sup>"Nazi Marriage", 14 January 1932, Unedited Proofs, Sigrid Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>473</sup>Seldes, G., *Witness to a Century: Encounters with the Noted, the Notorious, and Three SOB's*, (New York 1987) pp.151-152.

investigator', suggesting yet again the great degree to which the tone of a correspondent's reporting can be influenced by an imposing superior.<sup>474</sup>

It was the Chicago Daily Tribune's coverage of street clashes (usually between Nazis and Communists) and royal intrigues which distinguished it from other newspapers. With the exception of May, the Tribune published a higher proportion of stories devoted to internal unrest during the first eight months of 1932 than those publications in Herrmann's sample. The paper also ran stories on this subject even when its mainstream media counterparts did not. In February 1932, for instance, the Tribune accounted for one-third of all stories about civil unrest in Herrmann's sample of twelve newspapers. So pervasive was this aspect of the paper's German coverage that it was a mainstay of Sigrid Schultz's political dispatches.<sup>475</sup> Correspondents from other European countries also contributed to the paper's "riot" coverage. In July 1932, the Tribune published a dispatch from William Shirer humorously entitled: 'VIENNA NAZIS SLUG DIPLOMATS AT SWANKY CLUB; MOB WRECKS FURNITURE, SWINGS TABLE LEGS'.<sup>476</sup>

That the Tribune provided more extensive (and at times more exaggerated) coverage of Germany's civil unrest than its mainstream competitors should come as no surprise. Wars and revolutions had always received special attention in McCormick's

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<sup>474</sup>McCormick to Clayton, 17 December 1925, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>475</sup>See for example, CDT 10 March, 1 June, 18 July, 31 July, 2 August and 3 August 1932.

<sup>476</sup>CDT, 1 July 1932. For Shirer's other "riot" stories, see 11 May and 3 June 1932.



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paper (hence, its saturation coverage of the Sino-Japanese conflict in Manchuria). Moreover, in McCormick's eyes, a heightened state of tension always preceded major disruptions to the status quo; there was never "a calm before a storm". As mentioned in Chapter One, McCormick took a calculated risk in shaping the paper's German coverage in 1923 as if revolution were imminent. In 1932, the Tribune once again emphasized internal unrest, laying the groundwork for its coverage of a possible civil war.

What is unusual is that the Tribune Home Office had actually taken a respite from this strategy at the close of 1930 when Sigrid Schultz was instructed to reduce her quota of "riot" stories because their frequency was diminishing their news appeal.<sup>477</sup> Schultz and her superiors had 'hoped for bigger and better riots' but were swayed by the personal assurances of the German finance minister and Press Department chief in late January 1931 that the German domestic situation was improving.<sup>478</sup> However, by the summer of 1931 reality had set in and the Tribune renewed its emphasis on "riot" stories.

Both Schultz and the Home Office now saw that 'riot messages received the best play'.<sup>479</sup> However, management was disturbed by the fact that the Associated Press and the United Press wire services were not only providing more extensive coverage of civil unrest, they were 'jazzing stories up' (a euphemism for

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<sup>477</sup>See Scharschug to Schultz, 10 December 1930 & Schultz to Scharschug, 22 December 1930, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>478</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 26 January 1931, Ibid.

<sup>479</sup>Ibid., 24 August 1931.

distortion) to further enhance their appeal.<sup>480</sup> The Home Office concluded that the Tribune was 'underplaying riots' and risked losing readers.<sup>481</sup>

Schultz had prepared the Berlin bureau for the challenge from the powerful wire services by establishing an elaborate "riot organization".

We get general news through the Ullstein service (at no cost) and the Telegraph Union service. We have our informants in police headquarters. Among the Nazis and the Communists, we have the secret phone numbers of their leaders. The dinners we give them to encourage their willingness to talk don't appear on the expense account, but they give us the necessary contact. Should a policeman, Nazi or Communist get killed, I can assure you we hear about it!<sup>482</sup>

The prospect of the Home Office overplaying the internal unrest angle to the point of distortion, however, worried Schultz. In the same letter in which she outlined her "battle plan" against the wire services, she warned her superiors:

I know there are lots of stories from Berlin that could be "jazzed up". I know quite a number of our colleagues, especially in the [news] agencies, are doing it, but I always understood that the Tribune wants accurate and reliable news and every member of this office tries to be reliable and send only news that we sincerely believe or know to be true, after investigating it. I believe our readers prefer this "safe and sane", if unspectacular reporting -- or am I wrong?<sup>483</sup>

Schultz's concern stemmed from an unfortunate episode involving a Tribune story published under her byline on 10 August 1931. According to the front-page lead article entitled

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<sup>480</sup>Ibid.

<sup>481</sup>Ibid.

<sup>482</sup>Ibid.

<sup>483</sup>Ibid.

'MOBS ROCK BERLIN', Communist militants fired upon a formation of Berlin police during the late hours of 9 August after the latter attempted to storm the offices of a KPD newspaper. A shootout then ensued leaving four policemen and twelve Communists dead, along with many wounded.<sup>484</sup> The next day the Tribune published a follow-up story which stated that 'at least sixteen people were killed' and fifty were wounded in the melee, many of them critically.<sup>485</sup>

Two weeks later, when the published copy of her story arrived in the Berlin office, Schultz was overcome by panic -- her dispatch had been altered. She alerted cable editor George Scharschug that although 'there had been serious clashes' on the evening of 9 August', 'the slaughter story of 10 August was not true -- there was no "mob firing on the police in mass formation in Berlin". There was no single dead [sic], not to speak of sixteen'.<sup>486</sup> After Schultz received the Tribune's follow-up story, she feared that 'more corpses might sneak into our stories and create more havoc'.<sup>487</sup> She suggested that someone in the New York Cable Office, perhaps the rewrite man, was 'tempted by the figure sixteen'.<sup>488</sup> Although Schultz did not directly accuse any of her superiors of altering her copy, she sternly

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<sup>484</sup>CDT, 10 August 1931.

<sup>485</sup>Ibid. 11 August 1931.

<sup>486</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 24 August 1931, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>487</sup>Ibid., 26 August 1931.

<sup>488</sup>Ibid.

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informed the Home Office that 'if you want more "riots", we'll send more, but authentic news -- not New York fabrications'.<sup>489</sup>

And for good reason. Weimar officials did not take kindly to the Tribune's error. An image of stability was important for the government in its foreign policy, especially for attracting overseas investment. Not surprisingly, the German Press Department unleashed its wrath on Schultz. She reflected, 'the tragedy [of this episode] is that these *insertions* [my italics] into our cables ruined a good Brüning interview for us... The thirty-two dead were rubbed under my nose and the interview was lost'.<sup>490</sup> Fortunately for Schultz, the fake story incident appeared to be an aberration; there is no evidence of the Home Office taking liberties with her "riot" dispatches following the episode. Schultz continued to send an overabundance of cables on civil unrest over the course of the next year. The available evidence seems to indicate that she managed to maintain her credibility as well by exercising restraint when the costs of reporting a "riot" story outweighed its benefits. In August 1932, for instance, Schultz refrained from cabling "hot" information about an impending S.A. march on Berlin because doing so would have revealed the name of a long-time Nazi informant.<sup>491</sup> She also refrained from cabling the news that the poorly planned march never took place because reporting 'a revolution that doesn't "revolute" makes a correspondent look as if he or she were nervous, jumpy and scared'.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>489</sup>Ibid.

<sup>490</sup>Ibid.

<sup>491</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 16 August 1932, Ibid.

<sup>492</sup>Ibid.

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The Tribune's emphasis on Germany's internal unrest was one of its distinctive features; its coverage portending a Hohenzollern return to power was another. As mentioned in previous chapters, the Tribune consistently highlighted the monarchic angle in its coverage of Germany, especially during times of instability. It did so during the tumultuous year of 1923 as well as during the hotly contested Hindenburg/Marx campaign in 1925.

1932 would prove to be no exception. The paper published more articles exclusively devoted to royal intrigues than did any of its major competitors. More significantly, substantial chunks of the Tribune's general political stories were devoted to Hohenzollern activities. In a front-page preview of the first Hindenburg vs. Hitler presidential race, one-fourth of Sigrid Schultz's analysis was about the machinations of German princes.<sup>493</sup> Even the most trivial of royal news was reported by the paper. Not only did the Tribune publish a story entitled 'EX-KAISER ILL; CATCHES COLD SAWING WOOD', it ran on page one!<sup>494</sup> On many occasions Schultz wove the monarchic angle into the event. The appointment of Franz von Papen made her task easy. When the newly-appointed Chancellor announced the names of his Junker-filled ministry, the Tribune published the front page banner headline: 'LINK EX-KAISER TO CABINET'.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>493</sup>CDT, 10 March 1932. P.1.

<sup>494</sup>CDT, 4 January 1932, P.1.

<sup>495</sup>CDT, 2 June 1932, P.1.

The Home Office was very pleased with Schultz's approach to the von Papen story as well as others.<sup>496</sup> Management and the Berlin bureau shared similar reasons for inflating the role of the Hohenzollerns in German politics. Both sincerely envisioned a monarchic restoration in Germany's future. 'I know the New York Times is most emphatic in saying, no more Kaiser in Germany [sic] -- most others are too', Schultz wrote the Home Office, '-- but monarchism is not dead in Germany'.<sup>497</sup> The Tribune's cable editor, George Scharschug agreed, replying, 'you are the only correspondent with a decided Kaiser movement complex, but I have a sneaking idea that you are on the right track'...'you have a most interesting story on your hands and a story, I think, that will continue to grow'.<sup>498</sup> At least of equal importance was that Schultz and management agreed that royalty stories were very popular among American readers. 'I send most of the stuff I can find on the Kaiserists, believing the public likes it', wrote Schultz in August 1932.<sup>499</sup> The Home Office concurred, noting that her 'stories on German political affairs have continued to get good play'.<sup>500</sup>

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With the exceptions of its emphasis on violence and monarchic intrigues, the extent and composition of the Chicago Daily

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<sup>496</sup>Scharschug to Schultz, 12 June 1932, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>497</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 20 August 1932, Schultz Papers, Ibid.

<sup>498</sup>Scharschug to Schultz, 9 August 1932, Ibid.

<sup>499</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 20 August 1932, Ibid.

<sup>500</sup>Scharschug to Schultz, 9 August 1932, Ibid.

Tribune's coverage of Germany in the first eight months of 1932 mirrored that of the mainstream American press, as did the the tone and tenor of its reporting.<sup>501</sup> Like its counterparts, the Tribune was optimistic about the future of the Weimar Republic after Hindenburg's 13 March victory, stating that Nazism would not grow 'unless events are critically unfortunate'.<sup>502</sup>

However, its confidence in Weimar stability was steadily eroded during the ensuing months. The Nazi victory in the Prussian elections in late April alarmed Schultz.<sup>503</sup> The Tribune characterized Brüning's fall the following May as one which would 'have grave consequences in the international situation'. McCormick praised 'his statesmanly moderation' and regretted that his removal occurred 'at so critical a time'.<sup>504</sup> McCormick held Brüning in such high regard that he refused to publish a Schultz mail story which criticized the regime for its suppression of radical press organs.<sup>505</sup> In addition, the jingoistic publisher expressed clear reservations about Brüning's successor, von Papen, especially with respect to his spying activities against the United States during the neutrality period. In a July editorial, McCormick stated, 'If a bold and unscrupulous man were wanted to overthrow the republic of Germany, von Papen's record would point him out as

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<sup>501</sup>See Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Appendices D & H.

<sup>502</sup>"The German Election", CDT editorial, 15 March 1932.

<sup>503</sup>See CDT, 24 & 25 April 1932, P.1.

<sup>504</sup>"Reversal In Germany", CDT editorial, 3 June 1932.

<sup>505</sup>"Liberty of the Press", Unedited Mail Proof, 11 February 1932, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

suites to the task'.<sup>506</sup> And although the Tribune initially held out hope that the moderates might temper the radical Right following the Nazi electoral victory in July<sup>507</sup>, it took a more profoundly pessimistic view the following day: 'Not only is Germany politically fragmented, but its greatest masses are out on the two extremes... A democracy can exist with its masses gravitating toward the center... but not when this is reversed.'<sup>508</sup>

As with most segments of the mainstream American press, the linchpin of the Tribune's assessment of Germany was its perception of Hindenburg. And not surprisingly, the Weimar President's image underwent a radical change between January and August 1932.

Early on, Schultz had equated Hindenburg with George Washington: 'first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen'.<sup>509</sup> Schultz praised his 'eagerness "to do something", to help, to balance the pros and cons of each situation carefully and then to take a quick decision tempered with kindness and respect for the other fellow's case'.<sup>510</sup> She also stressed his youthful vitality.<sup>511</sup> Most important, however, Schultz tried to counter the notion that the aged Field Marshal lacked awareness and perspicacity; arguing, 'his aides and

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<sup>506</sup>"Captain von Papen in the U.S.", CDT editorial, 31 July 1932.

<sup>507</sup>"The German Political Crisis", CDT editorial, 2 August 1932.

<sup>508</sup>"Failures in Democracy", CDT editorial, 3 August 1932.

<sup>509</sup>Unedited Proof, 3 January 1932, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>510</sup>Ibid.

<sup>511</sup>Ibid.



friends cannot lull Hindenburg into a blind feeling of confidence so dear to the hearts of advisors of statesmen' and 'he waxes very indignant when he gets the impression that something is being kept from him'.<sup>512</sup>

The Home Office's agreement with Schultz's assessment of Hindenburg was evidenced by the fact that many of her dispatches received minimal editing. In fact, Schultz's published Presidential and Prussian election previews virtually matched those of her mail proofs sent two weeks earlier.<sup>513</sup> Management's positive sentiments towards Hindenburg were also reflected on the editorial page. McCormick was confident that 'with Hindenburg as head of state, reckless experimentation in international affairs is a danger avoided'.<sup>514</sup>

By August 1932, however, Schultz's faith in Hindenburg had dissipated. Privately, she conceded that his 'age is telling on him...his son and aides can make him do what they wish', although he still has the 'vitality to stop some of the more wild plans of the Papen crowd'.<sup>515</sup> Schultz's newly-found misgivings concerning Hindenburg's ability to preserve Weimar democracy, however, remained unpublished. In fact, the Tribune refrained from evaluating, or in many cases, even mentioning Hindenburg by name in its news articles or editorials throughout

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<sup>512</sup>Ibid.

<sup>513</sup>Unedited Proof (untitled), 18 February 1932 & "Hitler Continues Struggle for Power: Why April 24th Elections Decisive for Germany", Unedited Proof, 11 April 1932, Ibid.

<sup>514</sup>"The German Election", CDT editorial, 15 March 1932.

<sup>515</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 6 September 1932, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

July and August 1932. Without the benefit of archival evidence, one can only speculate as to the reasons behind this silence.

Schultz's private papers, however, shed light on the matter. Her letters to the Home Office indicate that the Tribune's pro-Hindenburg stance was based in part on McCormick's desire to obtain interviews with and access to the Reich President: a difficult goal because Hindenburg 'often shied away from the limelight'. In a letter to McCormick dated 30 January 1931, Schultz wrote, 'Tribune editorials should have smoothed the way considerably [towards obtaining an interview with Hindenburg]'. And she was quite pleased when 'the Foreign Office told [her] that the President was delighted with them'.<sup>516</sup>

Thus, the Chicago Daily Tribune's German coverage, with its heavy emphasis on civil unrest and monarchic intrigues, as well as its pro-Hindenburg position, demonstrates how the editorial and proprietary interests of the newspaper can affect the nature and tone of its reporting.

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Whereas the tone and tenor of the rest of the mainstream American press's German coverage generally fluctuated with the ebb and flow of events, the reporting of the New York Times appeared to be on a pre-set mission to vindicate and validate the strength of Weimar democracy and the character of the German people. The editorial department's near-messianic faith in the longevity of the Weimar Republic did not waver between January and August 1932, even on those occasions when that of its own news department did. As previously mentioned, the optimism of

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<sup>516</sup>Schultz to McCormick, 30 January 1931, Ibid.

the New York Times would come to represent the most extreme case of rose-coloured views among the large mainstream American press.

After it had spent a year and a half minimizing and dedramatizing Germany's economic and political problems, the hopes of the New York Times were raised in February 1932 when Hindenburg announced that he would seek a second term as President of the Weimar Republic. Echoing the sentiments of many publications, the Times called his decision 'a victory for the cause of peace and moderation'.<sup>517</sup> However, the Times went beyond the views of the consensus in stating that Hindenburg's election would 'assure a victory for Brüning's coalition' in any future Reichstag campaign.<sup>518</sup> In contrast, the paper's Berlin bureau appeared far more cautious. On the eve of the election, the Times published an article by Frederick Birchall, who had recently become the de facto bureau chief, in which he stated that 'it would be reckless to predict tomorrow's vote' because there are 'so many imponderables'.<sup>519</sup> He conceded that both Hitler and Thäelmann (the Communist candidate) would 'get a considerably larger vote than they had ever received before' because of 'the enormous discontent affecting every class' in Germany. Hence, the outcome of the election would depend on the 'extent of the drift' towards radicalization.<sup>520</sup>

Despite Hitler's strong showing (which was enough to force a run-off election), both the news and editorial departments

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<sup>517</sup>"Hindenburg Against Fascism", NYT editorial, 16 February 1932.

<sup>518</sup>Ibid.

<sup>519</sup>NYT, 12 March 1932, P.1.

<sup>520</sup>Ibid.

expressed unrestrained jubilation following Hindenburg's victory. This 'true "Feste Burg"... signals hope in democracy and in friendly international relations' stated one editorial,<sup>521</sup> while its Berlin dispatches called the election a 'victory for Brüning' and boldly stated that it indicated 'the first step toward the elimination of the Nazis as a powerful political factor in Germany'.<sup>522</sup> Hindenburg's run-off victory on 10 April reinforced the Times's view that the future of the Republic was bright. 'There can be little doubt that Germany's internal questions will be dealt with successfully' opined an 11 April editorial,<sup>523</sup> while the front page proclaimed that 'by converting hope into certainty', Hindenburg's 'decisive victory' has 'greatly stiffened the forces of liberalism'.<sup>524</sup>

Only the Prussian Diet elections seemed to cause consternation for Rollo Ogden, Dr. John Finley and the rest of the New York Times editorial board. However, even in this case, the paper rationalized the 'unpleasant result', taking solace in the fact that the Nazis garnered only thirty-six percent of the vote, far less than a majority. However, it did acknowledge the severity of the defeat for Prussia's pro-Republican parties, stating that the Nazi victory may place the Socialists and others 'in a hopeless minority'.<sup>525</sup>

One of the more peculiar features of the New York Times's German coverage was its reaction to Brüning's ouster and von

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<sup>521</sup>"A True Feste Burg", NYT editorial, 14 March 1932.

<sup>522</sup>NYT, 14 March 1932.

<sup>523</sup>"Germany Stands Fast", NYT editorial, 11 April 1932.

<sup>524</sup>NYT, 11 April 1932.

<sup>525</sup>"After the Prussian Test", NYT editorial, 26 April 1932.

Papen's appointment. The Berlin bureau's reaction was similar to that of much of the mainstream press; namely, that 'Hindenburg's forced retirement of Brüning may have grave internal repercussions'.<sup>526</sup> Moreover, Guido Enderis characterized the newly-installed von Papen regime as 'ultra-conservative, if not reactionary' and one that 'cannot be said in any sense to represent the German people'.<sup>527</sup> In stark contrast, the editorial board minimized the importance of Brüning's removal. Although the editorial praised Brüning's 'intelligence, energy, courage and amazing resourcefulness', it also posited that the danger associated with his removal 'may not prove to be so great as many have hastily predicted'.<sup>528</sup> Moreover, in contrast to virtually every large mainstream American newspaper, the New York Times welcomed the von Papen regime, because 'a conservative Government heavily tinged with militarism and nationalism may be able to stave off a Hitler regime longer than Brüning could have done'.<sup>529</sup> Not only did the board refrain from criticizing the new leadership for the unconstitutional deposition of the Prussian government in July, it actually praised von Papen for 'putting down with an iron hand the inveterate disturbances of peace' and downplayed the whole affair as 'merely a reassertion of the old German instinct for public order'.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>526</sup>NYT, 31 May 1932, P.1.

<sup>527</sup>NYT, 2 & 3 June 1932, P.1.

<sup>528</sup>"The Fall of Brüning", NYT editorial, 31 May 1932.

<sup>529</sup>"Brüning's Successor", 2 June 1932, Ibid.

<sup>530</sup>"Martial Law in Prussia", 21 July 1932, Ibid.

The Times ended the first eight months of 1932 where it had began -- with unmitigated confidence in the fortitude and resilience of the Weimar Republic. In an editorial published on the day of the Reichstag elections (31 July), the paper predicted that:

there is reason to hope and believe that control of the next Reichstag will be in the hands of parties and men [who are] neither noisy agitators or idle dreamers, but [in those] confident of being able to lead Germany back to much of her old prestige and prosperity by sane methods and a strong stable government.<sup>531</sup>

Despite the fact that Hitler's organization emerged from the election as Germany's largest party, both the news and editorial departments interpreted the balloting as a Nazi defeat. One editorial proclaimed that Hitler has been 'stopped with thirty-seven percent of the vote' and that 'the role of Mussolini or Lenin' was not in his future.<sup>532</sup> Indeed, 'Hitler's much advertised triumph was only a dream'.<sup>533</sup> The Times's news coverage was only slightly more balanced. Although Birchall noted a 'strong shift to the Right', he designated 'Brüning the real victor' because the ex-Chancellor could use his leverage in future cabinet formations.<sup>534</sup> But even without Brüning, Birchall predicted that von Papen's Junker cabinet could 'carry on without party backing, but sure of Reichstag support'.<sup>535</sup> He characterized the constituent-lacking regime and the

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<sup>531</sup>"Germany Voting", 31 July 1932, Ibid.

<sup>532</sup>"The German Election", 2 August 1932, Ibid.

<sup>533</sup>Ibid.

<sup>534</sup>NYT, 1 August 1932, P.1.

<sup>535</sup>Ibid., 2 August 1932.

politically-polarized legislature as an 'interesting innovation' and actually compared the relationship to the American division of power between the President and the Congress.<sup>536</sup> Birchall foolishly dismissed the Nazis as a factor in Weimar's political future, stating that the history of Hitler's party was one of heartbreaking defeats when victory lay just one step beyond its reach.<sup>537</sup>

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The reasons for the unrealistic optimism of the New York Times's German reporting, particularly in its editorial coverage, from January through August 1932, are ripe for speculation because of the dearth of pertinent archival material. Nevertheless, certain observations can be made regarding the paper's unjustified complacency with which it treated disturbing news from Germany.

Like other American newspapers, the New York Times maintained an unusually high degree of faith in Hindenburg's ability to preserve democracy in Germany. However, what distinguished the Times from the others was that it held him in high regard even after the Nazi victory in the Prussian Landtag elections when many other observers recognized that Hindenburg alone could not stem the Hitler electoral tide. Moreover, when many newspapers questioned the sagacity of Hindenburg's dismissal of Brüning at the close of May, the Times still referred to the Field Marshal as a 'tower of strength'.<sup>538</sup> Even the Berlin bureau, which had

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<sup>536</sup>Ibid.

<sup>537</sup>Ibid.

<sup>538</sup>"The Fall of Brüning", NYT editorial, 31 May 1932.

initially been hostile to Hindenburg's move, defended his action less than two weeks later on the grounds that 'Brüning took Hitler too lightly'.<sup>539</sup> And of course, the paper did not pass up the opportunity to praise Hindenburg for refusing Hitler's demands for the Chancellery in August.<sup>540</sup>

The New York Times's unabated faith in Hindenburg was reinforced by its continual assertions that the Nazis were on the verge of political decline. Sentiments such as 'the reservoir of Nazi support is about exhausted' and the 'Nazis have reached their peak' were reiterated throughout the first eight months of 1932.<sup>541</sup> The Times also appeared to have had a fall-back position in the event of a Nazi accession to power: Hitler's radicalism would be tempered by the influence of moderate politicians and by the demands of governmental responsibility. The paper even questioned whether in fact 'Hitler practiced 100% Hitlerism', contending that 'Hitler's intentions are not so extreme as his proclamations'.<sup>542</sup>

Implicit in these editorial positions was the dubious assumption that the German people possessed an affinity for parliamentary democracy and a penchant towards moderation. The paper asserted that 'many international observers have tended to exaggerate the numerical strength of Hitlerism and to underestimate the strength of German republicanism and

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<sup>539</sup>NYT, 12 June 1932, P.1.

<sup>540</sup>Ibid., 8 August 1932.

<sup>541</sup>"Hitler Votes", 12 January 1932, "The Reichstag Elections", 2 August 1932, NYT editorials. See also "German Republicanism", 15 March 1932, "The German Duel", 10 April 1932, "The Prussian Test", 20 April 1932, Ibid. and NYT 14 March, 31 July, 1 August & 2 August 1932.

<sup>542</sup>"Brüning Talks to Hitler", NYT editorial, 9 January 1932. See also "The Reichstag Elections", 2 August 1932, Ibid. See also NYT, 1 & 2 August 1932, P.1.



democracy'.<sup>543</sup> During the presidential campaign, the Times praised the Germans for their 'sober facing of the facts and firm sense of responsibility'.<sup>544</sup> Editorially, the paper boldly predicted that 'if it ever [came] to an actual trial of force, the German republicans [would] give a better account of themselves than the Hitler warriors'.<sup>545</sup>

The views of the editorial board may also have been influenced by the private views of Berlin-based Fred Birchall, who, as the paper's former managing editor, maintained strong links with management. Although Birchall's published analyses during the presidential campaigns were balanced and cautious, he privately informed Edwin James, the new managing editor, that Hindenburg's decision to run for office 'should take the wind out of Hitler's sails'.<sup>546</sup> And while Birchall publicly stated that the election was too close to call, privately he gave Hitler 'less than a one percent chance' of defeating Hindenburg.<sup>547</sup>

The impact of Birchall's opinions on the editorial board, however, is questionable. Even though James was present at editorial board meetings, and may have relayed Birchall's views, James's suggestions were accepted only occasionally.<sup>548</sup> In Ochs's tradition, the editorial department functioned as an autonomous

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<sup>543</sup>"German Republicanism", NYT editorial, 15 March 1932.

