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What We Expected from National Socialism: Hermann Rauschning and Danzig's Interwar Radical Right (1918-1942)

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What We Expected from National Socialism:

Hermann Rauschnig and Danzig's Interwar Radical Right (1918-1942)

(TITLE)

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Nima Lane

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What We Expected from Nazism: Hermann Rauschning and Danzig's Interwar Radical
Right (1918-1942)

Nima Lane

Master's Thesis

Advisor: Dr. Elder

April 25, 2019

Abstract

This project uses Dr. Hermann Rauschning as a case study to analyze the transformation of the German intellectual right, stretching from his early career in the Weimar Era to the post-1945 era. Rather than offer a purely narrative biography, this study uses the figure of Rauschning to examine the fate of the German right from the *Kaiserreich* to the aftermath of World War II. Rauschning, born in 1887, was both a political and intellectual figure. However, these aspects of Hermann Rauschning are not necessarily separate. Although some historians see Hermann Rauschning as unique, I argue that he is in fact representative the German right in this period. Rauschning was influential as a political theorist who wrote on the conservative revolution and relationship between nihilism and the Third Reich. He was also as a politician who negotiated with the League of Nations, promoted the NSDAP within Danzig, and formulated a new usable conservatism in the post-war era. Rauschning's works on these connections for a time shaped the Conservative memory of the Third Reich. Like his contemporaries, such as writer Hans Zehrer, historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler, and sociologist Hans Freyer, Rauschning was both directly and indirectly involved in politics. This work seeks to link both the intellectual and the personal with the political and the public.

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Introduction

For a man who spent his entire career opposed to the concept of revolution, his contemporaries were quick to label Dr. Hermann Rauschning a conservative revolutionary. His name became synonymous with the Conservative Revolution movement of the 1920s and early 1930s in the writings of several historians focused on the German right, who noted this revolt against the post-Wilhelmine order.¹ Within the German right this dissident movement arose from the anxiety generated by the German Revolution of 1918-1919 and the Treaty of Versailles. The movements within the right were volatile mixes of contradictory political ideals filled with infighting. Through perceived necessity, a number of them signed on with Germany's radical right, forming a much-needed coalition with the Nazi party. Within the interwar political environment of the Free City of Danzig, a semi-autonomous state in what had been West Prussia, Hermann Rauschning experienced the development, acceptance, normalization, and ultimately the rejection of Nazism as he went from a conservative Prussian army officer, to a Nazi politician, and then subsequently an anti-Nazi exile.

This project uses Dr. Hermann Rauschning as a case study to analyze the transformation of the German intellectual right, stretching from his early career in the Weimar Era to the post-1945 era. Rather than offer a purely narrative biography, this study will use the figure of Rauschning as a case study of the fate of the German right from the *Kaiserreich* to the aftermath of World War II. Rauschning, born in 1887, was both a political and intellectual figure; However, these aspects of Hermann Rauschning

¹ For example, see Jean-Michel Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America* (Verso Books, 2017), 101; Fritz R. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, First edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 225.

are not necessarily separate. Although some historians see Hermann Rauschning as unique, I would argue that he is in fact representative of the German right in this period. Rauschning was influential as a political theorist who wrote on the conservative revolution and relationship between nihilism and the Third Reich. He was also as a politician who negotiated with the League of Nations, promoted the NSDAP within Danzig, and formulated a new usable conservatism in the post-war era. Rauschning's works on these connections for a time shaped the Conservative memory of the Third Reich. Like his contemporaries, such as writer Hans Zehrer, historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler, and sociologist Hans Freyer, Rauschning was both directly and indirectly involved in politics.² This work seeks to link both the intellectual and the personal with the political and the public.

While academic biography by nature can be narrow in scope, the political and intellectual career of Hermann Rauschning is anything but narrow. By looking at Hermann Rauschning it is possible to analyze the way in which the conservative elements of Germany in the nineteenth century were connected to the more radical right politics of the Weimar Era. While this was before Hermann Rauschning's activities, his politics were heavily influenced by this history. Hermann Rauschning felt as if he was born in the wrong time as he was born too late to truly experience the nineteenth century. He got his doctorate in history, writing about Danzig's irrefutably German nature. After World War I he became one of the radical German nationalists who pushed against what he saw

² Jerry Z. Müller, *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 1987); Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge University Press, 1984).

as the de-Germanization of the region.³ His often-stated view was that German conservatism had been on a downward spiral since the middle of the nineteenth century. After Rauschning's flirtation with the far-right German National People's Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei, or DNVP) Rauschning slowly came to embrace Nazism, in part because of both parties' shared goals and outlook. Up to 1932 the DNVP was a potent political force in its own right and its transition from monarchism to the radical *Volkish* nationalism of the Nazis encapsulated part of the deeper continuities within German politics from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries.⁴

The 1890s had seen the reform of the political forces within the German right, such as the development pressure groups; these changes would come to shape the political situation of the German right after World War One. As historian Geoff Eley explains: "...a structural instability in the relations of power bloc to petty-bourgeoisie—was arguably a vital condition of future possibility for the emergence of German fascism."⁵ This continuity from the nineteenth century is what explained the postwar German right's embrace of these more radical right-wing forces to compete with the leftist parties that gained preeminence during the early Weimar Republic. Hermann Rauschning joined the party first as an agrarian expert in the rural principality of Warnau, but later became president of Danzig's Senate. While he had a great degree of prominence, he lacked the grassroots political power that regional Nazi heads at the time

³Hermann Rauschning, *Die Abwanderung der Deutschen Bevölkerung aus Westpreussen und Posen 1919-1929: Die Entdeutschung Westpreussens und Posens* (Bouvier Verlag, 1930).

⁴ See Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany*, First Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵ Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change After Bismarck* (University of Michigan Press, 1991), 361.

had. Due to his own political impotence and the tense political situation he gradually fell out with the Nazi party, a fate that was not unlike that of many so-called the Conservative Revolutionaries.