<sup>544</sup>"The German Duel", 10 April 1932, *Ibid.*

<sup>545</sup>"Hitler's Army", 16 April 1932, *Ibid.* See also "Hitler in Prussia", 20 March 1932, *Ibid.*

<sup>546</sup>Birchall to James, 15 February 1932, James Papers, NYT Archive.

<sup>547</sup>*Ibid.*, 9 March 1932.

<sup>548</sup>James to Birchall, 1 September 1932, *Ibid.*

unit. Publisher-in-waiting Arthur Hays Sulzberger was powerless at this early time to influence editorial stances. The evidence suggests that although Sulzberger had "the last word" on many matters, he still needed his father-in-law's approval for any modification of editorial policies. And cases of approval seemed rare. For example, Ochs chided his heir apparent when Sulzberger took exception to a series of 1932 editorials which harshly criticized Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>549</sup> Sulzberger was also intimidated by the paper's veteran editorial page editor, Rollo Ogden. 'I could no more talk to him than fly on my own', recalled Sulzberger in later life.<sup>550</sup> Ogden's own messianic optimism may have been reinforced by the *Weltanschauung* of his assistant editor, Dr. John Finley, whom Sulzberger regarded as a 'lovely man, but one who 'didn't know very much about the world, especially the nasty part of it'.<sup>551</sup> Thus, it is doubtful whether the news department or the young publisher were able to exert influence over the rigidly optimistic editorial department. This state of affairs would continue up through and after Hitler's appointment as German Chancellor.

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The New York Times provided the most comprehensive account of any newspaper regarding developments in Germany between January and August 1932. The Times published on average three times as many items per month (68) as did Herrmann's sample of eleven

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<sup>549</sup>Sulzberger to Ochs & Ochs to Sulzberger, ? December 1932, as cited in Shepard, R. *The Paper's Papers: A Reporter's Journey Through the Archives of the New York Times* (New York 1996), P.105.

<sup>550</sup>Shepard, *Paper's Papers*, P.107.

<sup>551</sup>Ibid.

metropolitan newspapers (21). In July alone, the New York daily printed more articles than any single American publication for the entire first four months of 1932. Moreover, individual New York Times stories on Germany tended to be two to three times as long as those featured in its counterparts. The Times also published at least twice as many editorials on German affairs than was typical in Herrmann's sample. Finally, although a smaller percentage of stories about Germany reached the front page of the paper, the sheer volume of news items published resulted in a greater number of German stories making the headlines in the New York Times than any other newspaper.

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is not surprising that the Times clearly outdistanced its competitors regarding the amount of news published about Germany. What is interesting, however, is that the breakdown within the paper's German coverage was in equal proportion to that of Herrmann's representative sample: roughly fifty percent devoted to domestic politics, twenty-five percent to reparations and disarmament, twenty percent to civil unrest, etc.

The composition of the New York Times's German coverage between January and August 1932 also reflected that of the mainstream American press on anti-semitism, despite the fact that the paper was owned and published by Jews. Even though the Times generated a whopping five hundred and forty news items about the Weimar Republic during this period, only four concerned Nazi racial ideology or Nazi-inspired anti-Jewish violence.

It is surprising that so few items were published despite the pressure from religious organizations, such as the American

Jewish Committee, to focus more attention on the plight of German Jewry. Nor did these urgings fall on deaf ears. In March, and again in July, the Home Office relayed its concerns that the Nazis had stepped up their anti-Jewish campaign, especially in schools and provincial cities, to the Berlin bureau.<sup>552</sup> The Home Office instructed the bureau to send such stories if the reports were confirmed. Birchall, however, did not believe that such cables were warranted because after 'having especially watched for real anti-semitic manifestations', he concluded that they were 'non-existent'.<sup>553</sup> He slightly modified his view in July, saying that 'Nazi anti-Jewish sentiment was neither stronger nor weaker' than it had been before, thus not requiring the paper's attention.<sup>554</sup>

It appears that Birchall was implying that Nazi anti-semitism in-and-of-itself was not newsworthy. His view, shared by many American journalists, was articulated by Berlin bureau chief Guido Enderis in 1931. In a letter to Sulzberger justifying his not reporting an anti-Jewish riot in Berlin on 12 September, Enderis explained that 'everybody knows that the Nazis are anti-semitic; it's no longer news'.<sup>555</sup> Sulzberger accepted Enderis's logic, only lightly criticizing him for disregarding a 15 September Home Office directive requiring more information about the violence.<sup>556</sup> More importantly, the young publisher instructed

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<sup>552</sup>James to Berlin bureau & James to Birchall, 8 March 1932 and James to Birchall 22 July 1932, James Papers, NYT Archive.

<sup>553</sup>Birchall to James, 9 March 1932, Ibid.

<sup>554</sup>Birchall to James, 23 July 1932, Ibid.

<sup>555</sup>Enderis to Sulzberger, 5 October 1931, Sulzberger Papers, Ibid.

<sup>556</sup>Sulzberger to Enderis, 22 October 1931, Ibid.

Enderis not to compensate for this isolated dereliction by sending a 'disproportionate amount of Jewish news' but to 'carry on as [he had] before the incident occurred'.<sup>557</sup>

Sulzberger himself was in a difficult position. The matter of the 12 September riot had been brought to his attention by Morris Waldman, an official with the American Jewish Committee. Waldman pointed out that non-Jewish newspapers such as the Times of London and the Manchester Guardian had given the story its full due, whereas the New York Times provided a belated and mundane account.<sup>558</sup> In response, Sulzberger attempted to appease Waldman almost to the point of conceding that the paper was in error.

You are well aware that we try to publish the news with accuracy and that we sincerely appreciate it when our friends take the pains to point out instances where, in their opinion, we have failed to meet our standards. May I add that our knowledge of the difficulties inherent in the task of a newspaperman is such that no single incident such as the one in question would cause us to doubt either the judgment or ability of our Berlin representative. Personally, should you be interested and care to stop in here some day, I should be glad to show you the report that was made to me.<sup>559</sup>

Sulzberger's conciliatory reply not only revealed the seriousness with which concerns from Jewish organizations were treated, it also masked the lack of sympathy he held with regard to the plight of his own people. Even though his uncle sat on the American Jewish Committee's board of directors, Sulzberger characterized the organization 'as one he could never belong to' because he 'did not feel the ties which caused the group of

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<sup>557</sup>Ibid.

<sup>558</sup>Waldman to Sulzberger, 1 October 1931, Ibid.

<sup>559</sup>Sulzberger to Waldman, 22 October 1931, Ibid.

high-minded men who compose its executive committee to watch the interests of the Jew as they do'.<sup>560</sup>

Sulzberger's ambivalent religious views were consistent with his ethnic history. Both he and Ochs were Jews of German descent. Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a deep-rooted schism developed between German and non-German Jews. As a group, German-American Jews tended to advocate assimilation by sacrificing religious customs and weakening the bonds of Jewish brotherhood. German-American Jews also tended to look down upon their less affluent and less assimilated Eastern European brethren.

Ochs and Sulzberger shared these feelings. Both were strong anti-Zionists and both were uncomfortable participating in activities where Jews were the sole beneficiaries. For example, in late 1932, Ochs refused to attend a dinner honoring the prominent reformer, Samuel Untermyer, for his efforts to help persecuted Jews in Germany, on the grounds that 'a strictly Jewish crusade may do more harm than good'.<sup>561</sup> Sulzberger too, expressed insecurity about his religion, especially concerning issues of emotionalism and faith.<sup>562</sup> He even admitted privately that his relative lack of sympathy for the Jewish plight was due to the fact that he was 'too fortunately born'.<sup>563</sup>

All of this discussion about Ochs's and Sulzberger's religious beliefs would be irrelevant were it not for their attempts to impose their brand of assimilationism on the

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<sup>560</sup>Sulzberger to Enderis, 22 October 1931, Ibid.

<sup>561</sup>Shepard, *Paper's Papers*, P.303.

<sup>562</sup>Sulzberger to his father, circa 1920, Sulzberger Papers, NYT Archive.

<sup>563</sup>Sulzberger to Enderis, 22 October 1931, Ibid.

operations of their New York Times. Given the prominence of anti-semitism in early 20th century America, both wished to ensure that the Times would not be perceived as the nation's "Jewish Newspaper". To this end, Ochs and Sulzberger implemented measures to "de-Jewify" the paper. Some Jewish staff members abbreviated their Hebrew-sounding forenames on their bylines; Abraham Rosenthal became A.M. Rosenthal, Abraham Raskin became A.H. Raskin, etc. Gay Talese and Harrison Salisbury contend that it was no accident that nearly all of the paper's editors were non-Jewish, leading the former to quip, 'the New York Times is owned by Jews, edited by Catholics and written for Protestants'.<sup>564</sup>

Management's attitudes towards employing Jews had a direct bearing on the operation of its Berlin bureau and, in particular, the appointment of a new bureau chief to replace Wythe Williams in 1930. Evidence from the New York Times Archive shows that then-managing editor, Fred Birchall, and then-European service chief, Edwin James, frequently alluded to an anti-semitic 'racial bar' in their discussions about the possible hiring of Joseph Shaplen, a Jew, to fill the post.<sup>565</sup>

Birchall and James actually sought to waive this unwritten rule and hire Shaplen but Ochs ignored their recommendation and awarded the spot to Williams's "number two" man, Guido Enderis, because he wanted to promote from within the bureau itself. The folly of Ochs's decision was evident soon after. Sulzberger recognized the need to strengthen the Berlin bureau following

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<sup>564</sup>Talese, *Kingdom*, P.58, Salisbury, *Without Fear*, P.29.

<sup>565</sup>Birchall to James, 29 January 1930 & James to Birchall 28 February 1930, James Papers, NYT Archive. See also Birchall to James, 15 August 1932 & James to Birchall 29 August 1932, Ibid.

lacked since Lincoln Eyre's death'.<sup>571</sup> Birchall was also instructed to make an on-site assessment of the beleaguered bureau. His report revealed that the situation was even worse than management had previously thought. 'Something must be done', he privately cabled in August 1932, 'the fact is that with Berlin temporarily a better news center than Paris and almost as good as London, we are worse equipped to deal with things here than we are in Vienna [a minor outpost]'.<sup>572</sup>

Birchall thought that Enderis was being poorly served by his staff. He described Hugh Jedell, the bureau's "number two" man as 'a good translator but of little other practical use'.<sup>573</sup> And although Birchall believed that Karl von Pueckler showed 'promise as a future correspondent', he also believed that von Pueckler 'was handicapped by all sorts of German patriotism'.<sup>574</sup> Birchall's assessment of von Pueckler is worth noting because the German national would later become a Nazi informant.<sup>575</sup>

Birchall's evaluation of Enderis was more balanced. On the one hand, Enderis possessed such an 'amazing knowledge of Germany and German personalities' that even 'the Foreign Office consulted him about things it did not understand'.<sup>576</sup> Enderis was also cited for 'his accuracy in reading popular tendencies' even though his published dispatches do little to support such a

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<sup>571</sup>James to Birchall, ?July 1932, #6-0721, Ibid.

<sup>572</sup>Birchall to James, 4 August 1932, Ibid.

<sup>573</sup>Ibid.

<sup>574</sup>Ibid.

<sup>575</sup>Birchall to James, 18 April 1933, Roll #59, Ibid.

<sup>576</sup>Birchall to Sulzberger, 30 April 1932, Sulzberger Papers, Ibid.



Enderis's poor coverage of the Hoover Moratorium.<sup>566</sup> Edwin James observed that Enderis was capable of handling 'the little routine matters' but not the big stories.<sup>567</sup> Enderis himself realized that he was not qualified for the head post and implored the Home Office for additional manpower.<sup>568</sup> His pleas were answered with a drastic and unorthodox directive implemented immediately prior to the biggest European news story of 1932, the Hindenburg-Hitler presidential campaign. In what was designed as a stop-gap move, the Times temporarily relieved Birchall of his managing editor duties and dispatched him to Berlin to become the bureau's main writer. The paper also recalled Edwin James from Paris to assume Birchall's previous duties in New York.

Birchall's arrival paid immediate dividends in the eyes of management. The Home Office praised the former managing editor's articles for being 'just what we have been wanting but not what we have been getting'.<sup>569</sup> Even Ochs, who by 1932 had detached himself from the day-to-day operations of the Times, complimented Birchall's work.<sup>570</sup>

Nevertheless, many of the Berlin bureau's problems remained. Birchall's deployment was meant as a temporary measure to give its dispatches from Germany the 'distinction which they had

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<sup>566</sup>Sulzberger to Enderis, 9 July 1931, James Papers, NYT Archive.

<sup>567</sup>James to Birchall, ?July 1932, #6-0721, Ibid.

<sup>568</sup>See Enderis to Birchall, 23 July 1931, Birchall to James, 4 August 1932, Ibid. See also Birchall to Sulzberger, 30 April 1932, Sulzberger Papers, Ibid.

<sup>569</sup>James to Birchall, 7 March & ?July 1932, #6-0721, James Papers, Ibid.

<sup>570</sup>Ochs to Birchall, 13 March 1932, Ibid.

claim.<sup>577</sup> Finally, Birchall described him as an 'excellent office manager' and cited his ability to reduce administrative expenses.<sup>578</sup> On the other hand, Birchall noted Enderis's poor physical health and low morale which was due in part to the fact that Enderis was a tireless worker who had not enjoyed a vacation in three years.<sup>579</sup> However, in Birchall's opinion, 'the remedy needed to go much deeper' than just giving Enderis a holiday.<sup>580</sup> 'The major problem with the Berlin outfit is that we have Guido plus nothing' and 'Guido himself is no writer' -- his pieces are 'excessively modest and conservative'.<sup>581</sup> Moreover, Birchall revealed that many of the bureau's dispatches published under Enderis's byline were only edited by him, but were actually penned by Jedell and Pueckler.<sup>582</sup>

Birchall recommended firing Jedell and appointing 'a strong man to play second fiddle' to Enderis.<sup>583</sup> Birchall lamented the fact that the Times could not risk filling the position with Shaplen, alluding to the strong possibility that the Nazis could exert political authority in the near future.<sup>584</sup> He mentioned Harold Callender, an experienced Times European correspondent, as a possible replacement, although he cited logistical

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<sup>577</sup>Ibid.

<sup>578</sup>Ibid.

<sup>579</sup>Birchall to James, 4 August 1932, James Papers, Ibid.

<sup>580</sup>Ibid.

<sup>581</sup>Ibid.

<sup>582</sup>Birchall to James, ?July 1932, #6-0719, Ibid.

<sup>583</sup>Birchall to Sulzberger, 30 April 1932, Sulzberger Papers, Ibid.

<sup>584</sup>Birchall to James, 29 August 1932. James concurred, see James to Birchall, 15 August 1932, Ibid.

difficulties in executing such a move. In retrospect, the best move (in addition to terminating Jedell) would have been to demote or even fire Enderis. However, Birchall immediately rejected these two options, stating that if the Times removed Enderis, 'the most popular and respected' of Berlin correspondents', it would hurt the paper's prestige.<sup>585</sup> And if the Times relegated him to the "number two" slot, it would not only damage the paper's prestige, but a humiliated Enderis 'would lie down on us'.<sup>586</sup>

Hence, Enderis remained in Berlin (through 1941 no less) but Jedell was formally dismissed at the end of 1932, although he did contribute free-lance pieces as late as March 1933. The Times delayed its hiring of the far more capable Otto Tolischus (who would go on to have a distinguished career in journalism) until the late spring of 1933, forcing Birchall to remain as the chief writer in Berlin on a semi-permanent basis. As a result, bylines featuring the name, "Guido Enderis" (with the notable exception of March 1933) would steadily become a thing of the past. The literary quality of the New York Times's coverage of Germany would continue to improve with Birchall's prominence, although its misplaced optimism, especially on the editorial page, would remain as a salient feature of the paper's reporting.

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In retrospect, the Chicago Daily News provided a more realistic assessment of the political situation in Germany

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<sup>585</sup>Birchall to Sulzberger, 30 April 1932, Sulzberger Papers, Ibid.

<sup>586</sup>Birchall to James, 4 August 1932, James Papers, Ibid.

during the first eight months of 1932 than the New York Times or the Chicago Daily Tribune, perhaps due to the fact that unlike in prior years, the tone and tenor of Edgar Mowrer's dispatches were not significantly altered. We know this because Mowrer's outside work, *Germany Turns the Clock Back*, published in early December 1932, echoes the opinions ascribed to him in the pages of the Chicago Daily News. In addition, a general degree of accord now existed between the views of the editorial department and those of the Berlin bureau. These radical developments can be traced more to changes within the power structure of the paper itself than to changes in the fortunes of the Weimar Republic.

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Like most of its mainstream press counterparts, the Chicago Daily News exaggerated the importance of Hindenburg's first victory over Hitler in March 1932. Hitler's 'serious drubbing' has 'enormously strengthened the position of Brüning both within and without Germany', wrote Edgar Mowrer following the election.<sup>587</sup> The editorial page echoed his sentiments, stating that '[Hindenburg's victory] is a cause for satisfaction and relief to friends of peace and social order throughout the world. It is a fresh demonstration of the stability of German political and economic institutions'.<sup>588</sup>

Unlike other newspapers, however, the Chicago Daily News did not characterize the result of the following month's run-off election as a victory for Hindenburg. The paper's headline,

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<sup>587</sup>CDN, 14 March 1932, P.1.

<sup>588</sup>"Responsibility Wins In Germany", CDN ed., 15 March 1932.

'HITLER GIRDS TO TAKE REICH STATE BY STATE; RE-ELECTION OF HINDENBURG FAILS TO DAMPEN NAZI HOPES' clearly reflected this view.<sup>589</sup> Mowrer called the result 'undecisive' [sic], stating that 'the election did not settle anything'.<sup>590</sup> The paper's editorial, "Hitlerism Shows Its Strength" appears to have been only a further elaboration of Mowrer's dispatch: 'The outlook in Germany and the rest of Europe for a recession of stormy fascism is far from reassuring despite the victory of the aged field marshal'.<sup>591</sup> The paper's pessimism may have resulted from false expectations in light of the fact that the editorial page had predicted 'a decisive victory' for Hindenburg, and Mowrer argued that Hitler need not outpoll Hindenburg in the run-off tally, 'only hold his own or slightly increase his vote'.<sup>592</sup> Far from celebrating, the Chicago Daily News ominously noted Hitler's gain of two million votes from the first election.<sup>593</sup> More significantly, the paper described the Field Marshal's victory as a hollow one for the Weimar Republic because 'voters cast their ballots for Hindenburg personally, rather than for the forces of moderation symbolized by his candidacy'.<sup>594</sup>

The Chicago Daily News was profoundly pessimistic about the chances of the democratic parliamentarians in the Prussian Landtag elections two weeks later. The paper's staff considered

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<sup>589</sup>CDN, 11 April 1932, P.1.

<sup>590</sup>Ibid.

<sup>591</sup>"Hitlerism Shows Its Strength", CDN ed., 12 April 1932.

<sup>592</sup>"Responsibility Wins in Germany", CDN ed., 15 March 1932 and CDN 9 April 1932, P.1.

<sup>593</sup>Ibid.

<sup>594</sup>Ibid.

the result troubling. Mowrer stated that 'the defenders of the republic' had 'received a serious jolt'.<sup>595</sup> He further contended that 'Hitler not only did not lose in comparison with the presidential elections, but, with the allowance made for circumstances, he gained remarkably'.<sup>596</sup> The paper's editorial, "Consequences of Hitler's New Gains" mirrored Mowrer's views. It stated that 'the momentary reassurances arising from the re-election of Hindenburg vanish in the presence of increased fascist strength' and as a consequence 'continued uncertainty in Germany and throughout Europe seems inevitable'.<sup>597</sup>

The image of the Weimar Republic reached its nadir in the eyes of the Chicago Daily News upon the dismissal of Brüning and the appointment of von Papen at the close of May 1932. 'Germany is in for a fresh period of severe political disturbance and the prospects for the success of the Lausanne reparations conference, faint in any case, today seem hopeless', predicted Mowrer after Brüning's ouster.<sup>598</sup> In addition, von Papen's appointment had opened 'the floodgates, and the ancient stream of pre-war German militarism and junkerdom have come pouring into what is left of the Republic'.<sup>599</sup> The editorial page continued: 'there is no concealing the gravity of the situation... reactionary elements... that dominated pre-war Germany are again in control'.<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>595</sup>CDN, 26 April 1932, P.1.

<sup>596</sup>Ibid.

<sup>597</sup>"Consequences of Hitler's New Gains", CDN ed., 26 April 1932.

<sup>598</sup>CDN, 31 May 1932, P.2.

<sup>599</sup>Ibid., 1 June 1932.

<sup>600</sup>"An Upset For Republican Germany", CDN ed., Ibid.

The assumption of power by Germany's traditional elites probably caused Mowrer to reassess the political situation. He concluded that the accession of Papen and Schleicher signalled the end not only of Weimar democracy, but of the Nazi movement as well. Thus, despite the fact that the Party had emerged as the biggest vote-getter in the July Reichstag elections, Mowrer boldly stated that 'Germany is not going fascist [because of the] shrewd calculations of von Papen and von Schleicher'.<sup>601</sup> The editorial board agreed, concluding that 'conservatism [would] continue to rule in Germany with a powerful and daring arm which threatens the existence of the Republic'.<sup>602</sup>

Why did Mowrer write off the possibility of a Nazi accession to power following the July Reichstag elections (even though Hitler's group doubled its vote from the 1930 balloting to become Germany's largest political party)? Why did he not use the same rationalizations which characterized the New York Times and other newspapers with rose-coloured views? This is not easy to explain. However, Mowrer did not hold Brüning in high regard. In fact, he criticized the ex-Chancellor's 'long drawn-out government by emergency decree'.<sup>603</sup> Moreover, Mowrer did not view Hindenburg as a "tower of republican strength". Instead, he described the President of the Reich as an aged man who has always been remote from anything resembling democratic thought'.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>601</sup>Ibid., 1 August 1932.

<sup>602</sup>"Germany Asks Strong Government", CDN ed., 1 August 1932.

<sup>603</sup>Ibid., 31 May 1932.

<sup>604</sup>Ibid.

Two different factors may account for Mowrer's about-face. First, although he was no admirer of the Junker Right, Mowrer credited von Papen and, particularly Schleicher, for their adroitness in consolidating power in the summer of 1932. In *Germany Puts the Clock Back* Mowrer summarized in detail the ruthless speed with which the new regime suppressed Socialist influence in Prussia.<sup>605</sup> Furthermore, he contended that Papen had outmanoeuvred Hitler in the past and would continue to do so in the future.<sup>606</sup> Second, based on his qualitative analysis of the political vulnerabilities of fascist movements as opposed to the far more tenuous statistical analysis used by the New York Times, Mowrer concluded in August 1932 that the Nazi tide was receding. He suggested that because Hitler (like Mussolini) had prophesized the success of the Nazi movement, rooted in what Mowrer called 'its impression of being something inevitable, fateful and irresistible', the Party would not recover from even the slightest loss in electoral momentum.<sup>607</sup> Because the Nazis failed to substantially raise their vote totals from the presidential and Prussian elections, Mowrer reasoned, 'the movement had lost the inevitable quality which unquestionably attracted millions of voters'.<sup>608</sup>

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A prominent feature of the Chicago Daily News's coverage of Germany during the first eight months of 1932 was the striking

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<sup>605</sup>Mowrer, E. *Germany Puts the Clock Back*, (New York 1932), Chapter One.

<sup>606</sup>Ibid., Chapter 22.

<sup>607</sup>CDN, 9 April 1932, P.1.

<sup>608</sup>Ibid.



congruity of views between the normally oppositional editorial department and the Berlin bureau. This was no accident; following the death of publisher Walter Strong in the spring of 1931 the paper's management structure underwent a major overhaul, profoundly affecting its German coverage.

These changes were implemented by the Chicago Daily News's new publisher, Frank Knox. Politically, Knox could best be described as a Hoover Republican in domestic matters and a moderate internationalist in foreign policy. Although he advocated multi-lateral disarmament,<sup>609</sup> Knox opposed U.S. participation in the League of Nations and the World Court.<sup>610</sup> The new publisher's views, however, were at odds with the Wilsonian tradition of the paper. It is for this reason that early in his reign Knox refrained from reversing the Chicago Daily News's editorial stances on the League and the World Court.<sup>611</sup> In retrospect, this decision was a smart move. Among the liberally-minded staff of the paper's foreign news service, only Edward Price Bell took serious enough exception to his boss's political beliefs to cause an irreparable breach.<sup>612</sup>

However, it was Knox's organizational philosophy which would foster the greatest change in the news and editorial reporting of the Chicago Daily News. Knox's background as an army officer and an editor under William Randolph Hearst underpinned his advocacy of a highly centralized administration dominated by the

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<sup>609</sup>Knox to Bell, 26 December 1931, Bell Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>610</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 1 September 1931, Binder Papers, Ibid.

<sup>611</sup>Ibid.

<sup>612</sup>See Bell to President Hoover, 7 November 1931, Bell to his mother, 21 November 1931 and Bell to Col. Mills, 27 December 1931, Bell Papers, Ibid.

publisher. Knox adhered to these traditions, exercising control in every aspect of the operation.

The Chicago Daily News's foreign service proved no exception. In September 1931 Knox placed the service under 'the immediate charge of Hal O'Flaherty, who would be in hourly consultation with Charles Dennis'.<sup>613</sup> Moreover, in contrast to the Strong regime, Dennis was to be 'available at any moment to consult with the publisher'.<sup>614</sup> Knox also consolidated power over the foreign service by abolishing the position of European Director, a post of great prestige but little influence, held by Paul Mowrer. In response to the deleterious effects of the Great Depression, Knox personally ordered his foreign service staff to 'reduce ruthlessly every kind of expense which [could] be eliminated without definite impairment of the service'.<sup>615</sup> In later recollections Mowrer and other European correspondents would blame Knox for destroying the foreign service.<sup>616</sup> However, Paul Mowrer and others expressed little initial opposition to Knox's moves. Quite to the contrary, with the exception of not being permitted to place overseas stories on page one except in rare circumstances (a frequent complaint even during the Lawson regime), Mowrer stated that he had 'absolutely no criticism to make... Colonel Knox's management suits me'.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>613</sup>P. Mowrer to Bell, 21 September 1931, Ibid.

<sup>614</sup>Ibid.

<sup>615</sup>Ibid.

<sup>616</sup>See for instance, P. Mowrer to Pryor, 18 September 1962, CDN Papers, Ibid.

<sup>617</sup>P. Mowrer to Binder, 2 May 1932, Binder Papers, Ibid.

Knox also revamped the editorial page. Unlike Strong, the new publisher not only 'took the liveliest of interest in all editorial problems' but also 'had a great deal to contribute'.<sup>618</sup> And although Knox penned few editorials, it is clear that by the autumn of 1932 he exercised full control of the editorial department.<sup>619</sup>

The chief loser from Knox's consolidation of power was Dennis. No longer would the editor enjoy the unofficial title of '"absolute czar" in editorial matters' as he had had under Strong.<sup>620</sup> Instead, he would be relegated to writing editorials about national politics under the watchful eye of Knox and his role in the operation of the foreign service was greatly diminished.<sup>621</sup> Nor was Dennis part of Knox's long term plans. In fact, the Colonel thought Dennis 'should retire because he was getting old'.<sup>622</sup> And although it appears that Dennis may have resisted Knox's decisions, the editor-in-chief's determination may have been undermined by a nonlife-threatening but 'sudden and serious decline in his health' in early November 1931.<sup>623</sup>

That the onset of Dennis's medical problems occurred four months prior to the Hindenburg/Hitler presidential election was critical as far as the Chicago Daily News's coverage of Germany was concerned. Upon the recommendation of Strong's widow, 'on

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<sup>618</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 1 September 1931, Ibid.

<sup>619</sup>Binder to Knox, 29 October 1932, Ibid.

<sup>620</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 10 July 1931, Ibid. See also Ibid., 17 July 1931.

<sup>621</sup>Binder to Knox, 29 October 1932, Ibid.

<sup>622</sup>Paul Mowrer as quoted in Lou Pryor's Manuscript, CDN Papers, Ibid.

<sup>623</sup>Bell to Knox, 7 November 1931, Bell Papers, Ibid.

the first day of his tenure' Knox tapped Carroll Binder, who Dennis had relegated to covering local stories, to become the paper's chief editorial writer on international affairs.<sup>624</sup> Binder shared Knox's desire for an editorial page marked by 'originality, variety and forthrightness'.<sup>625</sup> He also gained Knox's confidence and as a result, became an intermediary between the publisher and the foreign service.<sup>626</sup>

Unlike Dennis, Binder was a great admirer of Edgar Mowrer's 'superlative' work, contending in 1931 that 'nothing comparable has come from Germany',<sup>627</sup> which suggests that Binder took his lead from Mowrer in the formulation of his editorials on the Weimar Republic. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the removal of Dennis and the appointment of Binder as the chief foreign editorial writer accounts for the harmony of views between the Berlin bureau and the editorial department after 1931. Moreover, it is plausible that Binder convinced Knox that the paper should espouse Edgar Mowrer's views, as evidenced by the fact that the Berlin bureau chief's dispatches were not significantly edited. Immediately following the Prussian elections when Edgar Mowrer expressed great pessimism regarding the future of the Weimar Republic, Paul Mowrer voiced the opinion that 'under the previous regime, Edgar's remarkable articles on Germany would not have been printed'.<sup>628</sup> It seemed

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<sup>624</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 24 September 1933 (a recollection), 6 June & 17 July 1931, Binder Papers, Ibid.

<sup>625</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 24 September 1933 (a recollection), Ibid.

<sup>626</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 16 September & 14 October 1931, Binder Papers, Ibid.

<sup>627</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 17 July & 16 August 1931, Ibid.

<sup>628</sup>P. Mowrer to Binder, 2 May 1932, Ibid.

clear that an era of cordial relations between the Berlin bureau and the Home Office had opened in Chicago.

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The preceding examination of the reporting of events in Germany by the Chicago Daily Tribune, New York Times and Chicago Daily News during the first eight months of 1932 serves to reinforce a major thesis of this study: factors outside the parameters of the story, particularly ones within the news organizations themselves, helped shape the tone, tenor and extent of their German coverage as a whole. This is not to say that the tumultuous changes which occurred in the Weimar Republic during this period were of little influence on American journalists. After all, German news was a fixture on the front page of many mainstream American publications at a time when it could have been easily overwhelmed by the reporting of domestic affairs. It should be remembered that there was no shortage of news in the first eight months of 1932: the worst depression in American history, the most important presidential campaign since 1860, unparalled incidents of civil unrest (leading many historians to conclude that it was in this period when America came closest to revolution) and what many journalists called "the story of the century" -- the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and murder -- filled the pages of American publications.

Nonetheless, the events of 1930 caused American foreign correspondents to shift their focus back to Germany. The developments of the first eight months of 1932 ensured Germany's place in America's newspapers. Only through the Nazi regime's

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destruction in the Second World War would this position be  
relinquished.

## Chapter 6

### **Hitler Emerges Triumphant: Germany, September 1932 - January 1933**

Von Papen had hoped that the results of the July Reichstag elections would engender support for his "Government of National Concentration". Now comprising a Nazi/Communist majority, however, the new assembly greeted him with a preliminary vote of "no confidence" on 12 September. This prompted Papen (through the graces of Hindenburg) to dissolve the Reichstag for the second time in four months.

Elections were called for 6 November. During the intervening period Papen attempted to bolster his support by appealing to the disparate elements of Germany's Right wing and working class. He raised the tariff on British goods by three hundred percent and cut corporate taxes to appease big business. Papen also tried to attract working-class support by introducing public works initiatives for firms hiring from Germany's pool of six million unemployed.<sup>629</sup>

Like his predecessor, Brüning, Papen hoped for a political mandate through a diplomatic offensive. He pressed for the abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles and called for the Allies to return the Saar and former German colonies. The centerpiece of Papen's foreign policy was his decision to accelerate and, more significantly, to make a public display of German

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<sup>629</sup>Zalampas, *Adolf Hitler*, P.23. For an in-depth discussion of the German economy during the Papen, Schleicher and Hitler eras, see James, H. "Innovation and Conservatism in Germany's Economic Recovery: The Alleged Nazi Recovery of the 1930's" in Childers and Caplan (eds.) *Reevaluating the Third Reich* (New York 1993). For a general discussion of the last five months of the Republic, see Dorpalen, A. *Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic* (Princeton 1964) pp.371-483 and Eyck, *History of the Weimar* (Volume Two).

rearmament. This move was directed mainly towards the disillusioned junior officer corps of the Reichswehr -- segments of which had become sympathetic to the Nazis.<sup>630</sup>

Papen's aim, however, went beyond achieving a mandate for his regime. The aristocratic Chancellor sought Reichstag support to alter or even scrap the Weimar constitution in favor of one resembling the quasi-autocratic outline of 1871, in essence having the Reichstag relinquish its post-war powers and restoring authoritarian rule.<sup>631</sup> From the beginning, there was virtually no chance that the body would vote for its own diminution, unless there were to be a Conservative landslide victory in the November elections.

Such a victory did not come to pass. Although the DNVP scored some minor gains, the Reichstag elections of 6 November failed to provide anything near a parliamentary mandate for the Papen regime. Particularly striking was the success of the KPD, which garnered over 17% of the vote (mostly at the expense of the Socialists) to become Germany's third largest party.

Nor did the Communists remain quiet. Throughout November, the KPD collaborated with the Nazis in conducting a general strike which shut down the Berlin transit system. Labor unrest, combined with the unsatisfactory results of the elections, compelled Hindenburg to ask reluctantly for Papen's resignation.<sup>632</sup> The Nazi/Communist alliance in the transit strike

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<sup>630</sup>Ibid. See also Craig, *Germany*, pp.553-64 and Nicholls, *Weimar*, P.138. For an in-depth analysis of Papen's military policy see Carsten, *Reichswehr* pp. 364-384 and Geyer, M., "Professionals and Junkers: German Rearmament and Politics in the Weimar Republic" in Bessel & Feuchtwanger *Social Change*.

<sup>631</sup>Craig, *Ibid*.

<sup>632</sup>Craig and Nicholls, *Ibid*.



also alarmed Defence Minister von Schleicher, who questioned the loyalty of both the Reichswehr and the Weimar police forces in the event of a joint extremist uprising. Schleicher eventually convinced Hindenburg of the somewhat questionable proposition that Germany was on the verge of civil war and von Papen had lost the confidence of the army. After two weeks of vacillation, Hindenburg concluded that he was 'too old to assume responsibility for a civil war' and decided to 'let Herr von Schleicher try his luck'.<sup>633</sup>

Von Schleicher appeared to be in a far stronger position upon assuming the Chancellorship on 2 December than von Papen had been the previous summer. Central to this development were the changing fortunes of the Nazi party. Although the Nazis remained Germany's largest party, they had lost two million votes in the November elections and suffered a second setback one month later in a regional election in Thuringia. The Party grew short of funds and had difficulty inspiring sufficient enthusiasm among a German electorate that had gone to the polls four times in the previous nine months. Hitler's consistent refusal to take a subordinate position in a coalition government also dampened the spirits of his staunchest supporters. A general feeling of a "missed opportunity" pervaded the ranks of the NSDAP. To paraphrase Goebbels, it appeared that the Nazi party had campaigned itself into oblivion.<sup>634</sup>

Hitler's misfortune afforded Chancellor von Schleicher an opportunity to disable the Party permanently by luring away a disenchanted Nazi contingent led by Gregor Strasser. By

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<sup>633</sup>Craig, *Germany*, P.563.

<sup>634</sup>Childers, *Nazi Voter*, P.212 & 269, Nicholls, *Weimar*, P.137.

dividing the Nazi constituency von Schleicher aimed to transcend the socio-economic divisions which had characterized German politics since the nation's unification. The new Chancellor not only expanded Papen's public works projects but also solicited the support of independent labor unions. By making a sincere effort to inaugurate a period of detente with the Socialists, Schleicher even held out the long-range possibility of SPD participation in a reorganized ministry.

Despite Schleicher's appeal to a broad-based constituency, his attempt to bring stability to Germany failed. First, he fell victim to his anti-Republican past. Most Socialists harbored deep reservations about Schleicher's sincerity because it was he who had helped orchestrate the demise of the SPD government in Prussia the previous July. Second, his "divide and conquer" approach towards the Nazis also crumbled. In a move of inexplicable incompetence, Strasser, after announcing his break with Hitler, went away on vacation to Italy -- affording Hitler the time and opportunity to tighten party discipline by entrusting his closest ally, Rudolf Hess, with enforcing the Führer's order for absolute loyalty.<sup>635</sup> Finally, von Schleicher's attempt to court groups outside the traditional German right alienated his conservative constituency, especially the army. Other elements of the traditional right also worked against the Chancellor. Hjalmar Schacht led a group of industrialists opposing Schleicher in favor of Hitler.<sup>636</sup>

The key figure, however, was Papen himself. The ex-Chancellor engaged in a variety of activities to undermine

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<sup>635</sup>Craig, *Germany*, pp.566-68.

<sup>636</sup>Ibid., pp.568-70.

Schleicher's policies, including organizing a successful effort to bankroll the near-bankrupt Nazi party in their important regional campaign in Lippe in January 1933. Papen also cajoled and pressured Hindenburg's son, Oskar, into dumping Schleicher only a month into the General's Chancellorship.<sup>637</sup>

Von Schleicher thus was left politically isolated, compelling him to request rule by emergency decree. Under Papen's spell, however, Hindenburg refused to grant the general such powers, in effect, dismissing him. Von Schleicher resigned shortly thereafter, on 27 January 1933.

Out of the web of Papen's behind-the-scenes machinations, Adolf Hitler emerged as Germany's new Chancellor three days later. Papen and his conservative allies, Hugenberg among them, convinced a reluctant Hindenburg that Hitler would rule Germany in name only. Because the Nazi leader's cabinet would be stacked with conservative ministers, Papen boldly predicted that 'within two months we will have pushed Hitler so far into the corner that he'll squeak'.<sup>638</sup> He also argued that a Nazi/Conservative "Government of National Concentration" would enjoy the support of close to half the Reichstag, a great improvement over previous regimes. Finally, Papen calculated that if the new regime failed, Hitler (in his position as Chancellor) would be saddled with much of the blame.

In hindsight it is easy to ridicule Papen's logic -- especially in light of the fact that although the Nazis were given only two ministerial posts, they provided Hitler with control of most of Germany's police forces. But it is worth

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<sup>637</sup>Herrmann, "American Perceptions", P.139.

<sup>638</sup>Craig, *Germany*, P.570.

remembering that, at the time, most German politicians praised Papen and his conservative allies for their shrewdness in "boxing Hitler in". They were not alone in their views; such naiveté was shared by most elements of the mainstream American press.

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Despite the prominence of the American presidential campaign and the Lindbergh baby case, Germany remained a fixture in the pages of American newspapers between September 1932 and January 1933. In fact, the number of news stories generated by the mainstream American press during that period did not fall below the levels established in the first five months of 1932.<sup>639</sup>

Not surprisingly, Hitler's appointment as German Chancellor was the dominant story from the Republic but other events, especially Papen's call for rearmament in September, also received prominent attention in the American press. In fact, Papen's diplomatic offensive, and his much publicized conflict with the Nazis and the Reichstag, explains why the newspapers in Herrmann's sample generated more stories about Germany (527) in September than in any month of 1932.

Two related trends characterized the tone and tenor of the American press's coverage of Germany throughout this period. The first was that 'the [Weimar] Republic as a republic [was] finished' and the second was that the Nazis were in terminal decline.<sup>640</sup> Most major newspapers agreed with the Pittsburgh Press's view that 'Germany would continue under reactionary

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<sup>639</sup>This and subsequent calculations and analyses are based on Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Appendices I, S and M.

<sup>640</sup>The Nation, 26 October 1932 as cited in Zalampas, *Adolf Hitler*, Chapter One.

dictatorship' and that the 'Republic exists in name only, and merely because its opponents are too busy fighting among themselves to junk it'.<sup>641</sup>

The American press continued to express mixed views about the Papen Chancellorship. On the one hand, many journalists condemned Papen's policy of rearmament and cited it as proof that 'Germany was seeking to return to militarism'.<sup>642</sup> On the other hand, many journalists went along with Papen's anti-democratic constitutional changes in the belief that they would enfeeble the Nazis and the KPD by weakening the Reichstag. The San Francisco Chronicle, a staunch supporter of this policy, argued that '[Germany] can no longer 'leave the government to the mercy of a legislative debating society'.<sup>643</sup> However, some newspapers such as the Philadelphia Inquirer characterized Papen's move as an act of 'political suicide'.<sup>644</sup>

Despite their previous reservations, von Schleicher's appointment as Chancellor was favorably received by the American press. Time described the General as 'witty and companionable' while Business Week characterized him as a 'remarkably able man'.<sup>645</sup> Politically he was called 'a modern realist' who was 'sensible enough to know that what the German people want is

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<sup>641</sup>Editorial, Pittsburgh Press, 11 November 1932 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Six.

<sup>642</sup>New Republic, 28 September 1932, Ibid.

<sup>643</sup>Editorial, San Francisco Chronicle, 14 October 1932.

<sup>644</sup>Philadelphia Inquirer, 17 October 1932, P.1 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Six.

<sup>645</sup>Time 12 December 1932, Business Week 14 December 1932 as cited in Zalampas, Adolf Hitler, Chapter One.

bread'.<sup>646</sup> The Associated Press praised his handling of the Geneva conference as well as his attempt to broaden his constituency by 'building a bridge over the chasm separating the Nazis from participation in the government and, on the other hand, establishing friendly contact with organized labor'.<sup>647</sup> Schleicher's sudden popularity among many mainstream journalists seemed rooted in their hope that the General would 'crush any attempt at a Nazi uprising'.<sup>648</sup> Only publications on the liberal left such as the New Republic criticized the new Chancellor.<sup>649</sup>

The second theme was that of Nazi decline. From the reporting of Papen's dissolution of the Reichstag on 12 September to the Nazi victory in the Lippe Diet elections four months later, the American press consistently sounded the deathknell of Hitler's fascists. Most publications predicted that Hitler would soon meet his 'Waterloo' while, on the eve of the November Reichstag elections, many such as the San Francisco Chronicle expected that 'Hitler's fall would be much more rapid than his rise'.<sup>650</sup> The results, combined with those in Thuringia, seemed to vindicate these predictions. Many publications expressed the view that the Nazis had 'received a fatal check' or at the very least, 'Nazi strength was definitely waning'.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>646</sup>San Francisco Chronicle, 18 December 1932, Sec. IV P.6. See also Pittsburgh Press 5 December 1932, P.6 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Seven.

<sup>647</sup>Associated Press in New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3 December 1932.

<sup>648</sup>The Nation, 19 October 1932 as cited in Zalampas, *Adolf Hitler*, Chapter One.

<sup>649</sup>New Republic 14 December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>650</sup>Editorial, San Francisco Chronicle 6 November 1932.

<sup>651</sup>Nation 16 November 1932, New York Herald Tribune in Literary Digest 19 November 1932, P.13.

Strasser's widely publicized defection also confirmed impressions of the Party's downfall, leading Frank Simonds to conclude that 'the Nazis [were] visibly breaking up'.<sup>652</sup> Only a few publications, such as the Los Angeles Times, expressed the idea that predictions of Hitler's demise might have been premature. Moreover, the New Orleans Times-Picayune contended that the American press allowed itself to be influenced by the views of '[Hitler's opponents] and outsiders' without 'making due allowance and discount for its source'.<sup>653</sup> S. Miles Bouton echoed similar sentiments in the American Mercury.

Every month for years American readers have been told that the Nazi movement had reached its highest point and begun to ebb. Every gain by the Hitlerites was followed by comforting assurances that now the last reservoir of their votes had been exhausted.<sup>654</sup>

The revival of the Party's fortunes in the Lippe elections on 15 January, however, would mark the end of much of the press's celebration over the "decline" of the Nazis. Most publications asserted the view that the victory strengthened 'Hitler's strategic position', refuting 'assertions that Hitlerism was on the downgrade'.<sup>655</sup>

Schleicher's fall on 28 January came as no surprise to the American press. Journalists had become concerned about the General's position, particularly after the Nazi victory in

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<sup>652</sup>Philadelphia Inquirer, 10 January 1933 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Seven.

<sup>653</sup>Editorial, New Orleans Times-Picayune, 8 November 1932.

<sup>654</sup>American Mercury September, 1932 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Six.

<sup>655</sup>Business Week 25 January 1933, Associated Press in the Washington Post 16 January 1933, P.1, Ibid.

Lippe. With the exception of the New York Times, the press recognized that Schleicher was nothing more than 'a tottering Chancellor' after Hindenburg and Hugenberg withdrew their support for him.<sup>656</sup> Newspapers such as the Philadelphia Inquirer even criticized their counterparts for assuming that Schleicher had enjoyed Hindenburg's unreserved support in the first place.<sup>657</sup>

Most of the mainstream American press initially reacted to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor with cautious optimism. Although the majority of journalists agreed that Hindenburg had 'virtually launched his fatherland on an entirely new course in what may prove to be one of the most decisive decisions in the nation's history', they also shared Papen's confidence that Hitler 'seized only the semblance of power'.<sup>658</sup> Moreover, many journalists naively believed that 'it was inconceivable that Hitler as Chancellor [would] seek to put into practice the platform he has been dinning into German ears' because he was 'sworn to obey the Constitution and [would] likely do so' in the future.<sup>659</sup> The San Francisco Chronicle even praised Papen for utilizing Hitler as a bulwark against communism.<sup>660</sup>

However, a small number of publications took a pessimistic view. The New Orleans Times-Picayune and the New Republic ridiculed the notion that Hitler could be "tamed" by his

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<sup>656</sup>Associated Press in the New York Times, 28 January 1933, P.1.

<sup>657</sup>Editorial, Philadelphia Inquirer 30 January 1933 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Seven.

<sup>658</sup>Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph 30 January 1933, Pittsburgh Free Press editorial 31 January 1933, Ibid.

<sup>659</sup>Editorial St. Louis Post Dispatch, 31 January 1933 and H.V. Kaltenborn in Commonweal, 15 February 1933, Ibid.

<sup>660</sup>Editorial, San Francisco Chronicle 31 January 1933.



conservative ministers. The Louisiana newspapers wrote that 'unless Hitler changed his tactics, his encirclement by "conservative" cabinet colleagues may prove disappointing if it is designed to hold him in check' while the New Republic predicted that Hugenberg and his allies would 'go the way of Mussolini's early collaborators'.<sup>661</sup> It would take the rest of the American press many months to arrive at these sobering and accurate conclusions.

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The news and editorial reporting of the Chicago Daily News mirrored much of the mainstream press consensus. Although Edgar Mowrer's dispatches continued to ridicule Papen and the Junker elites, they lacked the sense of foreboding which normally characterized his reporting. He refrained from sounding the deathknell of the Republic -- even Hitler's appointment as Chancellor failed to jolt him. Instead, Mowrer seemed to have grown accustomed to Weimar's semi-permanent dictatorship. Chicago Daily News editorials exhibited a similar pattern. By January 1933 Carroll Binder had strengthened his hold on foreign affairs editorials by 'pushing out' Nicholas Yarros, a long-time Dennis ally.<sup>662</sup> Knox also bolstered Binder's power by prohibiting Dennis from making alterations or modifications on all drafts of editorials.<sup>663</sup> Binder continued to laud Mowrer, even though the Berlin correspondent's personal advice to sell off a German bond

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<sup>661</sup>Editorial New Orleans Times-Picayune, 31 January 1933. The New Republic, 15 February 1933 as cited in Zalampas, *Adolf Hitler*, Chapter One.

<sup>662</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 11 January 1933, Binder Papers, Newberry Library.

<sup>663</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 24 September 1933, (a recollection), Ibid.

cost him \$350 (a large sum by 1932 standards).<sup>664</sup> Thus, the accord between the editorial department and the Berlin bureau, which took shape during the first eight months of 1932, continued through 1933.

The general dearth of archival evidence from this period makes it difficult to account for Mowrer's "mellowing". Two seemingly contradictory trends may have influenced his change in tone. The first was the notion of Nazi decline. The November Reichstag elections reassured Mowrer that Hitler's 'chances of ever dominating Germany [had] become insignificant'.<sup>665</sup> He highlighted the dissension within the ranks of the Nazis, especially between the hotheaded Brownshirts and the rank and file.<sup>666</sup> According to Mowrer, 'the only issue is whether after the election Hitler will submit to von Papen and enter the cabinet in a subordinate position'.<sup>667</sup> The editorial page echoed these sentiments in a piece which read much like a post-mortem:

[Hitler's] campaign was ill-fated from the beginning... He never deserved to be called the German Mussolini. He appropriated the trappings and the manners of Il Duce, but he lacked the inflexibility of will and purpose, the power to eliminate opposition[!], the insight into the popular mind and the genius for statesmanship of the Italian dictator.<sup>668</sup>

Second, however, Mowrer expressed concern about the prospect of an unbridled Nazi dictatorship because the number of satisfactory cabinet combinations available to Hindenburg were

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<sup>664</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 11 January 1933, Ibid.

<sup>665</sup>CDN, 7 November 1932, P.2.

<sup>666</sup>Ibid.

<sup>667</sup>CDN, 5 November 1932, Ibid.

<sup>668</sup>CDN editorial, 8 November 1932.

woefully few. He called the appointment of von Schleicher 'the only thing that could be done to keep the frame of the German constitution intact, yet avoid handing over power to Adolf Hitler'.<sup>669</sup> Mowrer also showed confidence in the new Chancellor, stating that although 'von Schleicher is the president's last card, he is an ace'.<sup>670</sup> Mowrer's change of heart (especially in light of his criticism of von Schleicher following the Prussian coup) met with a similar turn-around on the editorial page. Because of his 'training, temperament, skill and particularly his iron will, von Schleicher should be able to vanquish Hitler'.<sup>671</sup> Moreover, 'von Schleicher has a livelier sense of the plight and the aspirations of the German masses than the not very astute von Papen'.<sup>672</sup> Worth noting, however, is that neither Mowrer's nor Binder's positive assessments went so far as to state that Schleicher would uphold Weimar democracy, although both now seemed more comfortable with the General's 'plans for consolidating the Reich along autocratic lines'.<sup>673</sup>

Perhaps because he predicted the downfall of Nazism three months earlier, Mowrer failed to express alarm at Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, even questioning 'whether Hitler wants to be Chancellor'.<sup>674</sup> Mowrer also argued that because Hitler 'will be fenced about with controls', he would not assume

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<sup>669</sup>Ibid. 2 December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>670</sup>Ibid.

<sup>671</sup>CDN editorial, 5 December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>672</sup>Ibid.

<sup>673</sup>Ibid.

<sup>674</sup>CDN, 30 January 1933, P.1.

the role of dictator.<sup>675</sup> Yet, in the same breath Mowrer stressed the importance of the appointments of Frick and Göring, which gave the Nazis control of Germany's police forces.<sup>676</sup> He also predicted that should Hitler dissolve the Reichstag, he would wage an electoral campaign 'under very favorable circumstances'.<sup>677</sup>

A similar type of vacillation appeared on the editorial page. Binder held out the likelihood that 'Hitler would make himself dictator of Germany', especially if Hindenburg 'passed from the scene'.<sup>678</sup> 'But for the moment, he is more or less a figure-head who enjoys his office only by the grace of former political foes'.<sup>679</sup> Binder also placed great faith in 'the republican and socialistic elements' who 'are not likely to relinquish their hard-won gains without a struggle'.<sup>680</sup> The paper concluded by predicting that Hitler's 'fascist followers are likely to be disappointed at the discrepancy between what Chancellor Hitler practices and what Nazi leader Hitler preached'.<sup>681</sup>

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The pattern of the New York Times's German coverage between September 1932 and January 1933 remained consistent with its reporting from previous periods. Quantitatively, the Times

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<sup>675</sup>Ibid.

<sup>676</sup>Ibid. 31 January 1933, P.1.

<sup>677</sup>Ibid., 30 January 1933.

<sup>678</sup>CDN editorial, 31 January 1933.