Rauschnig once wrote on his opposition to Weimar: “For three generations, 90 years, and indeed, for 150 years or 200 years, a so-called ‘free’ man has been trained up. For ninety years the ‘materialist conception of history’ has worked hard to spread among the masses its shallow, stupid materialism and praise this as progress.”⁶ Throughout his development and early career from 1914 to 1926 most of his sensibilities and political thought were focused on the time period from the demonization of the French Revolution to the glorification of Prussian military figures like Otto von Bismarck. The DNVP, founded in 1919, began as a largely monarchist movement which, like Rauschnig, changed over time as monarchism became politically unviable. The initial conservative revolution was a revolt against the Weimar Republic, which had replaced their monarchy. Several prominent military figures within the Prussian *Junker* class that Rauschnig belonged to actively stated their dislike of this new Weimar Republic. Although he later denied the *Junker* label itself his defensive refutations of it were not an attempt to distance himself from these landowners politically.⁷

I position Rauschnig’s nationalist conservatism in the early 1920s, as a pursuit of the Spirit of 1914, which is analyzed by the works of Peter Fritzsche and Jeffrey Verhey.⁸

⁶ Hermann Rauschnig, *The Conservative Revolution*, 1st edition. (G.P. Putnam’s sons, 1941), 175.

⁷ Rauschnig, *The Conservative Revolution*, 123.

⁸ Fritzsche wrote about the Spirit of 1914 in Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); see also Verhey writes about it in Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914 Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press).

Out of this spirit, figures such as Paul von Hindenberg arose who were similar to Rauschning in the way that they link the new right to aspects of the older right that still maintained Bismarckian elements. Both these men fought in the war, as did many of the members of the German right. Rauschning was a traditionalist, Christian, monarchist and I will argue that because of this spirit of 1914, a need for unity in the fractured right was awakened, which is what led to many of them siding with this newer, post-1918 right. Under this paradigm, according to Wolfram Pyta, the nature of centralized authority changed, as initial postwar monarchism gave way to statist authoritarianism. Nonetheless, some people on the right still clung to monarchism for a time.⁹

Hermann Rauschning primarily viewed political analysis through a historical lens and his works have become a larger part of the historiography of the German right even as he was part of these political movements himself. His self-conception blended a romantic ideal of conservatism that appealed to conservatives within Germany and potentially across Europe as he expanded his audience upon his exile. One of the aspects of this historical context is the relationship between those who stood on the ‘right’ and Germany’s past, which is a reoccurring element of Rauschning’s career both before and after his short-lived political career.

The new historiography of the Germany right truly begins with Geoff Eley’s work. Eley’s argument is that the rise of Nazism was not due to a failure of the German left-wing parties such as the Social Democrats, but rather to a collapse of the middle-class liberal parties, making them ineffectual when it came to negotiation. He challenges

⁹ Wolfram Pyta, “Hindenberg and the German Right,” in *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism*, 1st edition (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016).

the previously dominant narrative of the *Sonderweg*, which argues that Germany had a unique path to modernization that led to the events of the World Wars. Eley decided that other historians did not pay enough attention to the inner workings of the nationalist pressure groups in late nineteenth century Germany. After a period of stagnation in the 1890s, these groups started to steadily climb in membership, as Eley shows with statistical reports, and the body of secondary literature on Wilhelmine politics. Although he notes their membership, literary output, and the range of their message, he argues this was not enough. He also has to look at the internal relations that held the movement together.¹⁰ He asks: who joined these organizations (sorting them by profession), but perhaps just as significantly, he asks what it meant to be a member. Leaders of these organizations threw lavish, large scale events that were backed by membership. They were affiliated with various clubs for groups like athletes and veterans.¹¹ This would facilitate the growth of these organizations from honorary groups to activist groups, according to Eley.

Eley's work has had long-reaching impact on interpretations of the German right. One of the most up-to-date works on the German right in this period as a whole is Larry Eugene Jones's compilation of essays, *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Anti-Semitism* from 2014. Jones, like Eley, argued that the fractured German right was just as instrumental to the rise of Nazism as the failure of the German left. He shows the German right was made up of loosely knit associations which only had the distrust of liberalism and anger

¹⁰ Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, 121.

¹¹ Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, 131-132.

about the results of World War One holding these disparate people together. However, he questions the idea of an alliance between the “new right” and “old right,” perhaps to a greater extent than Eley does. Eley’s goal was to separate out the Wilhelmine-era German right from the proto-Nazi teleology that characterized these studies in previous works. Jones states the collection isn’t to “challenge the master narrative” but rather to serve as a basis for it using new scholarship.¹²

Conversely, Jeffrey Herf’s 1984 book *Reactionary Modernism* covers the intellectual side of the German revolutionary right through the Weimar period into the Third Reich, but unlike Eley, Jeffrey Herf argues that the ideology of these intellectuals displays ruptures in the continuities of German history.¹³ Herf states that his study is an affirmation of the axiom that “ideas matter”.¹⁴ Herf’s *Reactionary Modernism* plays a role in shifting the interpretation of the German right to the nature of ideology and the important links between the intellectual and political worlds of Weimar Germany. The figures in the German right that Herf covers serve as representations of the larger forces operating in the German right from the Weimar period into the Third Reich. For example, Oswald Spengler, a prominent representative of revolutionary conservatism’s roots due to his work *The Decline of the West* (1918), serves as a link between the conservative revolutionaries and the industrialist. His work started out as a rebuttal to the arguments

¹² Larry Eugene Jones, “The German Right in the Weimar Republic: New Directions, New Insights, New Challenges,” in *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism*, 1st edition (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 2.

¹³ Jeffrey Herf, “The Paradox of Reactionary Modernism” *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1-18.