<sup>679</sup>Ibid.

<sup>680</sup>Ibid.

<sup>681</sup>Ibid.

surpassed by three to five fold the average number of German news stories generated by other large mainstream American newspapers. The margin was greatest in October when the rest of the press was preoccupied with the FDR/Hoover campaign. With few exceptions, the composition of the Times's German coverage corresponded to that of other major American newspapers. The New York daily reflected the national trend in devoting the bulk of its attention to Weimar internal politics, as opposed to international issues. The Times also followed suit in its diminishing coverage of civil unrest.

Difficult to explain, however, are the monthly fluctuations between the number of stories about Germany which made the front page of the Times compared with those of other newspapers. For example, consistent with the paper's general quantitative advantage, the number of Times stories about Germany selected for page one in November was three times that of the national average. However, in January the number of stories making the front page of the New York Times fell below the national average, this despite the fact that the paper published three times more news items about Germany than its nearest competitor. Due to the paucity of archival documentation from this period, the roots of this as well as of other aspects of the Times's German coverage cannot be established to a certainty.

The New York Times was more confident about a Nazi collapse than even the Chicago Daily News. In October, Guido Enderis alluded to the poor financial state and low morale of the Party when he commented that 'Hitler's Nazis... look less jolly rattling their tin containers than the Salvation Army'<sup>682</sup> while

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<sup>682</sup>NYT, 23 October 1932, P.6.

the editorial board asserted that 'the Nazi movement has seen its best days'.<sup>683</sup> The November Reichstag elections served to reinforce these views. The Party's loss of two million votes led Frederick Birchall to conclude that 'the movement is at last in the retrogressive stage'<sup>684</sup> while the editorial page reiterated that 'the Nazi tide was ebbing, the threat of sole control of the country by Hitler is definitely removed'.<sup>685</sup>

It seemed as if the New York Times utilized every event to further this notion. Upon Schleicher's appointment, Rollo Ogden and his editorial staff proclaimed that 'Hitler has been kept out of power and his chances wane with every month that passes'.<sup>686</sup> Enderis boldly asserted in his 1933 preview that 'whatever the future may hold for Hitler, he will not be the dictator of Germany'.<sup>687</sup> Moreover, Nazi achievements were often minimized or ignored. No mention was made of Hitler's successful effort to reinvigorate the Party following Strasser's defection. In addition, the Party's strong showing in Lippe, where it received over 40% of the vote, was minimized, as evidenced even by the Times's headline: 'NAZIS GAIN IN LIPPE POLL AFTER BIG DRIVE, BUT FAIL TO WIN BACK NOVEMBER LOSSES'.<sup>688</sup>

The paper's prophecies of an imminent Nazi collapse coincided with its radically optimistic view of the Weimar Republic's prospects. Whereas the rest of the mainstream American press

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<sup>683</sup>"The German Campaign", NYT editorial, Ibid.

<sup>684</sup>NYT, 7 November 1932.

<sup>685</sup>"German Prospects", NYT editorial, 8 November 1932.

<sup>686</sup>"Germany's New Chancellor", 3 December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>687</sup>"Republican Germany", 18 December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>688</sup>NYT, 16 January 1933, P.4.

was suggesting that German democracy had been supplanted by authoritarian dictatorship, the Times alone held the view that 'based on the events of last six months', 'the outlook for German democracy was by no means so gloomy as would appear on the surface of things'.<sup>689</sup> It was as if the paper slanted its analysis of important events to promote Weimar stability. Immediately following the November Reichstag elections, the Berlin bureau concluded that 'the Papen-Schleicher regime may continue indefinitely or at least well into the next year'<sup>690</sup> because 'Papen was the real victor' in the election.<sup>691</sup> Even when Papen was dismissed two weeks later, the editorial board hailed it as a first step towards a republican return to power.<sup>692</sup> Both the Berlin bureau and the editorial department welcomed von Schleicher because of his 'much milder program'<sup>693</sup> and his 'breadth of view, intellectual elasticity and tactful political skill'.<sup>694</sup> Hindenburg's implementation of dictatorial rule was actually praised as an 'extra-parliamentary innovation'.<sup>695</sup> Enderis concluded that because Germany had made headway in solving international issues such as armaments and Hitler had been 'sidetracked', 1932 'had not been such a disastrous year after all'.<sup>696</sup>

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<sup>689</sup>"The German Test", NYT editorial, 20 November 1932.

<sup>690</sup>NYT, 23 October 1932.

<sup>691</sup>Ibid. 7 November 1932, P.1.

<sup>692</sup>"The German Test", NYT editorial, 20 November 1932.

<sup>693</sup>NYT, 3 December 1932.

<sup>694</sup>"Germany's New Chancellor", editorial, Ibid.

<sup>695</sup>NYT, 31 December 1932, P.1.

<sup>696</sup>Ibid.

Von Schleicher's resignation and Hitler's appointment as Chancellor took the New York Times by surprise. Two months earlier the paper had claimed that 'cooperation between the Hitlerites and the Papenites [was] inconceivable'<sup>697</sup> and two weeks prior to the appointment the editorial board argued that 'the German picture is very much more encouraging than it was a year ago'.<sup>698</sup> The day before Schleicher's ouster the Times reported that 'the Chancellor seems safe'.<sup>699</sup> The limited archival evidence from this period, particularly of Enderis's frustration that the Berlin bureau 'couldn't get anything out of the Junkers [sic] crowd', suggests that he was unaware of Papen's negotiations with Hindenburg.<sup>700</sup> Moreover, a 5 January letter from Enderis to the Home Office underscored the bureau's difficulty in cultivating news information sources in general. This problem led the Berlin correspondent to suggest that the Times 'pay for exclusive news tips and stories which [did] not come [the paper's] way free or through regular channels'.<sup>701</sup> Although James held out the possibility of putting Enderis's idea into practice, he resisted the plan because he feared that such a costly practice would undermine the bureau's objectivity in its reporting.<sup>702</sup>

Immediately following Schleicher's resignation, the paper did not 'envisage'... 'a government headed by Hitler' and instead

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<sup>697</sup>"The German Test", NYT editorial, 20 November 1932.

<sup>698</sup>"Gains in Germany", 10 January 1933, *Ibid.*

<sup>699</sup>NYT, 27 January 1933, P.1.

<sup>700</sup>Enderis to James, 5 January 1933, James Papers, NYT Archive.

<sup>701</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>702</sup>James to Enderis, ? 1933 (probably January), *Ibid.*



predicted that Papen would be 'the likely successor'.<sup>703</sup> The editorial page too was caught off-guard: 'It is hard to discover the rationale-- if there be any -- of the latest political upset in Germany'.<sup>704</sup> The paper praised Hindenburg in its editorial on Schleicher's ouster but had great difficulty in minimizing the blow of Hitler's appointment:

It would be useless to try to disguise the qualms which the news from Berlin must cause to all friends of Germany... Germany has entered upon a perilous political adventure.<sup>705</sup>

Nevertheless, the New York Times placed great faith in the German people's 'healthy sense of self preservation'<sup>706</sup> as well as Hindenburg's ability to 'unmake Hitler as quickly as he had made him' if the new Chancellor sought to 'translate the wild and whirling words of his campaign speeches into political action'.<sup>707</sup> Though stunned, the paper concluded that there was 'no warrant for immediate alarm'.<sup>708</sup>

The New York Times generally adhered to its pattern of unmitigated optimism in its assessments of Germany during this period. As in the past, the paper's editorials consistently announced the death of the Nazis as a viable political force while proclaiming the fortitude of Weimar democracy. The views of the Berlin bureau appeared more in harmony with those of the editorial board than they had been in the past. Unfortunately,

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<sup>703</sup>NYT, 28 January 1933.

<sup>704</sup>"Von Schleicher Resigns", NYT editorial, 30 January 1933.

<sup>705</sup>"Germany Ventures", 31 January 1933, Ibid.

<sup>706</sup>"Germany's New Chancellor", 3 December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>707</sup>"Germany Ventures", 31 January 1933, Ibid.

<sup>708</sup>Ibid.

the lack of archival documentation from this period does not allow for a well supported explanation for these characteristics. Fortunately, there is a greater abundance of primary evidence dating after Hitler's appointment to the Reich Chancellorship.

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Some of the same patterns which had differentiated the Chicago Daily Tribune's German reporting from that of its competitors remained during the September 1932-January 1933 period. Although the Tribune reduced its coverage of civil unrest and monarchic intrigues, it still published more stories on these subjects than any of its competitors.<sup>709</sup> Riots and royalty, however, were treated with the same prominence as major German political news. The story of Schleicher's ouster, for example, ran alongside an article about ex-Kaiser Wilhelm's seventy-fourth birthday celebration, while another story about the Hohenzollerns shared space with the Nazi victory in Lippe.<sup>710</sup> A sample of the Tribune's foreign stories during the week preceding the November Reichstag elections illustrates that the paper's propensity to "hype" the news was not limited to events in Germany:

'BRITISH "HUNGER ARMY" THREATENS TO INVADE HOUSE OF COMMONS TONIGHT; NEW RIOTING FEARED'

'FIVE SLAIN IN CUBA ON EVE OF ELECTION'

'PREMIER HERRIOT REACHES MADRID; SPANISH STUDENTS RIOT'<sup>711</sup>

'LONDON POLICE FIGHT "HUNGER ARMY" IN NEW RIOT'

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<sup>709</sup>Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Appendices I & M.

<sup>710</sup>CDT, 16 & 28 January 1933, P.6.

<sup>711</sup>CDT, 1 November 1932.

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'PREMIER HERRIOT INSISTS "ON WORD OF HONOR" HE HAS NO SECRET MISSION IN SPAIN'<sup>712</sup>

'FRENCH PROPOSE GENERAL STAFF FOR ALL EUROPEAN ARMIES'  
'WAR BETWEEN THREE SOUTH AMERICAN NATIONS THREATENED'  
'BANDITS PLUNDER HARBIN REGION IN NORTH MANCHURIA'<sup>713</sup>

'THREE ARE KILLED AS BERLIN POLICE FIRE ON STRIKERS'  
'CANADIAN CONVICTS SET FIRE TO PENITENTIARY; ATTACK GUARDS WITH KNIVES AND CLUBS'  
'REVEAL LETTER FROM MOSCOW URGING LABOR DISORDERS IN BRITAIN'<sup>714</sup>

Publishing news from Germany apparently was important to McCormick since the Tribune printed more stories between September 1932 and January 1933 than any other American newspaper except for the New York Times. However, the significance of this fact is offset by several factors. First, German events which probably would have received the paper's banner headline in 1923-24 now failed to make page one altogether. Schleicher's resignation, which was on the front page of every major American newspaper, ran on page six of the Tribune. Moreover, management deemed Hitler's appointment as Chancellor secondary to Congress's passage of a bankruptcy protection law. Second, the Tribune relied more on the Associated Press for its stories about Germany than it had in the past. This glaringly manifested itself during the November Reichstag campaign when the paper ran wire service accounts summarizing the election results for two consecutive days.<sup>715</sup> Finally, while the Chicago Daily Tribune printed the most news stories about Germany between October 1932 and January 1933, it

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<sup>712</sup>Ibid., 2 November 1932.

<sup>713</sup>Ibid., 3 November 1932.

<sup>714</sup>Ibid., 5 November 1932.

<sup>715</sup>CDT, 7 & 8 November 1932.

published the fewest number of editorials. Although McCormick commented on German rearmament, he remained silent on von Papen's resignation and Schleicher's appointment and dismissal, as well as on the general state of the Weimar Republic.

Nor were those editorials that were published written in the provocative tradition of its publisher. Quite to the contrary, after his piece of 14 September in which he condemned Hitlerism and stated that 'republicanism was in dire peril', subsequent Tribune editorials were terse, equivocal and failed to address the specifics of the designated topic.<sup>716</sup> McCormick's commentary on the November Reichstag elections was limited to 'the Reds gained and the Nazis have lost' while the rest of the piece was devoted to the American Presidential campaign.<sup>717</sup> The Tribune's editorial on Hitler's appointment was non-descript; no member of the "Government of National Concentration" including Hitler himself was identified by name. Instead, McCormick stated that Germany's paramilitary forces were 'natural expressions of the nation's gymnastic habits'.<sup>718</sup>

Lacking pertinent memoranda from this period, we are left to speculate about McCormick's unusual pattern of behavior which was somewhat reminiscent of his actions during the Hindenburg/Marx campaign of 1925. An examination of Sigrid Schultz's published and unedited views may shed some light on his seeming indifference.

As mentioned in previous chapters, Tribune management often softened Schultz's private views about Germany, if they were

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<sup>716</sup>"The German Crisis", CDT editorial, 14 September 1932.

<sup>717</sup>"German and American Elections", CDT editorial, 8 November 1932.

<sup>718</sup>"The Marching German Republic", 31 January 1933, Ibid.

published at all. What remained was often a flavorless "just the facts" accounting of events. The last four months of 1932 would prove to be no exception.

A comprehensive analysis of conditions in the Weimar Republic cannot be found anywhere in Schultz's published pieces though she had sent at least three detailed mail articles on the subject during the two-week period preceding the November Reichstag elections. In an October piece she commented that:

Germany's electorate is tired, hungry and cold. Many of them have reached the stage where they simply don't care what happens, as long as they have the feeling that somebody is at the helm of the government energetic enough to lead the country back to prosperity.<sup>719</sup>

Other than riots and royalty, Schultz's published articles concentrated primarily on the personalities and policies of Weimar leaders. Her views indicated a mixed opinion of Papen. Schultz wrote that 'his self confidence, optimism and eagerness to work [had] won him the sympathy of millions, but that his inconsistencies [had] harmed him'.<sup>720</sup> Now, 'Von Papen's position [had become] a stormy one'.<sup>721</sup>

Schultz's published views were a softened version of her unedited ones. The archival evidence shows that her opinion of Papen soured during the late Autumn of 1932 after an initial period of unreserved praise. In September, Schultz predicted that the 'Papen government [was] here to stay for quite a while' 'because he will introduce an era of energetic action'.

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<sup>719</sup>Unedited Proofs, 24 October 1932, Sigrid Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. See also 20 August, ? November (3), 14 November, ?December, Ibid. Some of these articles were over ten pages in length.

<sup>720</sup>CDT, 6 November 1932, P.1.

<sup>721</sup>Ibid.

Moreover, she contended that he was not actuated 'by a thirst for power' but because 'he sincerely believed that he would be able to help his countrymen'.<sup>722</sup> However, Schultz's opinions initially made little impression on McCormick, whose editorial of 14 September called Papen's 'aristocratic' government 'understandable but deplorable'.<sup>723</sup>

By November, Schultz herself had become more skeptical. She suggested that there were two sides to him: Papen, the enlightened aristocrat, 'a man of charming courtesy, great culture, vivacious wit and good humor' and Papen, the dictator, whose 'voice cracks like a whip while his mouth curls in contempt'.<sup>724</sup> Commenting on his disingenuous nature, Schultz wrote:

Many of the things dictator Franz von Papen has said with an absolute ring of sincerity in the last six months he held reign in Germany were not always accurate -- to put it mildly -- and Herr von Papen cannot but have known it.<sup>725</sup>

In assessing Papen's failure in the November 1932 Reichstag elections, Schultz cited the fallout from his dismissal of the Socialist-led Prussian government, his pro-Junker policies and his Machiavellian-like ploys to deny Hitler power. Papen's 'clever but tricky manoeuvring in the past has alienated all of the main political leaders of Germany' and as a result:

Germany no longer believes in him... "Judge me by my actions", Papen told Germany. Germany studied his actions and the conclusions the vast majority drew about his

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<sup>722</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 16 September 1932, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. See also 6 September 1932, *Ibid.*

<sup>723</sup>"The German Crisis, CDT editorial, 14 September 1932.

<sup>724</sup>Unedited Proofs, 14 November 1932, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>725</sup>*Ibid.*

character and politics made them vote for everybody else except Papen.<sup>726</sup>

Schultz's reassessment of von Papen appears based on his failure in policy and leadership in the autumn of 1932. However, her views may have been also influenced by her personal meeting with Papen. Schultz's impressions of Papen conveyed subsequently in her personal correspondence strongly resemble those of her unpublished articles. Again, Papen's duality comes to the fore:

His party manners would win the heart of any outsider but compare them with his business manners and you will find the man is a ruthless creature, his ruthlessness tamed by his good looks and made less repulsive by his firm conviction that he is doing his sacred duty.<sup>727</sup>

Schultz was so convinced of Papen's Machiavellian-like motives that she believed that he orchestrated his own ouster as part of an elaborate scheme to discredit Hitler by bringing the Nazi leader into power in December, traditionally the month of greatest unemployment.<sup>728</sup> Even after his resignation, Schultz contended that 'the Papen crowd will continue to pull the main wires'.<sup>729</sup>

Schultz held Papen's successor, von Schleicher, in much higher regard, as indicated by her correspondence and unedited proofs. She was impressed by Schleicher's 'perfect manners, gaiety, wit and laughing eyes'; he exhibited 'none of the outward earmarks of grimness or harshness one usually associated

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<sup>726</sup>Ibid.

<sup>727</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, ? November (pre 17th) 1932, Ibid.

<sup>728</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 23 November 1932, Ibid.

<sup>729</sup>Ibid.

with the word "dictator".<sup>730</sup> Schultz also praised his political skills, particularly 'his versatility, clear thinking, adroitness and his ability to inspire friendship and reach compromises'.<sup>731</sup>

Despite these sentiments, Schultz was pessimistic about the new regime's prospects for success. In a 19 December letter to Scharschug she questioned whether Schleicher would stay in power long enough for her biographical sketch to reach Chicago.<sup>732</sup> She was troubled by Industry's opposition to Schleicher's negotiations with the Socialists and the labor unions as well as by the restlessness of Germany's unemployed.<sup>733</sup> 'If Schleicher fails to restore quiet and create work for the workless', she wrote in late December, 'then the Hitlerites and the Communists will sweep the country into a whirlpool of utopian experiments as dangerous as the Russian Revolution'.<sup>734</sup>

Except for the view that Schleicher was 'one of the ablest men of modern Germany', the Chicago Daily Tribune reader was given a sterile and far less detailed analysis of the new Chancellor and his policies.<sup>735</sup> Schultz's positive assessment of Schleicher and her pessimistic views of the prospects for his regime were absent from the Tribune's published dispatches from Berlin. Instead, with the exceptions of pieces about civil

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<sup>730</sup>Unedited Proofs, ? December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>731</sup>Ibid.

<sup>732</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 19 December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>733</sup>Ibid.

<sup>734</sup>Unedited Proofs, ? December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>735</sup>CDT, 5 December 1932.



unrest and monarchic intrigue, her articles read like toned-down versions of wire service reports.

A similar dichotomy is seen in the Tribune's portrayal of Hindenburg, as well as of the Nazis. Privately, Schultz wrote that 'Hindenburg was a shadow of his former self' in that he had lost his iron will and yet, except for an article noting his declining physical health, no story commenting on Hindenburg's failing judgement can be found. In addition, although Schultz began to dismiss Hitler as a threat in September, she modified her view by November. Schultz wrote Scharschug in December that even though 'Hitler was weakening, he still remained a danger'.<sup>736</sup> In an unedited proof she wrote, 'it remains to be seen in 1933 whether Schleicher will be strong enough to hold the reins with the Hitlerite steeds pulling in one direction and the communists roaring in the other'.<sup>737</sup> The Tribune, however, published these appraisals on only a few occasions and only during the November 1932 Reichstag campaign.<sup>738</sup> In fairness to management, they did not go so far as to convey the opposite of Schultz's views. Nevertheless, the full weight of Schultz's general pessimism was not conveyed to Tribune readers and hence they may have been surprised by the collapse of the Weimar Republic in January 1933.

From the preceding discussion, several larger conclusions about the way news was shaped can be drawn. First, Schultz's change of attitude regarding von Papen is an example of how journalists' interactions with news figures tend to influence

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<sup>736</sup>Schultz to Scharschug, 19 December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>737</sup>Unedited Proofs, ? December 1932, Ibid.

<sup>738</sup>CDN, 6 November 1932, Ibid.

their assessments. It also suggests that journalists may turn against a regime if it fails to keep the support of its people, even if they admire certain personal qualities of the leader. Second, Schultz's assessment of the von Schleicher ministry demonstrates that reporters can refrain from letting their personal feelings about a leader color their appraisal of his regime's prospects. Finally, that the Tribune readers were not made aware of Schultz's views demonstrates once again the extent to which a newspaper's management can influence the scope, tone and style of news.

The discovery that most of Schultz's thoughts were not printed in Chicago also raises a host of new questions. First and foremost, why did McCormick extract much of the flavor from Schultz's analysis? Second, did McCormick's confidence in Schultz diminish during this period? Finally, was there a link between the ambivalent views of the editorial page and those of the news pages?

The answers probably lie in the archives of the Chicago Daily Tribune which to date remain inaccessible to virtually all scholars. As cited, the only available correspondence from this period is between Schultz and George Scharschug, the paper's cable editor. Unfortunately, within those documents little mention is made of McCormick's opinions. The other source of McCormick's views on Germany during this period, his editorials, though reliable, were infrequently presented. Worse yet, the pertinent documentation from the Sigrid Schultz papers comes to an abrupt end after 1932. Thus, it is difficult to gain an insider's view of one of America's most prominent newspapers during one of history's most important periods.

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Although the American press's delusion about a "contained" Hitler Chancellorship proved short-lived, one could ask why the media was not more skeptical about it in the first place. It is plausible to argue that American journalists reflected an international consensus of opinion which included political leaders and intellectuals, as well as European newspapermen. Many underestimated Hitler's political skills and ideological resolve. Equally important, however, was that American journalists overestimated the acumen of Papen. Nevertheless, the reaction of most of the mainstream American press to Hitler's appointment indicates that many journalists had retreated from their dire predictions of 1930 and 1932, mirroring their initial reaction to Hindenburg's accession to the Presidency in 1925: an initial forecast of doom followed by comforting reassurances that things were not as bad as they appeared. Unfortunately, 1933 would confirm the American press's worst fears.

## Chapter 7

### **From Republic to Dictatorship: Germany, February-March 1933**

'I want to appeal to the press of the world not to form premature judgments on the events that are taking place. Please judge Germany's deeds as a whole, not as isolated incidents'.-- Adolf Hitler, 2 February 1933

In only seven weeks Germany went from a republic to a dictatorship. By the end of March, the remaining vestiges of parliamentary democracy, constitutional federalism and individual freedoms had been eliminated. With these safeguards against absolute dictatorship gone, Hitler and the Nazis proceeded to mold Germany and later most of Europe into a 'barbarous utopia', the likes of which history had never before witnessed.<sup>739</sup>

This quick transformation into a "racial state" was facilitated by the deterioration and eventual dissolution of the Weimar Republic. The Weimar "system" itself had undergone an ignominious metamorphosis. As a result of its three-year succession of authoritarian minority governments, Germany was no longer a model of representative democracy; instead, the Republic bore an increasing resemblance to the Germany of Bismarck. Moreover, in nearly every national and regional election since 1930, the collective tallies of those parties hostile to the Weimar system were greater than those which supported it. By the end of 1932, most observers agreed that

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<sup>739</sup>Term used in Burleigh and Wippermann, *The Racial State*.

the spirit and much of the substance of Weimar was gone and that any remaining vestiges would soon vanish.

Before 1933, Nazi political fortunes were only indirectly linked to those of the Weimar Republic. True, the Nazis had profited greatly at the polls from Weimar's demise but other anti-Republican groups, such as the Communists, had benefited as well. With his appointment as Chancellor in January 1933, however, Hitler became the sole beneficiary of Weimar's end; the final measures which would destroy the Republic would also establish the basis for his absolute rule. Unfortunately, this fact was realized too late by Hitler's anti-Republican allies as well as by his opponents. The communists fell victim to their rigid ideology; their leaders actually welcomed Hitler's accession to power, interpreting it as the final stage of capitalism, delaying concerted action until such time that Moscow considered Germany ripe for a proletarian revolution. Moreover, the KPD continued its tradition of undermining Socialist resistance to the Nazis by refusing SPD overtures to challenge Hitler with a unified Leftist front.<sup>740</sup>

Hitler's conservative cabinet members, who were supposed to "tame" the radical Chancellor, actually encouraged him to abolish parliamentarism and wage war against the Left as quickly as possible. Hugenberg pressed for an immediate ban on the KPD and a Reich takeover of Prussia; Finance Minister von Krösigk suggested to Hitler that he dissolve the Reichstag immediately so as to preclude an organized legislative opposition; and Vice-

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<sup>740</sup>Mommsen, H. "The Reichstag Fire Decree and Its Consequences" in Koch, H.W. (ed.) *Aspects of the Third Reich* (New York 1985). The SPD was also hurt when a number of trade unions broke with the Party in early March, see Craig, *Germany* pp.576-7.

Chancellor von Papen advised that regardless of the outcome, the regime should make sure that the Reichstag elections scheduled for 5 March be Germany's last. In fact, Hitler's conservative ministers wasted little time in presenting their program for Weimar's destruction: all of these suggestions were made on Hitler's first full day in office.<sup>741</sup>

Other potential sources of conservative resistance to Hitler either remained aloof or actively supported his policies. Hindenburg, for example, signed without hesitation the 1 February decree dissolving the Reichstag and called for elections on 5 March. Far from trying to contain Hitler's power, Hindenburg shared his Chancellor's hopes that the elections would result in a parliamentary majority for the new government. Moreover, Hindenburg also hoped that the election results would allow for the passage of an enabling act (a measure widely advocated by nearly all anti-Republicans) which would emasculate the Reichstag by concentrating all legislative and legal authority within the Hitler government.

At the root of Hindenburg's thinking was his genuine concern that yet another minority regime in a three-year succession of minority regimes would leave Germany vulnerable to left-wing insurrection. In his eyes maintenance of the status quo was fraught with short and long-term dangers. Success for the new government in the 5 March elections, therefore, was crucial to alleviating the aged Field Marshal's greatest fear, nationwide civil war. To this end Hindenburg quickly agreed to sign a

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<sup>741</sup>Kershaw, *Hitler* (London 1991) P.66, and Pridham and Noakes, *Documents on Nazism, 1919-45* (New York 1975) pp.158-60.

series of emergency decrees (based on Article 48 of the Weimar constitution) which allowed the Nazis to wage their electoral campaign under the most favorable circumstances. On 4 February he issued a decree which allowed the cabinet to suppress any publication or disrupt any assembly that it believed expressed anti-government sentiments. On 6 February Hindenburg signed an emergency decree which provided the legal basis for a Reich takeover of SPD government offices in Prussia.<sup>742</sup>

It was his signing of the "Decree for the Protection of the State and People" on 28 February, however, which was to be the decisive blow. Issued in reaction to the burning of the Reichstag the previous evening by a deranged Dutch communist,<sup>743</sup> the so-called Reichstag Fire Decree permitted the Reich government to deprive a citizen of his personal liberties without providing for due process, a critical deviation from previous decrees. Henceforth, Germans could be arrested under false pretenses and detained indefinitely without charge. In addition, the Reichstag Fire Decree allowed the Reich government to take control of state governments under the guise of "restoring order".

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<sup>742</sup>See Koch, H.W. "1933: The Legality of Hitler's Assumption of Power" in Koch, *Aspects* and Dorpalen, A. *Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic* (Princeton 1964) pp.449-51.

<sup>743</sup>The question of who perpetrated of the arson itself has been a source of intense historical debate. Craig, Bracher and others claim that the Nazis were behind the fire in order to justify their suppression of the Left. However, evidence from the papers of Nazi government officials indicates in fact that M. van der Lubbe committed the arson alone. See Mommsen, H. "Reichstag Fire", Weinberg, G. *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: A Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-36*, (Chicago 1970) P.28 and Childers, T. "A History of Hitler's Empire", (Teaching Company Lecture Series 1991), which confirms the earlier assessment of Tobias, F. *Der Reichstagsbrand, Legende und Wirklichkeit* (Rastatt 1962).

Notwithstanding these aspects, the most significant feature of the measure was its provisions for enforcement. Again departing from precedent, Hindenburg allowed the Cabinet, rather than himself, to be the final executor of the measure, leaving the power to depose state governments to Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick, a Nazi. Frick wasted little time: between 6 and 19 March most state governments, even particularist Bavaria, came under Nazi control. The Reichstag Fire Decree would later prove to be an integral component of the National Socialist legal system. In fact, the measure provided the legal basis for the execution of the "July Conspirators" in 1944.<sup>744</sup>

Hindenburg detached himself from other policy decisions as well. He did not question Göring's 17 February directive to police chiefs ordering them to treat left-wing supporters 'with all severity' but not to 'even give the appearance of persecution of patriotic associations (S.A., S.S. and Stahlhelm)'.<sup>745</sup> Nor did he resist Göring's 22 February induction of S.A. and S.S. members into the Prussian police forces. Göring's actions are critical in understanding the wholesale and brutal suppression of the Left (they facilitated the arrests of mid-level Socialist and Communist officials, thus removing the conduit between Party leaders and their rank and file) as well the atrocities committed against the nation's Jews following the

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<sup>744</sup>For contrasting views concerning the Decree itself, see Koch, "The Legality", which argues unconvincingly that the Reichstag Fire Decree as well as the Enabling Law did not represent a departure from previous emergency measures. More accurate are Mommsen, "Reichstag Fire", Craig *Germany* pp.574-5, Kershaw *Hitler* pp.67-68, Bracher, *K.D. The German Dictatorship* (London 1975) pp.200-208 and Pridham and Noakes *Documents*, pp.173-4.

<sup>745</sup>Pridham and Noakes, *Documents*, P.169.



imposition of the Reichstag Fire Decree. Furthermore, Hindenburg ignored pleas from SPD and Catholic Centre Party leaders to curtail Nazi violence, and exhibited no concern about the construction of Dachau, Germany's first concentration camp, on 20 March. Even more ominous, when Jewish groups protested the widespread instances of S.A. violence against them, Hindenburg simply referred them to the Nazi-controlled interior ministry.

Apologists for Hindenburg point to his declining physical and mental health as the primary reason for his timid performance. It was no secret that Hindenburg lacked the stamina at age 85 to involve himself in the daily decision-making of the Hitler government. Most observers felt that he only had a year or two left to live, a prediction that did come true. Besides, Hindenburg had relied upon the conservatives in the cabinet, especially von Papen, to keep Hitler in line. That these cabinet ministers failed to handle the power delegated to them accordingly may perhaps be viewed as absolving the field marshal of much of the blame for Hitler's rise.

Nevertheless, Hindenburg's interventions accelerated the pace of Weimar's destruction. In addition to signing emergency decrees which undermined his own authority, Hindenburg paralyzed the Reichswehr by instructing his generals at the outset to remain aloof from the domestic unrest promulgated by the S.A. and S.S. True, Reich Defence Minister General Werhner von Blomberg sympathized with Hitler and the Nazis made substantial inroads in the junior officer corps. Nonetheless, the venerated Field Marshal enjoyed the loyalty of the bulk of the army; had he wanted to thwart Hitler, he would have had the power to do

so. That he chose not to sealed the fate of the Republic and ultimately, the army.<sup>746</sup>

To cite Conservative complicity in the dismantling of the Weimar Republic is not to suggest (as do some "Functionalist School" historians) that Hitler himself lacked a plan for his aggrandizement. Yes, Hitler had a propensity for indecisiveness and vacillation; his early reign was marked by personal passivity and even impotence. For example, the S.A. virtually ignored his orders of 10 and 13 March to curb their violent activities, particularly towards foreigners and to a lesser extent, Jews. Hitler remained silent when Göring publicly contradicted him by inciting the S.A. to 'settle old scores' and to take vengeance against the Jews. Moreover, the Völkischer Beobachter, the Party's primary press organ, published only Göring's statements on the matter.<sup>747</sup> Nevertheless, it is important not to view Hitler's apparent passivity as a sign of complete weakness. Rather, it could also be argued that during his first weeks in power the new Chancellor recognized the vulnerabilities of his position. Outnumbered by Conservatives in his cabinet, the manipulative Hitler let von Papen, Hugenberg and others propose measures for Weimar's abolition which he himself advocated. Moreover, to reinforce the illusion that he was their tool, Hitler treated his Conservative ministers, as well as Hindenburg, with deference, and at times, with

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<sup>746</sup>See Carsten, *Reichswehr*, Chapter Eight and Geyer, M. "Etudes in Political History: Reichswehr, NSDAP and the Seizure of Power" in Stachura, P.(ed.) *The Nazi Machtergreifung* (London 1983).

<sup>747</sup>Pridham & Noakes, *Documents*, pp.183-84. See also Bessel, R. *Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism, the S.A. in Eastern Germany, 1925-34* (Yale University Press 1984).

servility. As a result, Hitler's government remained unified in purpose during those first critical weeks in power. Conservative opposition did not manifest itself until the end of March, by which time the Nazi leader enjoyed an impregnable political position.<sup>748</sup>

Indeed, it was in March when Germany "crossed the Rubicon". In what would be the Republic's last elections, Hitler's coalition government emerged with a slim majority, despite the fact that the Nazis used the powers of the State to rig the elections, even to the extent of intimidating and coercing voters as they stood in line at polling stations. However, to pass the "Law to Eliminate the Peril to Nation and Reich", better known as the Enabling Law, which would formally end Weimar democracy and inaugurate his dictatorship, Hitler required a two-thirds vote from the body. With SPD opposition certain, passage of the act hinged on the actions of one of the Republic's founders, the Catholic Centre Party (Zentrum).

Hitler had reason to be confident; he required only a handful of Zentrum votes since the Nazis had taken steps to make sure that KPD members would not be in attendance. The Catholic Centre Party had remained split from the time of Hitler's appointment, even after some well publicized episodes of Nazi violence towards high level party members. The Zentrum's right wing, led by Ludwig Kaas, supported the Hitler government, largely because of its suppression of the Left. The Kaas

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<sup>748</sup>There is a myriad of sources which comment on the "Intentionalist/Functionalist" debate. The intentionalist cause is best promoted in Jäckel, E. *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power* (Middletown CT 1972) while the functionalists are best served by Broszat, M. *The Hitler State* (New York 1981).

faction welcomed the Enabling Law as a continuation of this effort, thus ensuring its passage. That the moderates, including Brüning, also voted for the draconian measure reflects the disturbing state of affairs in Germany during that time.

From outward appearances it would seem that the Nazis and the Catholic Centre Party had struck a freely arrived at political bargain; in exchange for their votes, Hitler would respect the autonomy of Catholic institutions. In reality, however, this was more a case of "political arm-twisting" than of "one hand washing the other". The moderate wing was demoralized by the Nazi takeover of Catholic Bavaria and intimidated by the unspoken, yet clearly conveyed threat that Hitler would unleash his wrath on its constituents as well as themselves if he did not receive their votes. That this fear was present is reflected in one Zentrum deputy's comment, 'he who lives, sees'.<sup>749</sup>

Now armed with a firm legal basis for his rule, Hitler moved quickly to eliminate remaining opposition. Fearing persecution, all German political parties had disbanded themselves by the end of June. In July the Nazis legalized a one-party state with the promulgation of the Law Against the Establishment of Parties. In early April the Nazis purged Germany's civil service of potential resistance, a feat that to its detriment, the Republic had been unable to achieve.

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<sup>749</sup>Pridham and Noakes, *Documents*, pp.188-92. See also Bracher, K.D. "Stages of Totalitarian Integration: the Consolidation of National Socialist Rule in 1933 and 1934" in Holborn, H. (ed.) *Republic to Reich: the Making of the Nazi Revolution* (New York 1972) Berghahn, Germany P.127, Craig *Germany* 576-78 and Koch, "Legality" op. cit.

The Nazis also intruded into German social and cultural life. Independent professional organizations were declared illegal and were replaced by National Socialist ones. Anti-semitic policy which in late February and March had consisted of *Einzelaktionen* (random acts of terror usually carried out by the S.A. and S.S. and condoned by Nazi authorities) took on a more systematic form at month's end.<sup>750</sup> On 28 March the Party called for a boycott of Jewish owned businesses, quickly followed by laws which denied participation in German political, professional and cultural life to Jews. Critically important, however, is that the relatively smooth transition to totalitarianism was underpinned by a subtle yet ever-present threat of Nazi terror. Through the development of the "Block Warden System", a grass-roots network of neighborhood informants, the Gestapo created the impression that the walls did indeed "have ears". So pervasive was this fear that historians have presented strong evidence that the level of intimacy within friendships and families declined markedly during the Nazi period.<sup>751</sup>

Despite these infringements on individual rights, many Germans welcomed and continued to support Nazi rule enthusiastically. Hitler had quickly brought stability and order to a nation which had been plagued by civil unrest and

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<sup>750</sup>1933 would not mark the end of random anti-semitic outbreaks. Pogrom like outbursts erupted in 1935 and again in 1937. However, it is important to note that a number of Nazi officials viewed these episodes negatively because of the image of chaos that they promoted. The Nazis implemented anti-semitic legislation such as the Nuremberg Laws in part as a legislative reaction to the *Einzelaktionen*.

<sup>751</sup>For comprehensive analyses of the workings of the police state see Peukert, D. *Inside Nazi Germany, Conformity and Opposition in Everyday Life* (London 1987) and Gellately, R. "Enforcing Racial Policy in Nazi Germany", in Childers and Caplan, *Reevaluating the Third Reich* (New York 1993).

disillusioned by impotent leadership, instilling a spirit of national pride and renewal which many had felt was missing in Weimar politics. In short, Hitler's accession to power symbolized that "Germany was back". However, one should be careful not to paint Germans with a broad brush (as do AJP Taylor and to an even greater extent Daniel Goldhagen).<sup>752</sup> Despite its best efforts to influence the elections, the Nazi Party had failed to receive an electoral majority in March 1933. Moreover, the German populace expressed a wide range of reactions to Hitler's early policies. There was no clear consensus regarding the anti-Jewish boycott: opinion ranged from enthusiastic support in areas such as Franconia, to 'markedly cool' in Munich, to blatant disobedience in Berlin. In fact, some historians seem to suggest that Hitler did not enjoy majority support until after his diplomatic successes of the mid 1930's.<sup>753</sup> It would more accurate to say that the primary contribution of "average" Germans to the Nazi consolidation of power lay less in their feelings towards Hitler and more in their myopic desire to scrap the Weimar system and their callous indifference to the persecution of the Left, not to mention the Jews.<sup>754</sup> The divided attitudes toward Hitler prevented a broad-

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<sup>752</sup>Taylor, AJP *The Origins of the Second World War* (London 1961) and Goldhagen, D. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York 1996).

<sup>753</sup>Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich, Bavaria 1933-45* (Oxford 1983) pp.231-2, 235-8. See also Weinberg, *Foreign Policy*, pp.24, 198, 246, and 360.

<sup>754</sup>This insensitivity was noted by some American visitors returning from Germany in March 1933, as reported in the NYT 20 March 1933.

based, grass-roots opposition from being formed, and thus were a source of his strength.<sup>755</sup>

And therein lies the tragedy of this period -- Hitler did not have to resort to unpopular means to secure dictatorship. Who knows if Hitler would have succeeded had he been forced to act outside Weimar's legal and legislative framework. Had his opponents put up a modicum of resistance or had his allies "left him in the lurch", he was prepared to unleash the forces of the State upon the nation's citizenry. Sensitized by the chaotic experience of the previous fourteen years, most Germans deplored even the appearance of domestic unrest and usually condemned those who instigated it. This attitude prevailed into the Hitler dictatorship as evidenced by the popular backlash against the regime during *Kristallnacht* in 1938. Would Hindenburg and the Reichswehr have remained aloof had Hitler incited a civil war? The point to be made here is that the systematic ease with which Hitler gained power made the possibility of subsequent resistance far more difficult, if not impossible. The speed of Nazi consolidation took even Goebbels by surprise, the latter admitting in April that absolute dictatorship had 'been achieved much more quickly than we had dared to hope'.<sup>756</sup>

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<sup>755</sup>In addition to Peukert, Kershaw and Gellately op. cit., see Bessel, R. (ed.) *Life in the Third Reich* (Oxford 1987) and Kershaw, I. *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford 1987). For a comparison of opinion on the local level, see Allen, *Nazi Seizure of Power*, op. cit. and Rinderle, W. & Norling, B. *The Nazi Impact on a German Village* (University of Kentucky Press 1993).

<sup>756</sup>Pridham and Noakes, *Documents*, P.192.

The first two months of Hitler's rule were more extensively reported by the mainstream American press than any other two-month period in the history of the Weimar Republic; in fact, the number of stories (1382) in Herrmann's sample in February and March almost equalled the combined total of the previous five months. The number of news items about internal politics in February was double that of January. More significantly, the print media kept American readers informed of widespread violence orchestrated by the Nazis; stories regarding civil unrest appeared on an average of once every three days.<sup>757</sup> The February figure, like that for any other month from the entire Weimar era, pales in comparison with the number of stories published in March. Even excluding the New York Times, America's largest and most influential newspapers printed an average of two stories per day on events in Germany; there were sharp increases in the coverage of German domestic politics and internal disorder, even while the attention of the American public was consumed by the debut of the Roosevelt administration.

The immense volume of news from Germany served to intensify the revulsion of American journalists against the Hitler regime and underscored the gravity of the situation. Although the media felt initially that 'Hitler had become Chancellor with his wings clipped', its confidence began to erode, particularly

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<sup>757</sup>These and subsequent calculations are based on Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Appendices Q, R and S.



during the last two weeks of February.<sup>758</sup> On the 15th the Nation considered Germany under 'mob law, supported by all the powers of the reactionary centralized authority'.<sup>759</sup> On the 18th the New York American conceded that 'all the power is now in Hitler's hands and nothing in the world could tear it from him', while the Literary Digest stated that 'Germany's Mussolini is in the saddle for the time being'.<sup>760</sup> Even cultural publications such as Modern Music (NY) contended that Germany was retreating rapidly into the Middle Ages.<sup>761</sup> Some publications such as the American Hebrew (NY) still clung to the hope that Hindenburg and von Papen would control the Nazis by 'bending them into the twig that would make the newer German tree'.<sup>762</sup>

In one fell swoop the Reichstag Fire Decree eradicated any hope that Hitler could be stopped. Most journalists believed that either the Nazis engineered the arson themselves or, as Time posited, were using the event as 'an excuse to launch a juggernaut of super-suppressive measures'.<sup>763</sup> The Associated Press objected to the measure's 'far reaching interferences with

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<sup>758</sup>Editorial, Philadelphia Inquirer, 1 February 1933, as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Eight.

<sup>759</sup>The Nation, 15 February 1933, as cited in Zalampas, Hitler, Chapter Two.

<sup>760</sup>Literary Digest, 18 February 1933.

<sup>761</sup>Ibid.

<sup>762</sup>Ibid.

<sup>763</sup>Time, 13 March 1933 as cited in Zalampas, Hitler, Chapter Two.

personal liberties', while the St. Louis Post-Dispatch noted that it legitimized the use of 'savage tactics' by the Nazis.<sup>764</sup> American journalists clearly recognized the implications of the Reichstag Fire Decree for Germany's Reichstag election. Although many had predicted a victory for Hitler's government prior to the decree, reporters and editors alike were convinced that Hitler would win 'the most unfair election campaign that Germany [had] ever seen' because he would use 'the weapon of violence to control the results'.<sup>765</sup> Most publications made no attempt to sugarcoat the outcome of the Reichstag election. The Nation exclaimed that the 'gods would weep' because Germany's 'battle for democracy' had been lost.<sup>766</sup> The Detroit Free Press, troubled by the long-term consequences for the United States, stated that 'the results may keep the Roosevelt administration on needles and pins during its lifetime'.<sup>767</sup>

Even though Hitler needed a two-thirds Reichstag vote to pass the Enabling Law, the Associated Press claimed that 'Germany was well on the way to Fascist dictatorship [because] by the vote of the people he has been given the legal tools to annihilate the

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<sup>764</sup>Associated Press 1 March 1933, editorial St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Ibid., as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Eight.

<sup>765</sup>Ibid. See also editorial, Philadelphia Inquirer 5 March 1933, Ibid.

<sup>766</sup>The Nation 15 March 1933 as cited in Zalampas, Hitler, Chapter Two.

<sup>767</sup>Detroit Free Press, 23 February 1933 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Eight.

last vestiges of the democracy which he considers a failure'.<sup>768</sup> The passage of the measure, though dramatic in its presentation (it made the front page of virtually every major American newspaper) was anti-climactic in its tone -- in the eyes of American correspondents, Nazi dictatorship was a foregone conclusion. Editorials expressed dismay, yet little shock about the eradication of the Republic. Journalists evinced a sense of foreboding as 'Germany turned a completely new page in her history'.<sup>769</sup>

The rapid demise of the Republic was only one facet of American press coverage of Germany during the first two months of Hitler's rule. Its outstanding feature was the reporting of the wave of anti-semitic terror which engulfed the nation in March. Herrmann's sample of publications printed a whopping 418 news stories about Nazi persecution of Jews, which accounted for nearly half of their stories about Germany. No other single issue had received that much attention in Weimar's fourteen year history.

The overwhelming majority of news stories and editorials vehemently condemned the Nazis for their 'acts of revolting cruelty'.<sup>770</sup> Time and Newsweek informed America that Jews were

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<sup>768</sup>Associated Press, 6 March 1933, Ibid.

<sup>769</sup>Editorial Washington Post, 23 March 1933, Ibid.

<sup>770</sup>Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph 24 March 1933, as cited in Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, Chapter One.

being 'jailed, beaten and tortured'.<sup>771</sup> The Literary Digest provided graphic detail of Nazi atrocities by reporting that some Jews had their 'eyes poked out, castor-oil poured down their throats and were burned with red-hot irons'.<sup>772</sup> In stating that 'all of Germany's six hundred thousand Jews are in terror', H.R. Knickerbocker recalled that 'not even in Czarist Russia have the Jews been subject to a more violent campaign of murderous agitation'.<sup>773</sup> Even publications in non-Jewish areas such as Toledo (Ohio), Tulsa (Oklahoma), Nashville (Tennessee) and Grand Rapids (Michigan) condemned the persecution,<sup>774</sup> while the Catholic Commonweal expressed dismay at the indifference of many German Christians to the Jewish plight.<sup>775</sup> Nor was Nazi persecution of the Jews thought to be short-lived; the overwhelming majority of Herrmann's sample of

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<sup>771</sup>Time & Newsweek, 27 March 1933, as cited in Herrmann "American Perceptions", Chapter Eight.

<sup>772</sup>Literary Digest, "American Outcry at German Jew-Baiting", 1 April 1933.

<sup>773</sup>New York Evening Post 15 April 1933 as cited in Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, Chapter One.

<sup>774</sup>Literary Digest 1 and 8 April 1933.

<sup>775</sup>Commonweal 5 & 12 April 1933 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Chapter Eight. The Commonweal was one of the few publications to comment on German public reaction to the outbreak of anti-semitic violence, which is difficult to explain given the attention generated by the story.

mainstream American newspapers maintained that Nazi anti-semitism would be a lasting problem in Germany.<sup>776</sup>

Other aspects of the Nazi terror pushed the American press beyond indignation. Ten people out of the many thousands of victims were Jews of American descent. Readers across the nation learned of the frightening experiences of ordinary people such as Mr. and Mrs. Max Schussler, originally from New York, who found themselves awakened at two A.M. by pistol waving S.A. men, and Julian Fuchs, a Berlin nightclub owner, who was accosted by Nazi storm troopers and imprisoned in his own washroom.<sup>777</sup> The importance of these accounts cannot be underestimated because they gave faces to the victims of Nazi thuggery, evoking sympathy from the American public. As important, and perhaps an indication of the level of Jewish assimilation, the headlines for these stories did not include the religion of the victims, only their nationality. The final straw, however, was Hitler's decision of 22 March, granting amnesty to the perpetrators of the attacks, a move which outraged much of the American press.

The American press's censure of the Hitler regime in February and early March destroyed any remaining good will between Nazi authorities and American correspondents. As previously mentioned, the Nazis had never enjoyed good relations with the foreign press, in large measure because the Party demanded money

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<sup>776</sup>Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Appendix R. Eighty-one percent of his sample predicted that anti-semitism would continue in Germany.

<sup>777</sup>CDT 10 & 14 March 1933.

in exchange for stories and tips.<sup>778</sup> In addition, Hitler's propensity to engage in monologues and his refusal to answer questions did not endear him to reporters during interviews. Once Hitler came to power, the mainstream press harbored serious doubts about the veracity of government news releases regarding the terror. On some occasions the Nazi officials denied outright that "excesses" had taken place. In a 25 March press conference, Göring claimed that 'not one Jew's fingernail has been touched' and 'not one synagogue has been desecrated or destroyed'.<sup>779</sup> To reinforce this myth, the Nazis pressured German Jewish groups, such as the Central Union of German Citizens of the Jewish faith and the Patriotic Society of National German Jews as well as "alleged" victims, to issue public denials that any atrocities against their brethren were taking place.<sup>780</sup> At other times, the Hitler authorities admitted that crimes had occurred, but said that they were committed by communists disguised as Storm Troopers.<sup>781</sup> The most common Nazi tactic was to deny at first that any indiscretions had occurred, then promise an investigation, and then end with an assurance that such incidents would not happen again. By the end of February the credibility gap proved unbridgeable.<sup>782</sup>

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<sup>778</sup>See Chapter One of this study for a more detailed discussion of this practice.

<sup>779</sup>As printed in the CDN 25 March 1933.

<sup>780</sup>See Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, pp.16-17. See also NYT 25 March 1933, P.1.

<sup>781</sup>As reported by the CDN 8 March 1933.

<sup>782</sup>For a detailed discussion of Hitler's relations with the international press corps during his first months in office, see Lipstadt, *Beyond*  
(continued...)

The biggest reason for the hostility of American correspondents towards the Hitler regime was the Government's institution of press censorship. Although the laws of 4 and 28 February 1933 were directed against domestic publications, the foreign press suffered as well because its reporters relied upon German newspapers for its own stories, particularly those emanating from outside Berlin. When the Nazi authorities recognized the role played by the international press in facilitating a worldwide backlash against Germany, they further undermined correspondents' access to data by making it illegal for 'any German to impart information to foreigners'.<sup>783</sup> This measure followed on the heels of the censorship decree of 7 March, which allowed postal and cable authorities to delete anti-government statements from outgoing dispatches and mail stories, although this was not carried out on a wide scale until the end of the month. More effective was the Hitler government's threat to expel correspondents if they 'misrepresented the internal situation': one which was carried out against Edgar Mowrer.<sup>784</sup> The threat of expulsion was also meant to coerce the managements of newspapers, magazines and wire services to instruct their correspondents to soften their views towards the regime. Louis Lochner of the Associated Press recalled how his superiors ordered him and his colleagues to

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<sup>782</sup>(...continued)  
*Belief*, pp.18-22.

<sup>783</sup>As reported by the NYT, 19 March 1933.

<sup>784</sup>As quoted by the NYT 7 March 1933.

'tell no untruth, but to report only as much of the truth without distorting the picture, as would enable us to remain at our posts'.<sup>785</sup>

The tactic which proved most effective during the early months of the Nazi regime was the threat of government reprisals against a correspondent's news source, often a victim of Nazi thuggery. Even Edgar Mowrer, whose reports of the terror were among the most graphic, admitted on 22 March that he had 'not used one-tenth of the duly verified information concerning the horrors practiced against scores of persons, notably Jews'.<sup>786</sup> The regime also coerced, disrupted and intimidated those reporters who had consistently portrayed the Nazis in a very negative light so that they would leave Germany. The Hitler government prevented those they deemed *Greuelhetzer* ("atrocitv mongers") from using the mail system, forcing reporters to rely exclusively on the more expensive telephone and telegraph services. In some instances, reporters were arrested for violating a law retroactively, subjected to police interrogation and even given stints in a concentration camp. More often though, the Nazis exerted subtle pressure on correspondents. Edgar Mowrer usually had two S.S. men stationed outside his home while the Nazis turned Sigrid Schultz's housemaid into a Gestapo

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<sup>785</sup>Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, P.23.

<sup>786</sup>CDN 22 March 1933, P.2.



informant.<sup>787</sup> Thus the era of the free press in Germany had come to a rude and abrupt end.