¹⁴ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, ix.

that ideology was merely a tool in the hands of the Nazi party and to an extent could be detached from the larger political forces other historians like Eley used to forge connections between the old and new conservatism in Germany. As for the intellectuals who made the argument that Nazism was detached from ideology, among them was none other than Dr. Hermann Rauschning himself, who took it upon him to shape the German right's historical memory.¹⁵

The German right's post-war transformation (or lack thereof) is yet another source of historical debate. In the field the genre of representative biography and intellectual history are often combined to analyze this question as was the case with Jerry Muller's book on Hans Freyer, *The Other God that Failed*. Muller's book on Freyer suggested that there was a process of deradicalization of figures on the German right. Other works such as Daniel Morat's work on Hans Zehrer, who was similarly active in the German right, argued that this idea of the German right's deradicalization was overblown and they instead got used to the new political context.¹⁶

Relatively little has been written on the figure Hermann Rauschning himself, though he is cited in several influential works. In 1963, his friend, and eldest son of the prominent novelist Thomas Mann, Golo Mann, wrote a biographical sketch of him that sang his praises as a historian and political analyst while summarizing Rauschning's political theories.¹⁷ J.S. Conway wrote "Rauschning as a Historian and an Opponent of Nazism" in 1973 for Toronto's *Journal of Intellectual History* and his argument was a

¹⁵ Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 7.

¹⁶ Daniel Morat, "No Inner Remigration: Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, and the Early Federal Republic of Germany," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (November 2012): 661–79, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244312000248>.

¹⁷ Golo Mann, „Hermann Rauschning“ in *Zwölf Versuche* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer S. Verlag GrnbH, 1973), 169-185.

summary defense of Rauschning's credibility in the face of attacks against it from revisionists and Nazi party leaders.¹⁸ Conway addressed the questions on the reliability of Rauschning's writings. These concerns got to the point where a Professor Theodor Schieder examined the claims in a piece entitled *Hermann Rauschnings "Gespräche mit Hitler" als Geschichtsquelle*.¹⁹ Conway came to essentially the same conclusion as Schieder that Rauschning's *Gespräche mit Hitler* and other works, while they couldn't be considered verbatim contained valuable insights about Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party. He described Rauschning as a trailblazer that people were unjustly suspicious of as he was an early "Nazi renegade".²⁰ In a similar vein, "Orwell's Nazi Renegade" was a piece written in 1986 by George Watson for the *Sewanee Review* literary journal which was a short look at Rauschning in the context of Orwell's interest in 'renegades' from totalitarian governments.²¹ Watson also agrees that Rauschning's work was credible. He adds that Rauschning made links between fascism and Bolshevism. Furthermore although Rauschning never met Orwell, his analysis on Hitler has echoes in the book *and Nineteen Eighty-Four* when the party shows an adherence to a kind of cynical subjectivity to manipulate the 'truth'.²² Doubts about Rauschning's claims about Adolf Hitler lingered throughout the years despite the vigorous defenses of the historians during the 1970s. Ian

¹⁸ Namely in Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power* (Harvard University Press, 1981).

¹⁹ Theodor Schieder, *Hermann Rauschnings „Gespräche mit Hitler“ als Geschichtsquelle: 169. Sitzung am 21. Juli 1971 in Düsseldorf*, 1972nd ed. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1972).

²⁰ J. S. Conway, "Hermann Rauschning As Historian And Opponent Of Nazism," *Canadian Journal of History* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 1973): 67–78, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjh.8.1.67>.

²¹ George Watson, "Orwell's Nazi Renegade," *The Sewanee Review* 94, no. 3 (1986): 486–95.

²² George Watson, "Orwell's Nazi Renegade," *The Sewanee Review* 94, no. 3 (1986), 492–93.

Kershaw decided he would not be able to use Rauschning's works on Hitler on his personal life.²³ The effort was largely driven by historical revisionist agencies and Swiss journalist Wolfgang Hänel during the 1980s who wrote that some of his anecdotes about Hitler seemed to be lifted from fiction.²⁴ There were not much in the way of purely political biographies of Hermann Rauschning during that time although some works on Danzig's Jewish community such as *Danzig 1939* depicted him as a restraining force.²⁵

With the coming of the 1990s German historians renewed their interest in Polish and East European affairs. One of them was Marek Andrzejewski wrote a 1997 biographical sketch on the man, using Polish sources. Andrzejewski portrayed Hermann Rauschning as an overlooked and dynamic political figure who underwent significant changes throughout his long life. Dr. Hermann Rauschning was a sort of out-of-place renaissance man more attuned to the world of the arts.²⁶ To Andrzejewski the changes in Rauschning's career were just as significant as his position in general.²⁷ Following this Pia Nordblum and Jürgen Hensel made a political biography of Rauschning out of a series of essays. They chronicled the various issues through his tenure as Senate President in the context of his later works on Nazism. The subject matter includes Rauschning and

²³ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris (1st ed. (1998). London: Penguin Press.* p. xiv. ISBN 0-7139-9047-3.

²⁴ „Zitat, Zitat, Zitat, Und Nichts Weiter“ - *DER SPIEGEL* 37/1985,” accessed October 7, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13514710.html>.

²⁵ Gunter Grass et al., *Danzig 1939: Treasures of a Destroyed Community*, Exhibition Catalog edition (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980), 38-39.

²⁶ Marek Andrzejewski, “Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze,” 1997, 1–15, http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~dnfg/images/Hermann_Rauschning.pdf.