Despite the efforts of the Regime, American journalists, through their courage and skill, were able to get through enough detailed accounts of the Nazi reign of terror to influence profoundly public opinion at home. On 27 March 1933 there was a "National Day of Prayer" on behalf of Germany's Jews. The following day, a mass anti-Nazi rally took place in Madison Square Garden where sixty thousand protesters were joined by an eclectic group of prominent religious and political figures including Al Smith and Robert Wagner. In addition, anti-Nazi protests occurred in over eighty U.S. cities, most of which had negligible Jewish populations. German-made goods were boycotted in New York and Philadelphia and many German and German-American businessmen publicly distanced themselves from the Hitler regime.<sup>788</sup> Even Washington was drawn into the fray. The House of Representatives debated whether there should be any official action against Germany in response to its persecution of the Jews (although nothing substantive came of it because of the intervention of Secretary of State Hull).

Although the overwhelming majority of the American press condemned the Nazi persecution of Jews, Deborah Lipstadt argues that a significant minority professed "less sympathetic" views. Some publications remained unconvinced that the situation in Germany was all that bad. 'Terrible things may be happening but

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<sup>787</sup>Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, pp.22-24, *Heald Vistas*, pp.118-119.

<sup>788</sup>For a brief summary of international reaction to Nazi excesses see Weinberg, *Foreign Policy*, pp.38-40.

they are not as terrible as the reports from Germany would have you believe' commented one Los Angeles Times editorial.<sup>789</sup> Some journalists accepted the denials of German-Jewish organizations at face value, as did John Elliot of the New York Herald Tribune, while others such as the editors of the Columbus Journal (Ohio) discounted the atrocity reports as repeats of the anti-German propaganda during the Great War.<sup>790</sup>

Another segment of the minority view acknowledged that "terrible things were happening" but claimed that the Jews, not the Nazis, were to blame. The bulk of the espousers of this position, a view often laced with anti-semitic stereotypes, belonged to the Protestant press. For example, the Christian Science Monitor asserted that it was the 'Jewish inclination' towards 'commercial clannishness' 'which got them into trouble' while the Christian Century excused Hitler's actions on the grounds that 'too many Jews in Germany are radicals and communists'. And in a case of reverse sequential logic, the Christian Science Monitor blamed the hostile response of American Jews to the Nazi violence for the violence that occurred in the first place, condemning their 'eye for an eye' attitude and instead suggested that Jews should 'heed Jesus's

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<sup>789</sup>Los Angeles Times 16 March 1933 as cited in Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, Chapter Two. Interesting is Hearst Foreign Editor Claude Bowers response to this view, 'there is no reason to doubt the proof from all the reputable news-gathering agencies of the world'. (28 March 1933 as cited in Herrmann, "American Perceptions"). Lipstadt's contention that the 'picture drawn by the American press [of the plight of German Jewry] was a confused one' during the early months of Hitler's rule is difficult to defend given the overwhelming consensus of press opinion sympathetic towards the Jews.

<sup>790</sup>New York Herald Tribune, 25 March 1933 and the Columbus Journal, 24 March 1933 Ibid.

commandment to "love one another".<sup>791</sup> Although demagogues such as Father Coughlin would later espouse similar views, the fiercely anti-Nazi position of the Catholic Commonweal demonstrated that not all religious commentators discounted the plight of the Jews.

Notwithstanding the consensus of press opinion which opposed Nazi policies and supported the Jews, the lines of public debate over Hitler were drawn by the end of April 1933. And despite the nationwide condemnation of the anti-semitic pogroms in 1935, 1937 and 1938 (*Kristallnacht*), many Americans, (particularly those from the isolationist ranks), soon gravitated to a pro-Germany position, thus making for a more balanced war of words. By 1939 American attitudes toward the Hitler regime seemed intrinsically contradictory, as shown by two polls taken after *Kristallnacht*. In one poll, 94% of those questioned disapproved of Germany's persecution of the Jews, yet in the other, 60% of those questioned believed that the Jews were either entirely or partially responsible for their plight. The paradoxical nature of American public opinion also extended to the nation's attitude after the outbreak of war in 1939 -- both anti-German and isolationist sentiment grew stronger.<sup>792</sup>

But in 1933 the spectre of war, though raised by some, was a secondary issue for the reporters stationed in Germany. Many

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<sup>791</sup>Christian Science Monitor, 4 & 8 April 1933, the Christian Century, 26 April 1933, *Ibid.*

<sup>792</sup>Levering, R. *The Public and American Foreign Policy, 1918-1978* (NY 1978), Chapters Two and Three. See also Cantril, H. *Public Opinion*, (Princeton 1951) P.381 as cited in Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, Chapter Five. Worth noting is that the Nazi propaganda campaign in the United States actually backfired on the Regime. See Frye, A. *Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere, 1933-41* (New Haven 1967).

correspondents conveyed the idea that a malevolent force had invaded Germany, in part because they were not quite sure who, if anyone, was behind the reign of violent chaos. Most major American newspapers felt that Göring encouraged, (but did not direct) the terror, while a few thought that Hitler was a force for moderation. In fact, some contended that Hitler's inclination towards restraint had increased as he acquired more power, a function of the somewhat dubious theory that "the office tempers the man". This argument was put forth by the New York Times and the Christian Science Monitor, which compared Hitler to the old saying about the month of March: 'he came in like a lion but will go out like a lamb'.<sup>793</sup> Less optimistic journalists such as Dorothy Thompson referred their readers to the barbarism of the Middle Ages as a parallel to Germany's current condition.<sup>794</sup> To still other reporters, events in Germany differed fundamentally from previous Western historical experience -- it was as if Hitler and the Nazis were mythic beings endowed with the power to captivate and mesmerize. The Literary Digest evoked this image with its assertion that 'the statement two plus two are four uttered in Hitler's vibrant baritone might be clothed in the passionate conviction and noble splendor of some message from the stars'.<sup>795</sup> Perhaps Birchall captured the surreal and uncertain turn of events in Germany best through his description, 'the Reich is changing rapidly and

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<sup>793</sup>Christian Science Monitor, 7 March 1933 as cited in Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, Chapter Two.

<sup>794</sup>Heald, *Vistas*, P.169.

<sup>795</sup>Literary Digest, 18 February 1933

basically into something different, the precise character of which no man at present can confidently predict'.<sup>796</sup> Unfortunately, journalists would eventually witness Germany's descent to the depths of evil.

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The rapid changes that characterized Germany during the first two months of Hitler's rule held particular appeal for the Chicago Daily Tribune which prided itself on reporting groundbreaking news. The Tribune published one and one half times more items on Germany during February and March 1933 than did the average of Herrmann's sample. This was all the more remarkable considering the fact that between 16 February and 7 March the Chicago press reserved large blocs of space for the biggest story in the City's recent history: the assassination of Mayor Anton Cermak in Miami as he accompanied then President-elect Franklin Roosevelt.

Not surprisingly, the Tribune extensively covered the general disorder and violence that followed Hitler's appointment. In fact, the paper devoted a higher percentage of its German reporting to Nazi terror than did any other major American newspaper. Nearly every reported attack on Americans received front page billing. Given Chicago's large Catholic population, it was not surprising to see that the Tribune emphasized the reporting of violence directed towards Germany's Catholics. The paper's inclination towards reporting domestic unrest also contributed greatly to its heavy play on Nazi anti-semitism. In

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<sup>796</sup>NYT, 20 February 1933, P.1.

fact, fifty percent of the Tribune's published news stories from Germany concerned the plight of the Jews, a greater portion than that in any other major American newspaper.<sup>797</sup>

However, what distinguished the German coverage of the Chicago Daily Tribune from other publications was the paper's emphasis on monarchic intrigues. As it had in the past, the paper not only reported on the machinations of the Hohenzollerns, it also injected them into its daily coverage of government activities. One need look no further than some of the Tribune's headlines between 6 February and 24 March 1933 to recognize this pattern:

- 'EX-KAISER'S SON JOINS HITLER AT NAZI FUNERAL' (6 February)
- 'KAISER SENDS HIS BAGGAGE INTO GERMANY; RESTORED MONARCHY IS SUSPECTED' (7 February)
- 'GERMAN VOTERS AT SEA; HITLER OR MONARCHY?' (18 February)
- 'WIFE OF KAISER IN BERLIN AS HIS POLITICAL ENVOY' (26 February)
- 'HITLER CABINET REVIVES SPIRIT OF KAISER'S DAYS' (3 March)
- 'HITLER'S AIM TO RESTORE GERMAN MONARCHY REVEALED' (7 March)
- 'HITLER REGIME KILLS GERMAN RULE BY PEOPLE; EX-KAISER'S FAMILY GIVEN HONORS' (22 March)
- 'HITLER IS MADE DICTATOR; SAYS "NO KAISER NOW"' (24 March)

Although there is a dearth of archival evidence for the Tribune from this period, the documents cited in previous chapters clearly demonstrate that McCormick had always maintained that a return of the Hohenzollerns was likely, if not inevitable. What is noteworthy (and puzzling), however, is that McCormick became more convinced of the likelihood of a restoration as Hitler consolidated his power at the expense of the monarchists, Papen and Hugenberg. His editorial of 8 February stated that it would be 'rash to predict' a rebirth of Kaiserdom, while his less equivocal one of 16 March stated that

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<sup>797</sup>See Herrmann, "American Perceptions", Appendix Q.

'although a matter for conjecture, monarchy is the natural supposition'.<sup>798</sup> And on 24 March, though he acknowledged in his paper's own headline that Hitler would not restore monarchism to Germany, McCormick concluded that there 'cannot be much doubt that the return of the Hohenzollerns impends'.<sup>799</sup>

McCormick's position that a Nazi dictatorship represented no more than a transitional phase between republic and monarchy interfered with his recognition of the unprecedented state of affairs in Germany. This is not to suggest that he looked favourably upon the Nazis. McCormick believed that 'Hitler's personality and utterances encouraged little hope that the Fascist movement [would] produce lasting good for Germany'.<sup>800</sup> He was also 'distressed' by the 'brutal terror' inspired by Hitler and exercised by Nazi gangs, as well as by the government's suppression of the international press.<sup>801</sup> Nor was he optimistic about the future, which after the passage of the

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<sup>798</sup>Editorial, Ibid. 16 March 1933.

<sup>799</sup>Ibid. 24 March 1933. In fairness to McCormick, it should be noted that Augustus Wilhelm, the former Crown Prince, was a staunch supporter of the Nazis. However, this fact alone does not fully account for the logic behind his views.

<sup>800</sup>Ibid. 2 February 1933.

<sup>801</sup>Ibid. 21 March & 23 February 1933. McCormick's acute sensitivity to the Nazi practice of press censorship was echoed by his cable editor, George Scharschug in a 27 March 1933 letter to Schultz in which he hoped 'for the sake of Germany that the government lets you tell the full story' because it was 'the best way to avoid unfriendly propaganda'. One may infer from his statement that Scharschug failed to understand the motives behind the censorship in the first place. Scharschug to Schultz, 27 March 1933, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

fall of the Republic, although this is a matter for speculation. Conversely, McCormick generally refrained from criticizing the German people. His strongest comment was that he was 'disappointed to find the German sense of reasoned order, patience and discipline overborne by bitter factionalism and reckless political violence'.<sup>806</sup>

However, it would be McCormick's isolationist views which would exert the most profound influence on the Tribune's editorial attitudes towards Germany from the Enabling Law down through the attack on Pearl Harbor. As was the case in Hindenburg's 1925 campaign (when McCormick initially raised the prospect of war only to downplay it after the Field Marshal's victory because he did not want to encourage U.S. intervention), once Hitler became absolute ruler, McCormick departed from his earlier view that a Nazi dictatorship would lead to war.

[In contrast to] 'the Reds in Russia, '[the Nazis] are not seeking to create in Germany a people with spear heads pointed to the rest of the world but a nation reorganized for better association with other countries... It is, theoretically at least, their objective to unite Germany, to free it from the limitations imposed by an unjust treaty and to give it the place to which its natural power and accomplishment would entitle it.<sup>807</sup>

Many of McCormick's critics have cited these statements, coupled with his staunch advocacy of appeasement, as evidence that the Tribune publisher was pro-Nazi. This contention, however, is questionable in light of the fact that McCormick had consistently opposed Hitler's domestic policies (save his suppression of the Left) throughout the 1920's and early 1930's.

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<sup>806</sup>Ibid. 23 February 1933.

<sup>807</sup>Ibid. 21 March 1933.



Schultz asserted in a 1971 interview that McCormick later sympathized with Germany after the 1934 Hitler-ordered execution of S.A. chief Ernst Röhm. She contended that McCormick's hostility towards the regime had been based on his disapproval of Röhm's homosexuality. To support her view, Schultz noted that McCormick's fiercest anti-Nazi pieces were written in the fall of 1933 soon after she had informed him of Röhm's sexual proclivities.<sup>808</sup> Schultz's theory, however, falls short because she too failed to account for McCormick's anti-Nazi positions before he learned about Röhm. What seems more likely is that as Hitlerism became an international issue and the prospects of another disastrous war loomed large, McCormick correspondingly softened his views towards Germany. Thus, it appears that it was primarily his isolationism, not his right-wing sympathies which underpinned his attitudes towards Germany after March 1933.

McCormick's somewhat contradictory views of Hitler's first months in office seem to have had a limited effect on Schultz's reporting. True, the emphasis on monarchic aspirations was a prominent feature of her reporting during this period, as it had been for years past. And given Schultz's confidence in a Hohenzollern return in 1930 and again in 1932, it is reasonable to assume that she shared, at least to some degree, her publisher's opinion on the issue. Finally, that the Home Office

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<sup>808</sup>Schultz interview 1971 (Part One), Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

praised her 'excellent reporting on the German situation' also indicates that she stood in accord with her publisher.<sup>809</sup>

As was the case with McCormick, the monarchic angle also may have delayed Schultz's recognition of Hitler's consolidation of power.<sup>810</sup> If her dispatches can be taken at face value,<sup>811</sup> Schultz felt that Hitler was a tool manipulated by his conservative cabinet ministers for most of his first eight weeks in office. On 5 February, 12 February and 18 February, Schultz declared Papen or Hugenberg the victors in their intra-cabinet battles with Hitler, consistently conveying the impression that 'the Nationalists [had] "put one over" on their new allies'.<sup>812</sup> As late as 7 March Schultz claimed that Papen and other cabinet members were exerting effective pressure to restore the Hohenzollern monarchy. In any event, she was convinced that a

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<sup>809</sup>Scharschug to Schultz, 27 March 1933, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>810</sup>As yet another example of the unreliability of journalists' retrospective accounts, in a 1971 interview, Schultz stated that as early as 1930 she considered Hitler's accession to power inevitable. This study has shown, through an examination of her correspondence, that this was not the case. See Schultz interview (1971 Part One), Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>811</sup>The Nazi censorship decrees of March do make it difficult to ascertain her reporting throughout most of the month, although her February dispatches through 6 March were not subjected to censorship. Moreover, we do not know of the extent to which Schultz's views were modified by the Home Office. However, her reporting during this period indicates a continuation not a deviation from the previous years.

<sup>812</sup>CDT 12 February 1933, P.2.

prospective Nazi dictatorship would 'pure and simple, meet with strong opposition'.<sup>813</sup>

Schultz's idea of an 'outmanoeuvred' or 'tamed' Hitler<sup>814</sup> may be traced in part to her mixed assessment of him. Though Schultz described Hitler as a 'master propagandist and master showman' who 'played on German emotions like a great artist',<sup>815</sup> she was careful to point out that he was 'often shaken by doubt, swayed by sentiment and a bit helpless'.<sup>816</sup> Hitler's futile attempt to restrain the S.A. in the wake of Göring's intervention of 10 March may have reinforced her view. More importantly, Schultz's evaluation of Hitler must be seen in comparison to her assessment of von Papen, whom she considered a first-rate Machiavellian political operator. Thus, it would not be too much of an overstatement to say that Schultz considered Hitler an amateur among professionals.

Schultz made it clear from the outset that the end of the Weimar Republic was at hand. She saw little significance in the Reichstag campaign of 5 March, accurately noting that even if Hitler's government failed to obtain a majority, the Chancellor would dissolve the legislative body by decree. After Hitler's victory, Schultz predicted that through an enabling act the

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<sup>813</sup>Ibid. 27 February 1933.

<sup>814</sup>Ibid. 18 February 1933.

<sup>815</sup>Ibid. 27 February 1933.

<sup>816</sup>Ibid.

Reichstag would 'close shop for at least two years'.<sup>817</sup> She considered ratification of the Enabling Law a foregone conclusion and predicted its 'prompt passage'.<sup>818</sup>

However, although Schultz sounded the death knell of the Republic, she refrained from pronouncing Hitler Germany's absolute dictator until 22 March. In examining her dispatches up to that date, it is not clear when, in her view, the Papen-Hugenberg regime ended and Hitler's began. The Tribune's March headlines such as 'HITLER SEIZES CONTROL OF ALL GERMAN STATES', 'PRUSSIAN MAYORS FIRED BY HITLER', 'HITLER TIGHTENS GRIP ON GERMAN RULE AT POLLS' which in their singular identification of Hitler as the representative of the German government marked a departure from the paper's February headlines, are unreliable as a clue to Schultz's change of mind because headlines were formulated in Chicago, not Berlin. Moreover, nowhere in the text of her articles did she indicate that Hitler had gained the upper hand within the cabinet. Hence, although the actions of Nazi leaders and gangs were reported in detail, the impetus and implications of their actions were not analyzed. In fairness to Schultz, Scharschug suggested on 27 March 1933 the possibility that some of her dispatches may have encountered 'censor troubles', a source of chronic concern for the Tribune Home Office.<sup>819</sup>

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<sup>817</sup>Ibid. 7 March 1933, P.3.

<sup>818</sup>Ibid. 21 March 1933.

<sup>819</sup>Scharschug to Schultz, 27 March 1933, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Schultz, as well as McCormick, omitted any tangible discussion of Hindenburg's role. In fact, McCormick did not mention Hindenburg by name in a single editorial from this period. The absence of commentary on the Field Marshal, which began in the summer of 1932 and would continue until his death in 1934, reflected both McCormick's and Schultz's belief that Hindenburg had ceased to be an important factor in German politics.

Although Schultz was later occasionally subjected to harassment by the authorities (including an interrogation by the Gestapo), probably because the tone of her dispatches tended to portray the regime in a negative light, she managed to remain at her post until finally being expelled in 1941.<sup>820</sup> While we cannot know for sure, Schultz's long tenure in Berlin was probably due in part to her cordial social relations with the Nazis, particularly Göring (who was a frequent guest at her dinner parties).<sup>821</sup> It is also plausible that during the second half of the decade Schultz's position may have been more secure because Hitler did not wish to alienate McCormick, a staunch advocate of appeasement. Perhaps the plethora of documents in the Chicago Tribune Archive will further substantiate these hypotheses once they are made available.

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The Chicago Daily News featured articles about Germany virtually every day in February and March 1933, even placing

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<sup>820</sup>Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, P.22.

<sup>821</sup>Sigrid Schultz interview, 1971, Schultz Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

them on page one on several occasions in a paper where such displays were usually reserved for matters of local or national interest. As in the case of the Tribune, the Daily News covered Hitler's consolidation of power extensively despite the distraction of the Cermak assassination, publishing five editorials on the Nazis in March alone. Its news about Germany emanated primarily from three sources: Edgar Mowrer, John Gunther, Carroll Binder and the editorial board. The salient feature of the Chicago Daily News's coverage of Hitler during this period was the paper's keenness and depth of foresight in its analysis, on a level far superior to that of most other major American newspapers.

At the outset, however, the paper did not merit such praise. In the early days of the Hitler Chancellorship, Mowrer shared the delusion of many observers that 'the real authority lies with von Papen'.<sup>822</sup> He also suggested that Hitler's fascist platform was merely a vote-getting veneer which he would shed upon the assumption of office. On 2 February Mowrer asserted that 'Hitler has thrown aside the veil of social radicalism and appears as a naked reactionary', resembling his conservative ministers.<sup>823</sup>

On 6 February Mowrer was relieved for nearly three weeks by John Gunther, the paper's thirty-two year old rising star.<sup>824</sup>

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<sup>822</sup>CDN 1 February 1933, P.1.

<sup>823</sup>Ibid. 2 February 1933.

<sup>824</sup>Mowrer's absence was probably unplanned. His daughter believed that he may have been injured in a skiing accident. Diana Mowrer Beliard to the author, 7 June 1997.

Gunther had been the Vienna bureau chief since 1930 and would report from there with distinction and later have a successful literary career. The future author of the "Inside" series immediately discounted the press's (and Mowrer's) contention of a "controlled" Hitler. In his first dispatch, Gunther asserted that 'it was easy to make Hitler Chancellor of the Reich but it will be exceedingly difficult to get rid of him'.<sup>825</sup> Influenced by the promulgation of the 4 and 6 February emergency decrees which suppressed the Left and legalized the Reich takeover of Prussia, Gunther opined that the 'government monopoly [of power]' had become a 'Hitler monopoly'.<sup>826</sup> On the 17th he cabled that 'day by day the relentless march towards permanent power continues under Adolf Hitler', reinforcing a theme of inevitability which came to characterize the paper's dispatches from Germany.<sup>827</sup> Moreover, Gunther believed that Hitler would remain in power regardless of the 5 March election results.<sup>828</sup>

The only aberration in Gunther's reporting appeared in his published article of 9 February, which appeared under the title, 'HITLER'S FIRST TEN DAYS IN POWER BRINGS LITTLE CHANGE IN GERMANY':

No heads have rolled in the sand. No corpses of Jews are swinging from the lampposts of *Unter den Linden*. Department stores are still doing business -- very good business, too.

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<sup>825</sup>CDN 6 February 1933, P.2.

<sup>826</sup>Ibid.

<sup>827</sup>Ibid. 17 February 1933.

<sup>828</sup>Ibid. 23 February 1933.

Nazi storm troops have not yet, surprisingly enough, crossed the Rhine. International bankers with offices in Berlin still survive -- in fact, they are negotiating with the government, whose followers had threatened to throw them out. The Treaty of Versailles, strange to say, has not yet been scrapped and the corridor and Upper Silesia are still Polish. Universal compulsory military conscription, fond dream of the Hitlerites, is still a dream. The Communist party has not been outlawed, although it very well may be shortly.<sup>829</sup>

The factual accuracy of the above text is not in question (although even at this early stage some Communist heads "had rolled in the sand"). It appears to imply, however, that since nothing terrible has occurred in the first ten days of Hitler's rule, nothing terrible will occur in the future (except that the Communists may be disbanded) -- a clear contradiction of Gunther's sense of foreboding exhibited in his articles of the previous three days. Moreover, that Gunther's subsequent dispatches offer no cause for optimism suggest the possibility that he may have been instructed (probably by Dennis) to write a dispatch which took a more encouraging view. Unfortunately, the lack of archival evidence about this episode precludes any definitive conclusion, though on the face of it, the 9 February dispatch appears glaringly misplaced.

On 24 February Mowrer returned to work and almost immediately reversed the positions he took in the beginning of the month. On the 27th he acknowledged that Hitler now exercised 'predominant influence' in the cabinet in large part because of the 'violent measures taken by the National Socialist government'.<sup>830</sup> Nearly three weeks before the passage of the

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<sup>829</sup>Ibid. 9 February 1933, P.1.

<sup>830</sup>CDN 27 February 1933, P.2.



Enabling Law, Mowrer predicted that 'a centralized dictatorship extending over the German states [would] be established, cloaked in the forms of moribund parliamentarism which [would] deceive no one'; a dictatorship represented in what Hitler and Göring decide'.<sup>831</sup> On 10 March he proclaimed that 'all Germany is now in the hands of the National Socialists' and mused that the Enabling Law was 'not really necessary since Hitler and his friends [had] acted as though such a law already existed'.<sup>832</sup> In fact, the Chicago Daily News considered its passage such a non-event that it carried only the Associated Press's account of the story.

His foresight aside, what made Mowrer's reporting so refreshing was his confrontational tone towards the Nazis. When anti-semitic violence intensified in the aftermath of the 5 March elections, Mowrer mounted 'a one man crusade': not only reporting it in graphic detail but also vigorously defending the veracity of his dispatches against the wave of Nazi attacks on the credibility of the foreign press.<sup>833</sup> Ultimately, Mowrer's campaign would result in his expulsion from Germany. But for a brief period he was the international press's modern-day Paul Revere, even risking his life to alert America to the evil brewing in Germany. It was his performance in March 1933 which

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<sup>831</sup>Ibid. 6 March 1933.

<sup>832</sup>Ibid. 21 March 1933.

<sup>833</sup>Diana Mowrer Beliard to the author, 15 July 1995.

earned Mowrer Gunther's statement that Mowrer was a combination of Shelley, Lincoln and Mohammed.<sup>834</sup>

At the beginning of March, Mowrer seemed an unlikely candidate for such distinction. He had been one of those who believed that Hitler would 'sincerely deplore... anything like a Saint Bartholomew's night' although admitting that random S.A. violence against the Jews 'might get out of hand'.<sup>835</sup> Within two weeks, Mowrer reversed this position, asserting unequivocally that 'what has happened sporadically to Americans has been the lot of many Germans' and that it was foolish to believe that 'the excesses [had] been merely the results of storm battalion men getting out of hand against the desire of the government'.<sup>836</sup>

Despite withholding many episodes, Mowrer nonetheless provided graphic descriptions of the Nazi terror, including his reports of 'bloodstained floors' in makeshift torture chambers. In a 22 March article he described how Brown Shirts, after inflicting a physical beating on their victims, 'mostly Jews', would 'compel them to lick up their own blood or that of fellow sufferers'.<sup>837</sup> Mowrer also noted (albeit incorrectly) that the construction of Dachau was 'the first time that concentration

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<sup>834</sup>Heald, *Vistas* op. cit., Chapter Two.

<sup>835</sup>CDN 3 March 1933.

<sup>836</sup>*Ibid.* 9 & 18 March 1933.

<sup>837</sup>*Ibid.* 22 March 1933.

camps [had] ever been prepared for one's own people'.<sup>838</sup> At the end of March, he reached the 'unquestionable' conclusion that 'the terror [had] been successful and German Jews and republicans were thoroughly cowed'.<sup>839</sup>

Mowrer's dislike of the Nazis was exceeded only by his distrust of them. The disbelief expressed in Mowrer's mocking recapitulation of Hitler and Göring's assertions that Van der Lubbe had set the Reichstag on fire is similar to that of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrity in his commentary on President Kennedy's assassination thirty years later.

The fire was *alleged* to have been the work of Maginus [sic] Van der Lubbe, a member of the communist party. Van der Lubbe is *supposed* to have smuggled himself into the Reichstag building which is *very carefully* watched. With kerosene, with special materials for starting fires and with explosive caps, he is *presumed* to have set fire to the heavy woodwork in at least thirty places. Then he is *supposed* to have lost his way or was unable to exit the building... Hitler, von Papen and Göring personally reached the scene of the building in *record time* [my italics].<sup>840</sup>

Mowrer's dismissal of the Government's version of the origins of the Reichstag fire inaugurated a distinct pattern in his reporting: he would begin by citing Nazi assertions that the "reign of terror" was fabricated by foreign journalists or the work of communists and then proceeded to defend vigorously the veracity of his reports as well as those of his colleagues. On 11 March Mowrer wrote,

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<sup>838</sup>Ibid. 21 March 1933. Lenin first established concentration camps for Russians in 1922.

<sup>839</sup>Ibid. 29 March 1933.

<sup>840</sup>Ibid. 28 February 1933, P.1.

Hostility against the foreign press seems to be steadily increasing, since the Nazis make foreign correspondents responsible for the growing hostility in other countries toward Germany, which, if it exists, is due exclusively to Nazi deeds.<sup>841</sup>

And he reiterated on the 23rd,

If the German government wishes to convince the world that nothing has occurred outside the normal run of events, it has an impossible task.<sup>842</sup>

Mowrer also resented the imposition of censorship on the international press. He made sure to clue in Chicago Daily News readers that his dispatch of 6 March 'may be the last uncensored description of German events for some time'.<sup>843</sup> The extent to which Mowrer's own reports were affected is unknown because of the lack of archival evidence, though given their fiercely anti-Nazi tone it would be logical to conclude that most of them made it through cleanly. The fact that his own dispatches were not censored did not stop Mowrer from stating that the practice should be abolished and from citing examples of censorship against other correspondents -- possible evidence of Mowrer's larger sense of mission.<sup>844</sup>

With one notable exception (the editorial of 7 March), the editorial board of the Chicago Daily News followed the lead of its Berlin bureau. In fact, the editorials of 22 and 29 March

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<sup>841</sup>Ibid. 11 March 1933, P.2.

<sup>842</sup>Ibid. 23 March 1933.

<sup>843</sup>Ibid. 6 March 1933.

<sup>844</sup>Ibid. 29 March 1933.

featured the introduction, 'as the Berlin correspondent of the Daily News reports'.<sup>845</sup> An 18 February piece echoed Gunther's view that Hitler was moving inexorably towards dictatorship: [what] took Mussolini years Hitler has done in a day' and hence would 'remain in office' regardless of the upcoming election results, while a 2 March editorial acknowledged that 'both Hindenburg and von Papen [had] been pushed into the background by Hitler'.<sup>846</sup> Nevertheless, management was 'astonished' that 'Hitler [had] acquired dictatorial power in only one month'.<sup>847</sup> Its 22 March postmortem on the Republic echoed Mowrer's long held view that 'the German republicans [had] only themselves to blame' because they lacked political wisdom. 'Hence, [republicans] only offered [the German electorate] bread crusts, while the Nazis promised them pie'.<sup>848</sup> The editorial board was extremely pessimistic about the future of Germany's Jews. As early as 29 March, the paper foretold that 'there [was] a systematic effort to deprive most German Jews of their means of livelihood and to herd them into medieval ghettos'.<sup>849</sup>

The tone and tenor of the Chicago Daily News's coverage of Hitler during this pivotal period was determined as much by the

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<sup>845</sup>CDN editorials 22 & 29 March 1933.

<sup>846</sup>Ibid. 18 February & 2 March 1933.

<sup>847</sup>Ibid. 2 March 1933.

<sup>848</sup>Ibid. 22 March 1933.

<sup>849</sup>Ibid. 29 March 1933.

changes in the paper's management as by events in Germany itself. Publisher Frank Knox further consolidated his power in 1933 largely at the expense of Charles Dennis, the paper's long-time editor-in-chief. Moreover, as Knox strengthened his grip the corporate balance of power swung even further in favour of his right-hand man, Carroll Binder.

It is in the Chicago Daily News editorials about Germany where this change is most evident. Five of the six editorials published in February and March 1933 echoed the alarm and pessimism of the Berlin bureau, indicating that they were almost certainly authored by Binder with little interference from his ostensible superior, Dennis. That there is no evidence that Binder's respect and admiration of Mowrer had lessened during this period suggests that he stood in full agreement with the Berlin bureau chief on the German situation. In fact, Binder's comment, 'Edgar and I speak the same language [about international issues]' made in September 1933 confirms the point.<sup>850</sup>

Whereas Binder was influenced by Mowrer, Knox came to follow the opinions of Binder. The paper's editorial of 22 March which absolved the French of blame for the dissolution of the Weimar Republic provides a good case in point. From reading the piece, no one would have known that since the Great War, Knox had maintained 'a bias against everything French', because the publisher had chosen to 'pay more deference to [Binder's]

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<sup>850</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 24 September 1933, Binder Papers, Newberry Library.

suggestions about foreign affairs'.<sup>851</sup> That Knox suppressed his own views in favour of Binder's (and hence Mowrer's) is also important with reference to the gloomy editorial of 29 March which accurately predicted the "ghettoization" of Germany's Jews. Again, one would not have known that Knox actually believed that correspondents from Germany -- including his own -- were exaggerating reports of Nazi anti-semitic terror, a stance he reversed only after his visit to Berlin in the summer of 1933.<sup>852</sup>

No such about-face occurred with Edward Price Bell. Bell was an early critic of the American press's negative portrayals of the Nazi regime.<sup>853</sup> He considered the 'uproar outside Germany against Hitler's policies affecting the Jews, wrong and foolish'.<sup>854</sup> Bell admired Hitler's 'desire for peace' and stated that only 'Hitlerism could avert another European war'.<sup>855</sup> He shared Dennis's optimism that the 'international situation [was] tending toward equilibrium than toward a fresh disaster'.<sup>856</sup> Bell's views are worth mentioning because his departure in 1931 was a direct function of Knox's takeover of the paper, hence

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<sup>851</sup>Ibid.

<sup>852</sup>Mowrer, E. *Triumph and Turmoil* pp.216-218.

<sup>853</sup>Bell to Kiep, 20 February 1933, Bell Papers, Ibid.

<sup>854</sup>Bell to Leitner, 10 April 1933, Ibid.

<sup>855</sup>Bell to Mills, 1 June 1933, Ibid.

<sup>856</sup>Bell to Mills, 2 March 1933, Ibid.

another example that links (albeit loosely) the Daily News's German coverage to changes in Chicago rather than Germany. The absence of an influential pro-German viewpoint, one which evolved into a pro-Hitler position after 1933, demonstrates that this paper's news presentation may have been influenced as much by those who shaped the news as by those who did not.

Despite his predominant influence, Binder's control of foreign affairs editorials was not absolute. Ultimately, he depended on Knox to 'squell Dennis's fuddy-duddy notions [of international matters]'.<sup>857</sup> As mentioned in Chapters Five and Six, Knox had gone a long way to achieving this end by designating Binder as the unofficial foreign affairs writer and by restricting Dennis's ability to alter editorial submissions. However, according to Binder, 'when Knox was away', 'Dennis [would] occasionally rewrite an entire editorial [and] almost invariably garbled it because he lack[ed] the familiarity with the deeper aspects of the question'.<sup>858</sup>

Binder could have been easily referring to the Chicago Daily News's 7 March editorial on the Reichstag elections results, one which inductive reasoning dictates must have been written or edited by Dennis. Flying in the face of the paper's previous and subsequent analyses, "Hitler's Victory and Its Meaning" characterized the election campaign as 'reasonably free' and the results a cause 'for moderate satisfaction among Germany's

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<sup>857</sup>Binder to P. Mowrer, 24 September 1933, Binder Papers, Ibid.

<sup>858</sup>Ibid.



liberal and constitutional elements'.<sup>859</sup> Moreover, the prospect of an unbridled Hitler dictatorship was discounted because the Nazi leader would have to rule 'in accordance with the letter of the Weimar constitution'.<sup>860</sup> Finally, the editorial asserted that Hitler would be restrained by his party's rank and file, 'among whom, there are temperate men and women who cherish the principles of representative and constitutional government' -- an assessment which Binder probably viewed as one example of Dennis's 'fuddy-duddy notions'.<sup>861</sup>

Dennis's optimism, (if it was he who wrote this editorial), was a throwback to his editorial and private views of Germany during the 1920's -- positions which had in part caused great friction between himself and Edgar Mowrer. Although it would be sheer speculation to say that Dennis wrote the 7 March editorial as a personal rebuttal to Mowrer, it is "food for thought" given that its claims had little if any basis in the facts available at the time. Worth noting is that Binder's intense personal dislike and jealousy of Gunther did not interfere with his evaluation of Gunther's dispatches which formed the basis of the 18 February editorial.<sup>862</sup>

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<sup>859</sup>CDN editorial, 7 March 1933.

<sup>860</sup>Ibid.

<sup>861</sup>Ibid.

<sup>862</sup>The source of the friction concerned who would take over the coveted London bureau in 1929-30. Binder thought of Gunther as conniving and disingenuous and resented the fact that Gunther was pampered by Strong and later Knox. See Binder to his wife, 18 July 1929, 8 January & 21 May 1930. See also Heald, *Vistas*, P.142 & 256.

The editorial of 7 March 1933 marked the last time that Dennis intervened in the paper's German editorials. That summer and fall, Knox stepped up his campaign against Dennis by exercising tighter control of editorial policy on national matters. In 1934 Dennis resigned and was replaced by Binder's close friend Paul Mowrer. Binder himself became the paper's foreign editor, assuming the responsibilities which he had first proposed to Walter Strong.<sup>863</sup> Neither Paul Mowrer nor Binder could stem the inexorable decline which befell the Chicago Daily News soon after. The cumulative effects of the Great Depression forced Knox (over the protests of Mowrer) to make deep cuts in the foreign news service while other news organizations expanded their news gathering services. In addition, Knox's entry into the political arena as the Republican nominee for Vice-President in 1936 ended a brief period of editorial harmony when he succumbed to the pressure of the isolationist wing of his party, creating an irreparable breach between himself and the internationalist Mowrer. Knox soon sold his interest in the Chicago Daily News after becoming Secretary of the Navy under Roosevelt in 1940 and was replaced by a succession of mediocre publishers and editors. Although the paper would stay in existence until 1977, the paper never regained the reputation it had enjoyed as one of America's best sources of news analysis on foreign affairs.<sup>864</sup>

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<sup>863</sup>See Chapter Four for the details of Binder's proposed job description.

<sup>864</sup>Heald, *Vistas*, pp.140-145.

The New York Times published 444 news items on Hitler's first two months in power, about five times as many stories as contained in the average of Herrmann's sample of major American newspapers. The paper produced a mind-boggling average of seven stories on Germany per day. The Times's coverage of the Nazi consolidation of power was comprehensive, in the purest sense of the term. Besides providing reports from Berlin and editorial analysis from New York, the paper published reactions from Washington and from nearly every European capital, including Stockholm and Copenhagen.

Paradoxically, the comprehensive nature of the New York Times's coverage of Hitler's first two months in office did not leave its readers any more aware of the tumultuous turn of events in Germany than did other newspapers. To the contrary, more often than not, the paper tended to misinform and confuse its readers by discounting, ignoring and even withholding disturbing facts and ominous signs which most other major publications included in their analyses. That the New York Times failed, by the standards of the time, to provide a reasonably accurate picture of what was happening in Germany was as much a function of the paper's own internal proclivities and deficiencies as of the behavior of Nazi censors.

One could argue that if American readers had only the editorials of the New York Times to rely on for information in February and March 1933, they would probably conclude that the German situation was a temporary disappointment, but hardly a long-term disaster.

As they had in the past, Rollo Ogden, John Finley and the other members of the New York Times editorial board consistently

lulled their readers into thinking that there was no cause for alarm regarding the accession of Adolf Hitler. The editorial board simply ignored or minimized the disturbing reports emanating from Germany, even those from the paper's own Berlin bureau.

Though it was expressed in different forms at different times, the salient feature of New York Times editorials on Germany was their unbridled optimism. In the first couple of weeks of Nazi rule the paper's editorials depicted Hitler as a dangerous man, but one who had been rendered innocuous by his conservative cabinet: 'Hindenburg's ingenious device [enabling him] to keep an eye -- and hand on the Nazi chieftain'.<sup>865</sup> Moreover, the editorial board opined that 'Hitler would be 'even more dominated' as the March Reichstag elections approached.<sup>866</sup>

When it became apparent in late February that Hindenburg, Papen and Hugenberg had not "tamed" Hitler, the editorial board still maintained its buoyant optimism, promoting the idea that Hitler himself had been transformed into a political moderate by the pressures of the office and the protocols of statesmanship. Although the Times acknowledged in a 19 February editorial that 'it is always dangerous to give dangerous men supreme power in the expectation that they will suddenly become conservative and safe', it placed greater weight on the notion that 'the very lions of agitation and demagoguery once in office have a way of roaring thereafter as gently as sucking doves'.<sup>867</sup> Pursuant to

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<sup>865</sup>NYT editorial, 5 February 1933.

<sup>866</sup>Ibid.

<sup>867</sup>Ibid. 19 February 1933.

this theme, a 26 February piece suggested that Hitler, far from emerging as the next Attila the Hun, would model himself after Napoleon III.<sup>868</sup> In fact, well after the 5 March elections the editorial board still insisted that Hitler had become a moderate -- ignoring the widely circulated and generally accepted reports of wide-scale arrests and brutality against the German Left and German Jews. Its editorial of 7 March argued that 'it is still to be shown that Hitler is ready to run the risks attendant upon applying the Mussolini method in Germany' on the grounds that 'there [was] no reason why he should invite trouble at least for the immediate future'.<sup>869</sup> And, while the New York Times's news department noted the opening of the Dachau concentration camp, its editorial board praised Hitler for his appointment of Reichsbank chief Hans Luther as the new German ambassador to the United States claiming that the move was evidence 'that the new regime [was] not contemplating anything startling or wild in foreign policy'.<sup>870</sup> By contrast, no other major American newspaper drew such a baseless conclusion. In fact, Hitler's move was simply a ploy to remove the stubborn Luther from the Reichsbank and replace him with the more politically sympathetic Hjalmar Schacht.

Whether they depicted Hitler as a 'lion of agitation' or a 'sucking dove', New York Times editorial writers consistently reiterated certain general claims to reassure readers that Hitler would succeed and that Weimar democracy would last. The

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<sup>868</sup>Ibid. 26 February 1933.

<sup>869</sup>Ibid. 7 March 1933.

<sup>870</sup>Ibid. 20 March 1933.

fact that the paper had used these theories to support its optimistic predictions during earlier periods in Weimar's history to no avail seemed not to have dissuaded the editorial board from resorting to them in February and March 1933.

The first of these could be called the quantitative argument.

The editorial board would miscalculate and even misrepresent election statistics to give credence to the view that support for the Republic was strong and the Nazis were on the wane. Nearly all of the editorials written during the 1930 and 1932 campaigns employed this tactic. The editorials on the March 1933 Reichstag campaign proved to be no different. The editorial of 2 February predicted that the Nazi/Nationalist coalition would not obtain an electoral majority on the grounds that it had not done so in the past, and the newspaper reiterated this position on the 26th -- after over three weeks of Government persecution of the Socialists, Communists and even the Catholic Centre Party. The editorial board even cited and dismissed Birchall's 15 February dispatch which asserted that it would take 'something akin to an act of Providence' for the Hitler government to lose in the elections.<sup>871</sup> And despite the Regime's victory, the editorial board expressed little concern since it defined the near fifty percent of those who did not vote for the Nazis or the Nationalists the 'irreducible core [of Germans] still faithful to the democratic ideal' -- a tenable conclusion only if one terms those who voted for the Communists

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<sup>871</sup>Ibid. 2 & 26 February 1933. See also NYT 15 February 1933, P.1.

or those who supported the Right Wing of the Catholic Centre party as good loyal republicans!<sup>872</sup>

While some editorials misled their readers into thinking that a Nazi dictatorship was inconceivable based on this logic, other pieces minimized and underestimated the Nazi threat by depicting Hitler and his party as immature, bungling, yet harmless political amateurs. A 26 February editorial compared the behavior of Hitler's Storm Troops to 'a gang of sophomores trying to break up the freshman dinner'.<sup>873</sup> And in the aftermath of the Reichstag fire and its ensuing decree, when the overwhelming majority of journalists were sounding the death knell of the Weimar Republic, New York Times editorial writer, Simon Strunsky, was calling the episode simply a momentary outgrowth of 'Nazi hysteria and fumble which [would only] work mischief for Germany's immediate future, but [would have] no lasting qualities'.<sup>874</sup> In fact, whereas virtually every major American journalist acknowledged that Germany was in for a long-term dictatorship with the passage of the Enabling Law, the editorial board held that the nation was engaged merely in 'a condition of momentary madness'.<sup>875</sup>

But by far the most recurrent theme in New York Times editorials was the paper's unmitigated confidence that the German people, through their strength of knowledge and character, would uphold the values of democracy and resist

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<sup>872</sup>NYT editorial 7 March 1933.

<sup>873</sup>Ibid. 26 February 1933.

<sup>874</sup>S. Strunsky, NYT, "Topics in the Times", 2 March 1933.

<sup>875</sup>NYT editorial 27 March 1933.

dictatorship. This is evident in the board's 26 February assertion that 'twenty million Germans are not going to submit to Hitler as the Italian people did to Mussolini'.<sup>876</sup> Unflustered by Hitler's victory in the 5 March elections, the editorial board argued that 'the healthy instinct for self-preservation which the German people have exhibited since the Great War would thus be a safeguard against wild adventure by the new Rightist regime'.<sup>877</sup> And on 21 March when the official colors of Weimar were permanently retired, the editorial board still clung to the hope that Germany would not 'permit itself to play traitor to its own past and to the cause of civilization'.<sup>878</sup>

In defence of Rollo Ogden and his staff, it must be noted that the editorial page also expressed some criticisms of the Hitler regime -- albeit belatedly. Though the paper had maintained a conspicuous silence during much of the Nazi terror, a 21 March editorial accused the Nazis of 'deliberately invoking the spirit of religious and race hatred' 'to the level of the Czars'.<sup>879</sup> In another piece published the same day, the paper condemned the censorship of the international press, although it suggested that the measure would be short-lived because the 'highly educated German people' [would not] put up with it'.<sup>880</sup> Finally, the editorial board called the Government's pattern of

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<sup>876</sup>Ibid. 26 February 1933. Actually, this statement is true if taken out of context. The German people did not submit to Hitler in the way that the Italian people did to Mussolini -- the Germans submitted much more quickly.

<sup>877</sup>Ibid. 7 March 1933.

<sup>878</sup>Ibid. 21 March 1933.

<sup>879</sup>Ibid. See also 27 March 1933.

<sup>880</sup>Ibid.



denials and counter-accusations regarding the Nazi terror 'clumsy and unsatisfying'.<sup>881</sup>

It stands to reason that the impact of these criticisms and the alarm they sounded were muted to a large degree by the editorial board's repeated assertions that Hitler would not establish a dictatorship, or that if he did, it would be a benign one. Even in late March, when Ogden and his staff began to note certain disturbing aspects of the regime, they still reverted to earlier form, contending -- without any foundation offered -- that the 'obtuseness' exhibited by the German government would not 'go so far, so disasterously [sic] far as it did in 1914'.<sup>882</sup> That this 'obtuseness' (a revealing characterization in itself) would go beyond that of the Kaiser and his advisors is strong retrospective evidence that the analysis of Germany by the New York Times editorial board was based on a vision which had little basis in reality.

A series of Sunday analyses written by managing editor, Edwin James echoed the optimism of the paper's editorials, perhaps even to a greater extreme. In the days following Hitler's appointment James asserted that the new Chancellor could 'not put in effect any of the basic changes in things he advocated so strongly in his campaign speeches' because he was 'hamstrung' by his Conservative ministers and by Hindenburg, who would resort to force if necessary.<sup>883</sup> Unlike other observers, however, James continued to reassure readers that Hitler was still the tool of

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<sup>881</sup>Ibid. 27 March 1933.

<sup>882</sup>Ibid. 27 March 1933.

<sup>883</sup>NYT editorial section, 5 February 1933.

Papen, Hugenberg and Hindenburg as late as 27 March, despite the almost universal opinion to the contrary.<sup>884</sup>

James was one of the few journalists who erroneously predicted that the Nazi/Nationalist coalition would meet defeat in the March Reichstag elections. And in the event of a Hitler victory, James assured readers that all would not be lost, claiming that Hitler would still have to govern under the laws of the Weimar Constitution. James even pooh-poohed the significance of the Enabling Law on the grounds that the Reichstag had not invested dictatorial power in Hitler but rather 'in the existing government'. Nor was this a case of semantics -- James was still under the illusion that Hitler did not dominate the cabinet. He even reinforced this view by arguing that 'there were no immediate prospects that the Nazis would have any more ministers' under the measure. Moreover, although none of his colleagues, including the editorial board, shared this view, James, in his capacity as managing editor, accountable only to the publisher, made sure that his logic was the one conveyed by the Times's headline on the Enabling Law's passage.

'HITLER CABINET GETS POWER TO RULE AS A DICTATORSHIP; HINDENBURG LESS ACTIVE; HITLER TO ISSUE DECREES WITH MORE AUTHORITY THAN PREDECESSORS'<sup>885</sup>[my italics]

Note how this headline, though legally accurate,<sup>886</sup> fails to transmit the chilling implications of the law; namely, that

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<sup>884</sup>Ibid. 27 March 1933.

<sup>885</sup>NYT 24 March 1933. P.1.

<sup>886</sup>James's argument can be carried to an even greater level of absurdity. Because Hitler ruled under the provisions of the Enabling Law for the four years of its duration, it can be argued that the Weimar Republic lasted until 1937!

power was actually being invested in Hitler alone, Hindenburg was rendered inactive and Hitler could issue decrees with absolute authority. In short, this marked the dawn of the Third Reich -- a fact recognized by virtually every mainstream newspaper's managing editor, except for Edwin James.

If the internal safeguards of Hindenburg, Hugenberg and Papen failed, argued James on 26 March, Hitler would be deterred from pursuing extreme policies at home and abroad by the forces of geopolitics and world opinion. James went on to predict that much like 1914, Britain, France and the U.S.S.R, now with 'the new virile Poland' would combine forces to stop Hitler from foreign aggression.<sup>887</sup> In the same piece James contended that 'it may prove true that the Government has no intention of ruining Germany's international position by espousing an official anti-semitic program in the Reich'.<sup>888</sup> Six days later the Regime announced the imposition of a nationwide boycott of Jewish businesses.

James made no mention of the alarming reports from the Paris and Vienna offices, courtesy of German refugees, about the Nazi anti-semitic terror following Hitler's electoral victory, including a 19 March dispatch which told of an episode in a Berlin police station where seven Jews were taken at gunpoint and 'compelled under threats of death to flog one another until several of them lost consciousness'.<sup>889</sup>

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<sup>887</sup> NYT editorial section, 26 March 1933.

<sup>888</sup> Ibid.

<sup>889</sup> NYT 20 March 1933 (Paris bureau).

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The fact that James focused little attention himself on the anti-semitic aspect of the Hitler story in February and especially March was probably based on his feeling that 'for some time' the New York Times's local and national news departments had devoted too much attention to the plight of Germany's Jews and not enough to the persecution of the Left. To this end he instructed the Berlin bureau in April and again in August to send 'a little less Jews and a little more Socialists and Communists' on the justification that

'if there are six hundred thousand Jews getting a raw deal, there are some millions of Socialists and Communists who are also getting a raw deal. Maybe not as raw [as the Jews] *but the numbers make up the difference.* The persecution of the Jews is a damnable thing but it is after all only part of the general and larger situation'[my italics]'.<sup>890</sup>

Despite his protests, James's own articles also talked little about the persecution of the Left. He made no reference to, for instance, a 17 March dispatch from Vienna which spoke of Nazi brutality and torture of prominent Socialist officials in Cologne as well as of Karl Boechel, a deputy in the Saxony Parliament who was beaten close to death in front of the Parliament building by a group of Brown Shirts and then prevented from receiving medical help.<sup>891</sup>

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Because of a dearth of evidence, it is difficult to ascertain whether the Berlin bureau may have at times fuelled management's optimism or whether the latter's was independently generated.

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<sup>890</sup>James to Birchall, 24 August 1933 and 12 April 1933, NYT Archive.

<sup>891</sup>NYT 18 March 1933.

Nevertheless, some of the similarities between the paper's editorials and published dispatches are striking.<sup>892</sup>

For all of February and most of March Enderis and Birchall were proponents of the "caged Hitler" theory. The day after Hitler's appointment, Enderis characterized the new government as 'Colonel von Papen's show'.<sup>893</sup> He reinforced this stance on 5 February, arguing that the Nazis held only the 'limelight positions' in the cabinet -- an interesting designation of those who controlled the nation's police forces -- while the Conservatives held the 'substantial' ones.<sup>894</sup> Although acknowledging that fact that Hitler, through the imposition of the repressive decrees of 4 and 6 February, would be able to wage an electoral campaign under the best of circumstances, Enderis thought that the outmanoeuvred Nazis would suffer defeat at the hands of the Conservatives in the 5 March balloting.<sup>895</sup> In fact, Enderis's only concern centered on Hindenburg, whose 'fidelity to democratic practices' he questioned after the Reich takeover of Prussia a week after Hitler's appointment.<sup>896</sup>

Management was aware of Enderis's journalistic limitations (see chapters four and five) and probably realized that his writing and analytical skills were not equal to the biggest European story since Lindbergh's landing in Paris. Thus, it was

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<sup>892</sup>Without possession of a correspondent's proofs, one cannot be sure of the extent to which his original work was edited by the Home Office nor after 7 March 1933, the extent to which material was censored by Nazi authorities. Fortunately there is archival evidence that will shed a good deal of light on this issue.