²⁷ Andrzejewski, “Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze,” 15.

the ‘Jewish question’, his critique of Nazism and how typical his critique was among the German bourgeoisie, and his struggle to reconstruct his political identity.²⁸

Recently, biographer Albrecht Hagemann wrote *Hermann Rauschning: Ein deutsches Leben zwischen NS-Ruhm und Exil* (A German Life Between Nazi Renown and Exile).²⁹ Hagemann’s work is the most comprehensive work on Hermann Rauschning to date. As a biography, the historical context is used to explain Hermann Rauschning rather than vice-versa. Of Rauschning’s major works the book is centered around two Hagemann sees as the most significant due to their popularity and far reach: *The Revolution of Nihilism* and *Hitler Speaks*. Hagemann uses Hermann Rauschning as an example of the German conservative from the era of the Kaiser to the Federal Republic of Germany. Rauschning, perhaps in part due to his flaws rather despite them, serves as an exemplar of Germans at this juncture. To Hagemann, Rauschning in his entirety could be summed up by his views post presidency: “This is the typical Rauschning we will encounter again later: radical reckoning with the National Socialist on the one hand, boundless disappointment of the Conservatives over the abuse and the deformation of a formerly ‘good project’ on the other.”³⁰ Hagemann’s summation is a succinct assessment of Rauschning’s place after he made his exit from Danzig; although it does raise the question of whether it implies that Rauschning thought Nazism was “a good idea poorly executed.” After this point Rauschning is the metaphorical Cassandra, calling a truth that few are hearing, as displayed when Nazism is seen as an object of satire rather than

²⁸ Pia Nordblom and Jürgen Hensel, *Hermann Rauschning : Materialien und Beiträge zu einer politischen Biographie* (Osnabrück : Fibre, 2003), <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/17995530>.

²⁹ Albrecht Hagemann, *Hermann Rauschning: Ein deutsches Leben zwischen NS-Ruhm und Exil*, (Köln Weimar: Böhlau Köln, 2018).

³⁰ Hagemann, *Hermann Rauschning*, 142.

Rauschning's serious portrayal of its fanaticism in *Revolution of Nihilism* and *Hitler Speaks*.³¹ The book does not concern itself with continuities as it jumps around frequently between events and writings both during and after the war. As the goal of the book is to present a picture of Rauschning using the combination of his works, correspondence, and the other pieces which inform the history surrounding him. At a glance, Hagemann's interpretation uses Rauschning's writings to build on what has already been written about Rauschning by Andrzejewski, Nordblum, and others who follow his works. In a sense this piece is a reconstruction of those arguments made in the 1970s by Conway and Watson using the slowly accumulating biographical pieces of the post-Cold War period.

While Hagemann focuses on Rauschning's life as an intellectual life after his exile, the present work focuses more on Rauschning's *The Conservative Revolution* and other earlier works instead to better contextualize Rauschning within the intellectual history of the German right. While Jerry Muller would argue of figures like Rauschning that they deradicalize, and Daniel Morat would say they 'remigrated', thus not truly changing at all, I would argue that Rauschning simply tempered and remarketed his ideology in a new context while keeping many of the key, reactionary elements. The label of conservative revolutionary was fitting in a number of ways as he essentially spent his entire intellectual career revolting against powers that led the German right whether it was the Weimar Republic, the NSDAP, or even the Adenauer administration. That being said, his opposition to revolution is worth noting as it relates to his entire political framework, connecting him to the earlier ideas of the German right which revolted against the spirit of the French Revolution.

³¹ Note that *Hitler Speaks* is simply the English title of *Gespräche mit Hitler*.

The methodology of this work will entail looking at Rauschning's own words such as his speeches, letters, books, and articles in concert with the secondary literature on Danzig and the German right. Rauschning's political career can be explained through the reports of the League of Nations, as well as the writings of other figures within his environment like fellow politicians such as Ernst Ziehm, friends like High Commissioner Sean Lester, or even his wife Anna Rauschning's biography. Some of this requires using his later writings to understand his view of the situation as he was operating within Danzig. While Rauschning was, in some sense, an unreliable narrator, by using his reported actions compared to his generally consistent ideology, the work attempts to theorize where he and those like him might have stood intellectually during this period using a variety of sources. This mix of sources combines intellectual history, political history, and biography to use Rauschning to explain the German right from the 1920s into the post-war period. This work will be split into four chapters. This work also builds upon what came before it, but rather than building on the assumptions held within Hermann Rauschning's works, it will reevaluate his role from his roots in pre-WWI German conservatism to the post-Nazi world. In doing this, this work seeks to find Rauschning's intellectual and political roots as he understood Europe through the lens of the past.

The first chapter argues to understand Hermann Rauschning and his particular place in the German right, it is imperative to understand the political forces at play during Rauschning's early life in the late nineteenth century. The chapter begins the long continuities which link together the fractured ideas within the German right and the significance of them and the political arena in which they operated. This is informed by a

body of literature that defined the German right up to World War I. This chapter explores how the state of the German right after the war gave birth to a new German right that chased these past ideals. Among one of these right-wing parties was the German National People's Party (DNVP), which Rauschning was initially affiliated with, up until the interwar period. In the interwar period is Rauschning's rise to prominence within the context of the right and rural politics in the Weimar Republic. The chapter asks where Rauschning's ideas came from and what he wanted to accomplish through them. In essence this chapter is the prelude to both Rauschning's ideology and how he managed to get into the position from where he launched his political career in the Nazi party.

The second chapter explores how Hermann Rauschning conducted himself as the first Nazi president of the Danzig Senate. His politics and demeanor made him valuable to elements within the Nazi party who wanted to put on a moderate face for the tense negotiations with Poland. Dr. Hermann Rauschning presented a respectable face that bridged the gap between the Nazi party and the rest of the German right in a unstable political atmosphere. Rauschning's negotiations with the League leadership were informed and hindered by the trends within the German right, as Danzig's political separation from the Reich meant that members of the right would have to form coalitions, adhere to a relatively democratic constitution and work with the League of Nations.

Chapter three explores how Rauschning operated as an iconoclast and went into exile from the mid to late 1930s. How his works contributed to the western understanding of the Reich from his beliefs about the Nazis' nihilistic opportunism to his analysis of the psyche and beliefs of Adolf Hitler. As Hermann Rauschning and his family experienced their collective exile from Danzig, the political forces within Danzig clashed as

Rauschning revolted through both word and action against the NSDAP with the assistance of his various connections that he accumulated from his time as the President of the Danzig Senate. Both Rauschning's formal and informal breaks with Nazism showed a consistent line of continuity with his beliefs and sensibilities from earlier. His beliefs informed his actions through the most tumultuous time in his personal history. The chapter thus demonstrates that his conception of Nazism's revolutionary fervor is largely born from his experiences.

The final chapter seeks to cover Rauschning's intellectual life after his exile in 1936. Rauschning's life to that point builds up to his two works *The Revolution of Nihilism* and *The Conservative Revolution*. The chapter argues that the continuities throughout Rauschning's life informed this new usable conservatism he was trying to formulate as an intellectual figure rather than a political figure. From this point on Rauschning was largely a political analyst and historian like a number of the adherents of the German revolutionary right who tried to find their way through this new post-War environment, and yet, for Hermann Rauschning his postwar experience and war experience blended together as he migrated to the United States. Hermann Rauschning's postwar intellectual life consisted of a quick burst of fame during the war which faded into the 1950s. Despite this, his conception of Nazism still continues to influence the German right as the past inevitably forms the future in conservative movements like it.

Chapter 1: Rauschning: Kaiserreich to Republic

Hermann Rauschning was born into a Germany far different from his father's. The sheer number of the territorial changes and the ongoing march of modernization in such a short period at the end of the long nineteenth century rendered his parents' Germany into an idealized historical construct. Despite his age, the continuities between these older ideas of conservatism and German nationalism would feature prominently in his mind throughout his life. Hermann Rauschning was born in Thorn (now Toruń, Poland) in West Prussia to Clara and Leopold Rauschning in 1887. It was one year before Bismarck's death and Kaiser Wilhelm's ascension to the throne. It was right at the end of the old Bismarckian era and the start of the right's reshaping in the 1890. Leopold Rauschning was a former Prussian officer. He was a barrister and heavily involved in education in West Prussia.³² Hermann Rauschning's paternal great grandfather, Ludwig Rauschning, was a cavalry officer in the Napoleonic wars. His maternal grandfather, Hugo Dauben, was also a Prussian officer who fought in the artillery regiment in Southwest Africa.³³ Suffice to say, his family were no strangers to military tradition by the time he joined the Prussian cadet corps. He attended this institution from 1899 to 1903, so the political landscape had already seen and integrated these changes by the time he received his formal schooling in his early teen years.³⁴ The Rauschning were moderately wealthy landowners, so Hermann Rauschning was initially well educated. He

³² Heinrich Babucke, *Zur Erinnerung an die Übersiedelung des Altstädtischen Gymnasiums zu Königsberg, Pr. in das neue Schulgebäude am 9. April 1889: Festschrift* (Hartungsche Buchdr., 1889), 317.

³³ Hans Wolfram von Hentig, *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Band 21, 2003, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd118749331.html#ndbcontent>.

³⁴ Marek Andrzejewski, "Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze," 1997, 1, http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~dnfg/images/Hermann_Rauschning.pdf,

studied *Germanistik*, history, and music in Berlin and Munich beginning in 1906.³⁵ His education would create the basis for his status as a cultural figure later on in his life.

To Hermann Rauschning, politics, music, culture, and history in Danzig were all intertwined with the cultural development of Northern Germany. This was made apparent when he covered the cultural history of Prussia as a student. In 1911, he wrote a doctoral dissertation on music and musical education in Danzig, while he attended Berlin's Friedrich-Wilhelm University (now known as Humboldt University).³⁶ This was Hermann Rauschning's first major work before World War I. Rauschning's dissertation had some minor political elements as he acknowledged the political situation and history of Danzig had a profound effect on the culture of Northern Germany as a whole. He traced Danzig's tradition of music education from the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century to the efforts of German folk revival in the nineteenth century.³⁷ Rauschning focused primarily on church music. He later republished his thesis in the 1930s under the title of *History of Music Education in Danzig from the Beginning to the Dissolution of Kirchenkapellen*.³⁸ He paid particular attention to the role of the trumpet, as well as organs and vocals.³⁹

³⁵ Hans Wolfram von Hentig, *Neue Deutsche Biographie*

³⁶ Jürgen Hensel and Pia Nordblom, *Hermann Rauschning: Materialien und Beiträge zu einer politischen Biographie*, (Fibre, 2002), 18.

³⁷ Hermann Rauschning, *Geschichte der Musik und Musikpflege in Danzig: von den Anfängen bis zur Auflösung der Kirchenkapellen* / von Hermann Rauschning (Kommissionsverlag Danziger Verlagsgesellschaft, 1931), <http://pbc.gda.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=31021&from=publication>,

³⁸ Andrzejewski, "Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze.", 1.

³⁹ Rauschning, *Geschichte der Musik und Musikpflege in Danzig*, 4.

Hermann Rauschnig, per his thesis, believed that nationalism was inexorably connected to music.⁴⁰ In nineteenth-century Prussia, the study of music had taken a nationalistic and humanistic approach with the intended goal of both personal development and glorifying the state.⁴¹ Music education in Germany was also justified as having value for religious purposes as well since the 18th century. As a result, both the church and the state in Prussia played a large part in musical education, the combination of which heavily influenced Hermann Rauschnig in his early years. Perhaps more notable than what Rauschnig wrote in his thesis, was what he left out. Later scholars of Renaissance music in Danzig would note that he left out the contributions of prominent Polish figures within Danzig's musical past, figures including Georg Knopf, who sought to incorporate both Polish and German elements in Danzig's culture. Hermann Rauschnig sought to present a narrative of a purely German history of Danzig's culture.⁴²

Following the Napoleonic Wars, conservatives and nationalists had made efforts to reorganize music education to instill a sense of cohesive national pride. These reforms were instituted by the educational officials as there was a notion that the German states had fallen behind the rest of Europe in the field of musical education. After unification, reforms resulted in a shift from religiously inspired music to folk music. Figures such as Beethoven and Wagner, whom Rauschnig also wrote about, were beloved figures of late

⁴⁰ Rauschnig, *Geschichte der Musik und Musikpflege in Danzig*, 5.