<sup>893</sup>NYT (GE) 2 February 1933.

<sup>894</sup>Ibid. 5 February 1933.

<sup>895</sup>Ibid. 11 February 1933.

<sup>896</sup>Ibid.

not surprising to see Frederick Birchall again assuming the role of the New York Times's chief correspondent in Berlin. In fact, between 13 February and 13 March only one published dispatch featured Enderis's name.

Birchall agreed with Enderis that Hitler was a puppet of von Papen and Hindenburg. His 12 February dispatch read, 'the safeguards against extremist Nazi policies still hold and there is every manifestation of a desire to subordinate extremism' and in the same vein he argued on the 23rd that Hitler would be 'checked by the Nationalists and [Catholic] Centrists and [would] be subjected to "Hindenburgian control" in the last eventuality'.<sup>897</sup>

Ironically, as Hitler's power in the cabinet grew and the activities of his Storm Troopers became more unrestrained, Birchall began to suggest that the Chancellor had moderated his views, thus obviating the need to contain him. Perhaps Birchall's late February statement that 'Hitler himself has been sobered somewhat by his responsibilities in office and on the whole is fairly responsive to the counsels of his new associates' could be traced to the Chancellor's ostensibly accomodating attitude towards his Conservative colleagues.<sup>898</sup>

Birchall maintained this view through 21 March despite the intensification of Nazi violence against the Left and the Jews in the aftermath of the 5 March elections.<sup>899</sup> The Reichstag Fire

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<sup>897</sup> NYT (FTB) 13 & 24 February 1933.

<sup>898</sup> Ibid.

<sup>899</sup> Besides his published dispatches, see Birchall to Sulzberger, 21 March 1933, Publisher's papers, NYT Archive. This letter in particular will be the subject of intense examination in the upcoming pages.

Decree and the election results convinced Birchall only that Papen's influence in the cabinet had ceased and hence Hitler had 'no formidable opponents left'.<sup>900</sup> On 21 March, Birchall privately characterized Hindenburg as 'a rubber stamp to validate decrees' and 'doubt[ed] whether or not he [was] even permitted to know half of what's going on'.<sup>901</sup> Thus, although he acknowledged the 'absolute and complete control [of Germany]' was in the hands of the Nazis as early as 9 March, Birchall was unsure of 'what the results of [a Hitler dictatorship] may entail'.<sup>902</sup>

At the very least, Birchall was prepared to give Hitler every benefit of the doubt. He disagreed with the ominous predictions of other journalists, claiming that there would be 'no extreme persecution of Nazi opponents' because 'there would be no advantage to the Government in unsettling Germany's social structure'. In a play on an infamous Hitlerian phrase, Birchall predicted that 'no heads will roll except in the figurative sense'.<sup>903</sup>

The outbreak of widespread Nazi terror, though acknowledged by Birchall, did not seem to compel a reconsideration. Even in his report of 7 March describing the early cases of Nazi "excesses" against Jews, Leftists and Americans, Birchall noted a 'new moderation in the political atmosphere', a sentiment he

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<sup>900</sup>NYT 2 March 1933.

<sup>901</sup>Birchall to Sulzberger, 21 March 1933, Sulzberger Papers, NYT Archive.

<sup>902</sup>NYT 6 & 10 March 1933.

<sup>903</sup>Ibid. 7 March 1933.

reiterated two days later.<sup>904</sup> Moreover, between 9 and 12 March Birchall absolved Hitler for the 'spreading hooliganism' on the grounds that it was 'obviously not easy to control 17 million [Nazi] voters in their hour of triumph', and subsequently praised him for his efforts to restrain the storm troopers.<sup>905</sup> In what could have passed as a report from the Reich Propaganda Ministry, Birchall proclaimed on 12 March that 'the series of small outrages during the last week should now end'.<sup>906</sup> In none of his reports during this period did Birchall comment on the notion that at least some of the violence might have been inspired by years of belligerent Hitler oratory or ideas from *Mein Kampf*.

The fear of censorship and reprisals against bureau staff may have been one reason why this notion was absent from, or minimized in, Birchall's dispatches between 7 and 13 March and especially in Enderis's thereafter. On 14 March Sulzberger, in a letter to Birchall acknowledged the existence of censorship pressures though he did not discuss them.<sup>907</sup> Birchall, in his 21 March reply, 'confidently expect[ed] to see the circulation of the New York Times prohibited in Germany', remarking ominously, 'I am afraid everybody is in for bad time in which we shall not escape'.<sup>908</sup> Two days later, Birchall introduced a system of coded

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<sup>904</sup>Ibid. 8 & 10 March 1933. On the 10th Birchall implied that he agreed with police reports that most of Germany remained 'quiescent and peaceful'.

<sup>905</sup>Ibid. 9 March 1933.

<sup>906</sup>Ibid. 13 March 1933.

<sup>907</sup>Sulzberger to Birchall 14 March 1933, Publisher's Papers, NYT Archive.

<sup>908</sup>Birchall to Sulzberger, 21 March 1933, Ibid.



phrases such as 'Thunderstorm in Boston equals massacre of Jews in Berlin' as a way of circumventing suspected Nazi wiretaps of the Bureau's international telephone line.<sup>909</sup>

Nazi intimidation affected Enderis's March reporting, as well as his psyche. In violation of Times policy, Enderis left many of his dispatches unsigned so as to avoid being traced by the authorities, especially in the case of those stories which called for a recitation of Nazi violence or an evaluation of the Regime. Enderis's front-page article on the passage of the Enabling Law, for instance, featured only a Berlin dateline.<sup>910</sup> In response the Home Office instructed Enderis to shed his anonymity and refrain from this practice on the grounds that a signed dispatch was the best way for a New York Times reporter to be held accountable for his ideas -- ironically, the reason why he withheld his name in the first place.<sup>911</sup> A cursory examination of Enderis's articles reveals that the Home Office's efforts met with only limited success, perhaps due to Birchall's sympathy for the thirty-year Berlin resident: 'please understand, Guido is scared stiff!'<sup>912</sup> Nor were Enderis's fears unfounded; in early May, Karl von Pueckler, the bureau's "number

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<sup>909</sup>Birchall to Seldon, 23 March 1933, James Papers, Ibid.

<sup>910</sup>NYT 24 March 1933. See also Ibid. 17, 18, and 23 March 1933. The story of the 17th was about a meeting of German Jewish veterans which was interrupted by Nazi Brown Shirts. The one on the 18th was about the Nazi raid on the home of novelist and staunch Hitler opponent, Lion Feuchtwanger. And the one on the 23rd discussed the Nazi/Nationalist split over control of Prussia. Enderis's name did appear on less innocuous pieces such as another 18 March dispatch which discussed arrangements for the upcoming Potsdam ceremony.

<sup>911</sup>James to Birchall 18 & 19 April 1933, Ibid.

<sup>912</sup>Birchall to James, 18 April 1933, Ibid.

three man" was uncovered as a Nazi informant.<sup>913</sup> Thus, the Berlin bureau featured two reporters who were not about to criticize the Regime, one because he was afraid to and the other who saw no reason to.

This left Birchall. Though no friend of the Nazis, he had given Hitler a great deal of latitude during the first week of the March terror. However, after his 12 March dispatch predicting the end of the violence, not a single dispatch under his name was featured in the New York Times for another two weeks -- a seemingly incomprehensible turn of events. Unlike the case of Edgar Mowrer, there is no evidence which suggests that Birchall was sick or injured and it is doubtful that he would be allowed to take a holiday during the biggest overseas story in years. Nor was management upset with his articles -- Sulzberger in a 14 March letter praised Birchall for his 'splendid pieces'.<sup>914</sup> Why then would the paper allow the less well thought of Enderis to assume Birchall's role in covering the dawn of the Third Reich?

The reason is that on the evening of 12 March Birchall undermined the journalistic integrity of the New York Times and nearly destroyed his own. Ironically, what got him into trouble was not what he wrote, but what he said. Birchall agreed to speak to a nationwide American audience on CBS radio from Berlin about the situation in Germany and the Times chose to publish excerpts from the program.

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<sup>913</sup>Birchall to James, 5 May 1933, Ibid.

<sup>914</sup>Sulzberger to Birchall, 14 March 1933, Ibid.

Birchall's broadcast seemed to amount to a tacit endorsement of the Hitler regime, a step further from his written articles. It was virtually devoid of criticism and made no reference to the outbreak of the anti-semitic brutality of which anyone living in Berlin at the time would have been acutely aware. Instead, Birchall told millions in America that there was 'no cause for general alarm in the ascendancy to power of Adolf Hitler' and 'urged his listeners to dismiss from their minds any thought that there would be in Germany any slaughter of the National Socialist Government's enemies or racial oppression in any vital degree'. He also 'urged Americans to dismiss any thought that the present rulers of Germany desire to go to war with anybody'. Birchall's personal impression of Hitler read like a Goebbels propaganda speech: 'He is a bachelor and a vegetarian and neither drinks nor smokes. His whole life, his whole thought are given to this National Socialist movement, and he has taken upon himself the hardest job ever a man could take'.<sup>915</sup>

The backlash was immediate. Many Jewish publications and organizations which heretofore limited their criticisms of the New York Times to not sympathizing enough with the plight of their brethren, now accused the paper of 'whitewashing Hitler' completely and of condoning the brutality taking place in Germany.<sup>916</sup>

That the paper offered no response reflected the peculiar state of affairs within management itself which had existed for

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<sup>915</sup>NYT 13 March 1933.

<sup>916</sup>See Shepard, *Paper's* P.304.

much of the past decade. Arthur Hays Sulzberger, who occupied the publisher's chair while his father-in-law lived out his last two years in semi-retirement, still lacked the clout that usually came with the office. As mentioned in Chapter Five, Sulzberger exerted little, if any influence on Rollo Ogden and the editorial department. This fact is clearly evidenced on a more subtle level such as Sulzberger's choice of words to Birchall, which sounded more like those addressed to a peer in the midst of an intellectual disagreement than to an editor in the midst of a public relations crisis. Sulzberger tempered his fury over the fact that Birchall had left him in the dark about agreeing to the broadcast, obtaining only James's approval (and James had not bothered to inform his publisher either).<sup>917</sup> Sulzberger gently suggested to Birchall that 'it was unwise to broadcast, particularly without the knowledge of the publisher'.<sup>918</sup> As for the broadcast's content, Sulzberger again exhibited a remarkable degree of deference to Birchall, especially given the circumstance in which the Berlin correspondent had placed the paper:

By reason of the censorship, the talk had to be more temperate than the splendid articles you have been sending us. Your remarks, therefore, were susceptible to the interpretation that you were speaking in defense of what has been taking place in Germany.<sup>919</sup>

Had Sulzberger possessed the actual powers of the publisher, he might have fired Birchall immediately, if for no other reason than to show the American public that the paper would not

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<sup>917</sup>Ibid.

<sup>918</sup>Sulzberger to Birchall, 14 March 1933, Publishers' papers, NYT Archive.

<sup>919</sup>Ibid. See also Shepard, op. cit.

associate itself with someone who appeared to be a Nazi sympathizer. Instead, it seems that Sulzberger merely instructed Birchall to "lay low" for a couple of weeks, perhaps an indication of the publisher's own weakness. In addition, Sulzberger may not have taken more severe steps against Birchall to avoid further weakening the Berlin bureau: Enderis was not a long-term solution and the acclimatization of a new correspondent under the conditions in Germany would have been very difficult, especially in cultivating news sources. Ochs's veto of Joseph Shaplen in 1930 and the ensuing problems it caused for the Berlin bureau now came back to haunt the paper.

Nor did it appear that Sulzberger was able to exert any influence on James or Ogden. Despite the wave of criticism, the Times refrained from publishing an editorial response. Moreover, the fact that James too had failed to inform the publisher did not seem to disrupt his career. He remained the paper's managing editor until his death in 1951, despite the fact that he made no secret of his lack of regard for Sulzberger, testimony to the power of seniority.

The larger importance of this episode, however, lay in Birchall's explanation concerning the broadcast as well as his less controversial dispatches. Some of Birchall's optimism was sincere, rooted in his belief that Hitler genuinely wanted to bring tranquillity to Germany. 'I knew that Hitler really desired to stop this racketeering and was about to take [the necessary] action, so it seemed to me that a little cheery optimism might be well based', he reflected.<sup>920</sup> Moreover, in

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<sup>920</sup>Birchall to Sulzberger, 21 March 1933, James Papers, Ibid.

Birchall's opinion, taking a rosy view offered benefits which could not have been reaped by taking a pessimistic position. If, on the one hand, he argued, 'Hitler had succeeded, my news would have been excellently timed; if, on the other hand, he reasoned, 'Hitler did not succeed, my optimism would not be misplaced because it would show up my dispatches as coming from a correspondent who wanted to be as optimistic as he could'.<sup>921</sup> Birchall thus was suggesting that the credibility of the Times, as well as his own, would be enhanced by taking a positive stance regardless of the outcome; in short, he believed that he had placed the paper in a win/win situation. That taking such a view would require the correspondent to minimize or suppress facts to the contrary, hence providing an inaccurate picture of the situation in Germany, did not seem to cause him immediate concern.

Beyond this complex rationale, there was a simpler, though even more disturbing reason behind the Nazi-friendly broadcast. Unbeknownst to the public, Birchall belatedly informed Sulzberger, 'I conceived the notion of making [the broadcast] a bait for a real interview with Hitler, one which I have been vainly seeking'.<sup>922</sup> In Birchall's defence, it is worth repeating that by this time reporters in Germany were desperately scrambling for news sources and access to the Regime, beyond that of the Reich Propaganda Ministry. Birchall may have felt that "buttering up" the Nazis was the only way to continue to carry out his duties to the paper. However, in this case, he

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<sup>921</sup>Ibid.

<sup>922</sup>Ibid.

seemed to disregard the larger obligation of journalistic honesty.

For Birchall, the CBS episode marked a watershed in both his reporting and personal view of the Nazis. Whether as a result of his disillusionment with Hitler (Birchall believed that 'the movement had gotten away from him'<sup>923</sup>) or an attempt to regain his credibility, Birchall upon his return, wrote eloquent pieces which excoriated the Regime, particularly for its anti-semitic policies. One day after his candid letter to Sulzberger, Birchall wrote James that, in fact, the 'forebodings [of other observers were] justified' and acknowledged the possibility of a future 'mass slaughter' of Jews (though he thought this unlikely because he believed that other nations would intervene militarily).<sup>924</sup> He also earned the high praise of his anti-Nazi contemporaries and even earned a Pulitzer Prize in 1934. Within the bureau, Birchall courageously resisted pressure from the Nazis and the pusillanimous Enderis to fire a young Jewish office worker named Bolgar as a show of good faith towards the Regime. In July he wrote Sulzberger,

Are we editorially and personally to speak for freedom and then, for the sake of a slight profit, to give the lie to all our protestations by yielding to the pressure of these miserable fanatics? Are we to go back upon our own people? And what would become of this quite decent lad who has been helping us to the best of our ability to fight our battle? Some of this I have endeavoured [unsuccessfully] to impart to Mr. Enderis with such emphasis that the good Lord would give to me.<sup>925</sup>

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<sup>923</sup>Ibid.

<sup>924</sup>Birchall, "Memorandum on Anti-Semitism in Germany", 22 March 1933, Ibid.

<sup>925</sup>Birchall to Sulzberger, 10 July 1933, Sulzberger Papers, NYT Archive.

Whereas Birchall showed no concern that he was sacrificing his objectivity when he was contributing tenuously-rooted optimistic pieces, he became distraught that he was doing so in his criticisms of Hitler's government; so much so that he asked Sulzberger to release him from his post. On 30 April he wrote the publisher:

I wish to get out of Berlin as soon as possible. The fact is that I am sitting so close to this thing that I am beginning to feel my whole sense of perception getting warped to say nothing of my sense of humor getting lost... I find myself writing sermons instead of news... even though I know that it isn't my job to save the world. However, I assure you that no decent man can sit here in close to this thing for long without becoming in a sense a crusader for freedom, decency and the rights of the weak. But I want to get away before this crusading spirit kills my news sense -- I even taste Nazis in the beer.<sup>926</sup>

But Birchall remained in Berlin to the outbreak of the Second World War, in part because he felt that 'the job is more interesting than any prolonged festivity could be' and because of the impact that his departure would have on the calibre of the Berlin bureau, which he quipped 'functioned none too well in normal times'.<sup>927</sup> As for the future of Germany, Birchall was prophetic. Less than two months after telling America that the accession of Hitler was no cause for alarm, he wrote,

I can assure you that there isn't the faintest doubt that [the Nazis] are getting ready to go after all they desire by force if it isn't given to them voluntarily. *And their appetite will grow upon concessions.* If they last, we are going to have 1914 all over again -- *only worse.* That in and of itself is enough to stir up any decent man with a memory.[my italics]<sup>928</sup>

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<sup>926</sup>Birchall to Sulzberger, 30 April 1933, Ibid.

<sup>927</sup>Ibid.

<sup>928</sup>Ibid.



(330)

A little over six years later, Germany invaded Poland; the world would never be the same again.

## Conclusion

Though the degree of consensus varied from period to period and event to event, one is struck by the remarkably high level of uniformity in the mainstream American press's coverage of the demise of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler.<sup>929\*</sup> Although many publications mischaracterized Hitler as a monarchic reactionary or as a fascist, akin to Mussolini, they correctly recognized that he was, indeed, a malevolent figure. Hitler's Nazis were often described as unstable extremists and after their assumption of power generally were depicted by the American press as ruthless bullies who preyed upon the innocent and violated the rules of fair play.

However, the alarm about Hitler was probably muffled because many mainstream American journalists consistently minimized the prospects for, or consequences of, Nazi success. Although the reasons for this are not altogether clear, several factors come to mind. An overwhelming majority of publications cited in this study regarded the Nazi Party as an amateurish, and even somewhat risible political operation. This was partly because of the legacy of the botched Beer Hall Putsch -- indeed, it really did appear that the Nazis 'were better fitted for a comic

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<sup>929\*</sup>As pointed out in the introduction, it is difficult, (as well as risky) to make sweeping generalizations about US press coverage of the Weimar Republic's decline and the rise of Adolf Hitler. After all, there were thousands of American publications in existence in the 1920's and 1930's and examining a sufficient cross section of them may well be impossible. Moreover, not only were there variations within the press's coverage of Germany but the archival analysis presented in this study also reveals a variety of factors behind the reporting itself. Thus, it is necessary to proceed with great care in this conclusion.

opera stage, than a serious effort to overthrow the Weimar regime'.<sup>930</sup>

The mainstream American press also underestimated the Nazi threat because it discounted the effectiveness of the Party's campaign messages on the grounds that they were irrational. Journalists concluded that the Nazi constituency was comprised primarily of young people and women, claiming that they were the only segments of German society which were vulnerable to the Party's emotional appeal. Many American publications declared that the "average German", on the other hand, was immune to such lures because he was rational and self-disciplined.

This assessment of the "German character" seemed to be at the root of the American press's corresponding overestimation of the viability of the Weimar Republic. Repeatedly, American journalists either asserted or implied that Germans were inclined naturally to support parliamentary democracy. This essentially baseless theory may have blinded journalists to the reality that popular support in Germany for the Weimar Republic throughout the 1920's and early 1930's was tenuous at best. This was clearly evidenced by their "positive spin" on the Reichstag and Presidential election results of the 1924-1932 period. Instead, some publications, most notably the New York Times, often cited (and misrepresented) electoral statistics to reinforce their claims of Republican stability.

American journalists may have been also lulled into thinking that the Weimar Republic was stronger than it actually was because it had endured a succession of political and economic crises. What they seemed to miss was that although the Republic

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<sup>930</sup>NYT editorial, 10 November 1923.

survived attempted coups, hyperinflation and even the Great Depression, it did not emerge unscathed. The political and economic chaos of the early 1920's and 1930's, combined with the stabilization crisis of the mid and late 1920's, served to erode Weimar's base of popular support. Perhaps their omission could be traced partly to the fact that American correspondents in Germany were based in Berlin, an SPD stronghold, where support for the Republic was greater than in the rest of the country.

The American press's underestimation of the Nazis must also be seen in light of its overestimation of the ability of Weimar's leaders, particularly Hindenburg, to keep Hitler from gaining power. In fact, so strong was the press's faith in Hindenburg that many American journalists failed to question his judgment in appointing Hitler as Chancellor; some even praised the move. And although most American journalists realized their folly soon after, it took publications such as the New York Times and the Christian Science Monitor much longer to recognize the full import of Hindenburg's decision.

However, most American journalists began to question the viability of Weimar as a result of the Nazi electoral breakthrough in the 1930 Reichstag elections. Hindenburg's presidential victories over Hitler in March and April 1932 provided only a momentary cause for hope. The Nazi victory in Prussia and Brüning's dismissal soon afterwards finally convinced most American journalists that the Weimar Republic was finished and that an authoritarian government in the Bismarckian mold was in the offing.

After 1930 the general consensus of editorial opinion among the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune about Weimar's future also began to break down. Both the Daily News and the Tribune grew far more pessimistic about the situation in Germany in 1931 and 1932, with the latter suggesting that a monarchic restoration was inevitable. The New York Times, on the other hand, appeared unmoved by the alarming turn of events in Germany.

Although the political and economic difficulties faced by the Republic exercised varying degrees of influence on the opinions of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune, the divergence of views among the three newspapers after 1930, as well as the consensus which preceded it, were due largely to the internal dynamics within each news organization. Moreover, that this was true of these politically and journalistically diverse publications suggests that the assessments provided by exclusively product-driven press perception studies are inadequate in addressing the deeper questions of causation.

The control of German news presentation in the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and Chicago Daily Tribune often depended upon the influence of individual journalists within the bureaucratic framework of their respective news organizations. Had circumstances afforded Carroll Binder the opportunity to shape news and editorial policy of the Chicago Daily News at an earlier date, it is very likely that Edgar Mowrer's realistic appraisals of Germany would have made their presence felt in both his own dispatches and on the paper's editorial page. Similarly, had Walter Strong lived past 1931, it is highly

probable that with Charles Dennis at the helm, the Chicago Daily News would have gone the way of the New York Times, presenting rose-coloured views of Germany with little basis in fact. In addition, Robert McCormick's autocratic control of the Chicago Daily Tribune facilitated his fluctuating editorial stances in 1925 and early 1933. His overseas correspondents also found themselves at his mercurial whim. If McCormick felt that a particular story did not warrant a detailed account or prominent display, it did not receive it, as in the case of the omission of Sigrid Schultz's excellent dispatches on the Hitler treason trial. Finally, after Adolph Ochs's withdrawal from the day-to-day operation of the New York Times each of the paper's departments began functioning as autonomous units whose heads were accountable to no one. Hence, the Times's decentralized management structure was an essential precondition for both the publication of Rollo Ogden's editorial views and Frederick Birchall's CBS radio speech ploy.

The ideologies and traditions of the Chicago Daily News, Chicago Daily Tribune and New York Times also had an impact on each paper's German coverage. In the case of the Tribune, for instance, McCormick's rabid anti-Communism was probably at the root of his 4 February 1933 editorial which praised Hitler for his initial suppression of the Left. The Daily News's long-standing practice of refraining from publishing overseas news on the front page survived two changes of publisher. And the Times's propensity for employing dispassionate, yet unimaginative correspondents manifested itself in the form of Guido Enderis, whose reporting from Germany was at best, undistinguished.

It is also important to recognize the influence that business and market considerations had on the tone and tenor of each paper's German coverage. The Tribune tended to "hype" stories on civil unrest and monarchic intrigues, partly because McCormick and Schultz believed that those features sparked the interest of local readers. During the Lawson and Strong years, Chicago Daily News management took exception to many of Edgar Mowrer's dispatches, in large measure because of the objections of the paper's German-American readership. Finally, the attempts by the New York Times to avoid being thought of as America's Jewish newspaper was reflected in the underplaying of anti-semitic episodes and in its hiring decisions -- the far more capable Joseph Shaplen would probably have been Wythe Williams's replacement in the Berlin bureau, had the former not been a Jew.

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Implicit in the arguments put forth in this study is the notion that a number of American journalists saw themselves as something more than just objective recorders of events. Rather, they appeared to believe that they could influence events in the political arena from the periphery, much like a home team's fans at a football game. The Chicago Daily News's 1924 effort to promote the Dawes Plan, with the hope of undermining Robert LaFollette's presidential aspirations, can be seen as an outgrowth of this thinking.

Irrespective of what journalists themselves thought, it is difficult to measure how much of an influence their reporting actually had on American public opinion, since nationwide

polling did not begin until 1935. However, logic dictates that the analyses of newspapers and magazines helped shape American public opinion since the printed press was the primary source of European news during the 1920's and early 1930's (radio was still in its infancy). Moreover, it is probably safe to say that the relative impact of the New York Times, Chicago Daily News and the Chicago Daily Tribune on nationwide opinion was probably greater than that of other publications because of their large-scale syndication services. This was particularly true of the Times, which was widely read by America's political and financial elite.

More certain is that American correspondents who had been based in Germany in the 1920's and 1930's influenced American public opinion decades later. The impact of the Nazi experience on them was profound; when war broke out, many journalists including Frederick Kuhn and Edgar Mowrer joined US intelligence services and enthusiastically supported the anti-Hitler effort. More importantly, after Germany's defeat in 1945 their anti-totalitarianism was directed towards the Soviet Union. This generation of American correspondents later became among the staunchest anti-Communists in the late 1940's and 1950's.<sup>931</sup> Their ability to mobilize American public opinion against its former wartime ally was a necessary precondition for Marshall Aid and NATO, as well as for McCarthyism and intervention in Vietnam. Hence, some roots of the Cold War could be traced to the experience of a group of young newspapermen and women who had reported from the chaos which was Weimar Germany.

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<sup>931</sup>For an interesting discussion of this long-term consequence, see Heald, *Vistas*, pp.226-234.



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This bibliography provides a comprehensive list of all sources consulted, whether or not they provided valuable material. The reader should take note that except for the books by Heald (and perhaps Schudson), a work which analyzes the decision-making behind American press coverage of overseas events during the 1920's and early 1930's has yet to be written.

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