⁴¹ Alexandra Kertz-Welzel, "The Singing Muse? Three Centuries of Music Education in Germany," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 26, no. 1 (2004):, doi:10.2307/4 bl/; 0215294, 18.

⁴² Martin Morell, "Georg Knoff: Bibliophile and Devotee of Italian Music in Late Sixteenth-Century Danzig," in *Music in the German Renaissance: Sources, Styles, and Contexts*, ed. John Kmetz (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 105.

nineteenth-century German nationalism.⁴³ Rauschning's mentor, Max Friedländer, was a part of this nationalistic effort to promote the Germanic identity through music.

Friedländer worked on various projects concerning German folk music under the Kaiser Wilhelm II, such as the aptly named *Kaiserliedbucher*.⁴⁴ Later on, in the 1920s, Friedländer would work from his new home at Harvard University to develop an archive of German folk music.⁴⁵ This archive, as well as German folk music in general, would later be appropriated by the Nazis following the seizure of power, despite the fact that Friedländer was Jewish.⁴⁶ Due to the connectedness of these different historical moments, the icons of the German right like Otto von Bismarck thus played a key role in promoting ideology and identity through music in the nineteenth century. This was the world that Hermann Rauschning initially immersed himself in.

Hermann Rauschning seemed of the opinion that he was born in the wrong time as he was born too late to truly experience the nineteenth century. He was not old enough to remember Otto von Bismarck, but despite this, he would always be looking back on the suicide of Bismarck's old order. He held onto the belief that "German Conservatism had been decaying and denigrating and degenerating since the middle of the nineteenth

⁴³ Kertz-Welzel, "The Singing Muse? Three Centuries of Music Education in Germany," 11.

⁴⁴ Hans Joachim Moser, "Friedländer, Max," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, Band 5, 1961, <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd116797673.html#ndbcontent>.

⁴⁵ Philip V. Bohlman, "Landscape Region Nation Reich: German Folk Song in the Nexus of National Identity," in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 106.

⁴⁶ James R. Dow and Hannjost Lixfeld, "National Socialistic Folklore and Overcoming the Past in the Federal Republic of Germany," *Asian Folklore Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991): 117–53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1178188>.

century.”⁴⁷ With the loss of notables like Bismarck, this new right reshaped its political identity around this idea towards the end of the nineteenth century. The German right embraced industry but were very critical of liberalism and the symptoms of the capitalistic, bourgeois society. They also had a distaste for the rationality of the Enlightenment.⁴⁸ Fritz Stern once described the paradox of this idea: “[I]ts [German right’s] followers sought to destroy the despised present in order to recapture an idealized past in an imaginary future.”⁴⁹ These threads had roots within the nineteenth century, but only intensified as Rauschnig grew older and dealt with the emergence of the mass politics in the twentieth.

Among the German right’s reforms in the 1890s, was the shift from the politics of notables, to the politics of collectives in the form of various pressure groups. One of the main pressure groups behind this reconstruction of politics was the Agrarian League.⁵⁰ The reasoning behind the existence of nationalist pressure groups like this were the difficulties of the lower and middle classes in getting any kind of direct representation in government. Therefore, they formed groups to apply pressure to the government and lobbied for the interests of the German farmers despite being under the leadership of the *Junkers*.⁵¹ The importance of agrarian versus industrial support for the German right-wing parties in Bismarck’s period drove the central tenet of “iron and rye” to the

⁴⁷ Hermann Rauschnig, *The Revolution of Nihilism: Warning to the West* (New York: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 1938), 100.

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 13.

⁴⁹ Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 6-7.

⁵⁰ Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change After Bismarck* (University of Michigan Press, 1991), 6-7.

⁵¹ Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, 7.

forefront. The protectionist policies driven by the *Junker* class which linked interests of the industrial elites and the landowners. The Agrarian League's brand of agrarian mobilization politics united militaristic conservatism, *Völkisch* ideas of economics, Social Darwinism, and anti-Semitism.⁵² In Prussia's rural areas, the conservatives used the Agrarian League as a means of opposing the political left. This groundwork of grassroots agrarian movements would shape Hermann Rauschning's career into the Nazi era as he joined organizations like the Danzig Land League.

Hermann Rauschning, along with an entire generation of German conservatives, came of age during the First World War. At the age of twenty six, Rauschning volunteered while still a student of music, despite having a congenital heart defect. He served as an infantry lieutenant under his father, who was an officer in the 8th regiment of German Imperial Army.⁵³ In June of 1914, prior to the breakout of the war, he had met Anna Schwartz, a fellow music student at a party in Berlin. After he was deployed in August he kept in contact with her via his letters from the front. Initially he wrote glowingly of the military effort.⁵⁴ On the 18th of October of that year, Rauschning sustained a serious head wound. He was sent to the Berlin-Charlottenburg military hospital for surgery, where he spent the rest of 1914. Anna Schwartz visited him there, and at the beginning of 1915, he asked the Schwartz family's' permission to marry her. Her parents seemed hesitant, but Hermann Rauschning and their daughter begged them. They told them that they were running out of time as Hermann Rauschning would soon be moved back to the front. The marriage was moved up to June 1915. They married in

⁵² Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*, 41.

⁵³ Jürgen Hensel and Pia Nordblom, *Hermann Rauschning*, 19.

⁵⁴ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, (The Bobbs-Merrill Co, 1942), 74-76.

the small village of Krumhübel (now *Karpacz* in Polish).⁵⁵ The ceremony was an austere affair in a small log church. Hermann Rauschning wore his officer's uniform while the bride wore a simple white dress. She told her children that the circumstances of the war made a more traditional wedding difficult.⁵⁶ Following their marriage, Hermann Rauschning was deployed to Lithuania.⁵⁷ The newly married Anna Rauschning went back to Berlin. In October, their first child, Heilwig, was born, four months after their wedding. A few months after their daughter's birth they moved to a small apartment in Tilsit, where they had a second child and they would remain for the remainder of the war.⁵⁸

The First World War may have ended in 1918, but for the German right, the political struggle had only begun. The events of 1918 shaped the German right to a degree not seen since the death of Otto von Bismarck. The 1918-1919 German revolution ushered in several issues the German right had to contend with in the post-War era. The Versailles Treaty, the rise of paramilitary groups, and even the emergence of new political parties were all set forth by the German revolution. Perhaps even more significantly, the events of 1918 showed the German right that a revolution could succeed in Germany.⁵⁹ This was all too significant for Rauschning, who often painted the reactionary politics of the time in terms of revolution throughout his writing career. The most lasting effect of these events of 1918, however, would be the national myths created

⁵⁵ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 77.

⁵⁶ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 77-78.

⁵⁷ Albrecht Hagemann, *Hermann Rauschning: Ein deutsches Leben zwischen NS-Ruhm und Exil* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 23.

⁵⁸ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 78.

⁵⁹ Peter Fritzsche, "Breakdown or Breakthrough?," in *Between Reform, Reaction and Resistance: Studies in the History of German Conservatism from 1789 to 1945*, ed. Larry Eugene Jones and James N. Retallack (Providence: Berg Publishers, 1993), 327.

about the war. These national myths would continue to drive the German right for years. The crisis of the revolution itself would leave the Weimar Republic with questionable legitimacy in the eyes of the German right.

For the German right-wing parties, it seemed that everything was falling apart before their eyes during the German November Revolutions. The navy, which was such a staple of conservative politics in the 1890s, went into a revolt. Eventually these revolts spread all around Germany. On November 8th, 1918, Bavaria became a Socialist state under Kurt Eisner. That same day there were rebellions in Saxony, Baden-Wurtemberg, Thuringen, and Hesse-Darmstadt.⁶⁰ The next day, in Berlin, Philip Scheidemann proclaimed a German republic as head of the Social Democrat party, while his more radical colleagues struggled with him concerning the type of government they wished to pursue.⁶¹ As some right-wing figures attempted to collaborate with this new order, others simply wished it overthrown. When Paul von Hindenburg helped the new government take control of the German army, his son-in-law wrote, “so this is what it must be like when one suffers a stroke.”⁶² Unfortunately for the figures who opposed the political revolution, most of the German army had completely disintegrated by this point, along with the monarchy.

Rauschnig volunteered during the armistice of November 11th, 1918 and thus became one of the officers in the *Freikorps*. The *Freikorps* became a popular outlet for

⁶⁰ Ralph Haswell Lutz, *The German Revolution, 1918-1919* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1922), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.32000005046349>, 37-38.

⁶¹ Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2007), 19.

⁶² Wolfram Pyta, “Hindenberg and the German Right,” in *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism*, 1st edition (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 34.

much of the disillusionment among the veterans that would make up the German right follow WWI. The *Freikorps* consisted of mercenaries who carried out a program of counter-revolution on the eastern front.⁶³ He was stationed in the border protection unit as he was very reluctant to abandon West Prussia. His period as an officer in the organization was short lived as the *Freikorps* officially disbanded in 1920.⁶⁴ Rauschning's brief stint in this paramilitary tied him to many of the upper level officers of the NSDAP, including Arthur Greiser,⁶⁵ who would later serve alongside Rauschning in Danzig's senate, and Hans Albert Hohnfeldt,⁶⁶ the first Nazi party member in Danzig. As the *Freikorps* carried out counterrevolutionary activity, the political arm of the German right fermented their own response to the revolution. A manifesto was advertised in a Berlin newspaper in and titled: *Aufruf* or 'Invocation' on November 22nd, 1918.⁶⁷ This new advertisement called for a new German National People's Party (*Deutsche National Volkspartei*, or DNVP), which would be ready to cooperate with any party that shared their main aims: to heal the wounds of war and to restore law and order.⁶⁸

Rauschning talked little about his time with the DNVP directly; however, when he is looked at through the prism of the interactions between the old and new right, the party served as a representative for all the conservatives positioned themselves between the old and the new in the conservative milieu. The party was founded out of the collapse

⁶³ Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War*, 1 edition (Oxford : New York: Clarendon Press, 1993), 89.

⁶⁴ Jürgen Hensel and Pia Nordblom, *Hermann Rauschning*, 19.

⁶⁵ Herbert S. Levine, *Hitler's Free City: A History of the Nazi Party in Danzig, 1925-1939* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 18-19.

⁶⁶ Robert S. Wistrich, "Arthur Greiser" in *Who's Who in Nazi Germany*, 3 ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁶⁷ Lewis Hertzman, "The Founding of the German National People's Party (DNVP), November 1918-January 1919," *The Journal of Modern History* 30, no. 1 (1958): 24–36.

⁶⁸ Hertzman, "The Founding of the German National People's Party (DNVP)", 24.

of the *Kaiserreich* and became a force in opposition to both the Weimar Republic and the growing forces of Marxism.⁶⁹ The DNVP was formed partly in response to the German Revolution of 1918-19. To the conservatives, the German Revolution gave the parties a sense of urgency and sped up the reformation of the conservative parties. This was not unfounded as some members of the conservative parties feared for their lives. In the case of the new German National People's Party, it meant that conservative parties were eager to join together out of necessity in this new political environment. This new party was described as a combination of Conservatives, Free Conservatives, Christian Socialists, Pan-Germans, and other agrarian and nationalist interests.⁷⁰ Specifically, the response was at least initially in opposition to the new Weimar Republic, as many of the German right doubted the legitimacy of not only the Versailles Treaty, but the republic itself. The legacy of the Weimar Republic as being tied to the collapse of the old order came from the Versailles Treaty, the German Revolution, and the 'stab in the back' myth at the end of WWI. Many of the members of the DNVP saw this 'stab in the back' as a betrayal by the Jews and the socialists.⁷¹

Rauschnig returned to West Prussia with his family and was determined to stay there, despite the fact that it changed hands as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. The lands there were ceded to the newly reborn nation of Poland.⁷² After a period of negotiations, Danzig, in his words a beacon of German culture, became its own free city, which was locked into a customs union with the new Poland.⁷³ This settlement displeased

⁶⁹ Hertzman, "The Founding of the German National People's Party (DNVP)", 35.

⁷⁰ Hertzman, "The Founding of the German National People's Party (DNVP)", 24.

⁷¹ Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 95.

⁷² Andrzejewski, "Hermann Rauschnig. Biographische Skizze.", 2.

⁷³ Lowe, *Danzig*, 186.

both Poles and Germans. For Poland, the economic concessions were mostly worthless, as was the city's secession from Prussia. For the Germans, it was yet another example of the hypocrisy of the allies in their rhetoric of national self-determination espoused by Wilson's Fourteen Points.⁷⁴ Protests against the treaty were common, especially among the women in the DNVP, and this issue dominated most discussions on foreign policy on the German right.⁷⁵ One of Rauschning's first books, which he published in 1929, was on what he saw as the displacement of the Germans from 1919 to 1929. In his mind, all the problems facing the German minority in Poland was all tied into the Versailles Treaty from the perceived dispossession of land to the economic problems. Criticism of the Versailles Treaty itself came from both sides of the political spectrum as the settlement of the treaty was an embarrassment for many Germans in the face of the international community. Woodrow Wilson remarked on the sloppy and ineloquent nature of the German leaders while the French subjected them to humiliation by touring their train through the ruined French countryside before dumping their baggage and telling them to carry it themselves.⁷⁶ The perceived injustice of the Versailles Treaty was perhaps one of the few things that both socialists and conservatives in Germany could agree on.

The crisis of the revolution and the Versailles Treaty would leave the Weimar Republic itself with a questionable legacy in the eyes of the German right. This feeling was compounded by the fact that the German Social Democratic party dominated politics in this early stage of the Weimar Republic, roughly 1918 to 1923.⁷⁷ As a result, the right

⁷⁴ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 10-11.

⁷⁵ Raffael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany*, 1st edition (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 127.

⁷⁶ Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 34-35.

⁷⁷ Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 84.

has its own legitimacy crisis. The DNVP, like much of the right side of the political spectrum during the 1920s, was more defined by what it was not than what it was. The party itself was seemingly riddled with contradictions and disunity, given the wide variety of interests within it. This had the end result of the party taking on a number of unexpected turns and positions. Within the party there was a shifting balance between the DNVP being a party of notables and a party of the people. Even more unexpectedly, it was one of the most popular political parties for women. For these women, international issues like the Danzig issue gained significant importance.⁷⁸ After Rauschning settled down in Posen, and with the support of his wife and daughters he began his initial foray into local politics through the DNVP with a heavy focus on this very issue.

The early 1920s was thus a chaotic period for the German right, which struggled and failed to gain control of Germany. In 1920, for example, Wolfgang Kapp attempted a coup that nearly overthrew the government. The DNVP's role in this was indirect. While the DNVP leadership opposed the Kapp Putsch, many of its adherents desperately hoped it would succeed. Outside of the leadership, the DNVP did not vocally oppose this *Freikorps*-backed coup. The Kapp Putsch would sow seeds of division between the DNVP's hardliners and moderates.⁷⁹ The Kapp Putsch would also inspire the Beer Hall Putsch instigated by Adolf Hitler and the *Freikorps* in 1923. While the Beer Hall Putsch also failed, it would hold a powerful place in the memory of the German radical right and make a controversial firebrand named Adolf Hitler a political notable in Germany. The

⁷⁸ For more on this topic see: Raffael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany*, (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004).

⁷⁹ Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany*, 1st edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

chaos did not only stem from civil strife. There was also the issue of economic concerns as the German economy was on the verge of a collapse.

After the Beer Hall Putsch, the years 1923 to 1924 represented a significant shift for those like Rauschnig who stood on the intellectual right. In 1924, he became the main editor for a German language magazine, *Deutsche Blätter in Polen*, a magazine on Poland's German minority. Meanwhile, Germany experienced hyperinflation that made their currency essentially worthless. Rauschnig, like many other Germans began to experience financial problems.⁸⁰ In comparison the ethnic Poles were not suffering nearly as much. The German right blamed much of the problem on the Treaty of Versailles. In addition, the courts decreed that ethnic Germans had to pay reparations to the Polish government in 1925. The German right was able to seize on both the economic grievances and the ethnic tensions to great effect. The socialistic elements of the government could not afford what they promised to the German lower and middle classes in a time of unemployment and economic difficulty, so they began to lose ground, and this gave the German right new influence.⁸¹

Even though 1926 was considered the beginning of a Golden Age for the Weimar Republic, this was not the case for Rauschnig. The 1926 Dawes Plan was enacted in concert with other economic reforms, ushering in a three-year long 'golden period' in Weimar under the leadership of the DVP (German *Volks* Party) and Gustav Stresemann. Germany was largely relieved of its economic woes, but Danzig still had its share of difficulties. Ethnic Germans in the surrounding territories suffered from the high

⁸⁰ Andrzejewski, "Hermann Rauschnig. Biographische Skizze.", 2.

⁸¹ Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, 84.

unemployment rate.⁸² Rauschning eventually had to give up his business due to financial problems. Rauschning eventually turned his focus back to his newly acquired farm after his failed venture in now Polish territories.⁸³ He was not particularly politically or even artistically active after that point. The right seemed to go largely inactive on the economic issues back in Berlin. During this period of relative economic stability, the German right in the Weimar Republic shifted their view towards attacking modernist culture, particularly the figures who would later join the NSDAP.⁸⁴ These issues contributed to yet another round of infighting within the German right much to the frustration of politically active ethnic Germans like Rauschning.

Following the Dawes Plan, conservatism in Germany and in the adjacent German-speaking territories were steadily radicalized.⁸⁵ In 1927 the NSDAP began to campaign in Danzig. The party's first election in 1927 was a poor showing.⁸⁶ In 1928, the party leader resigned, but the year after that, the party started to grow significantly.⁸⁷ Historians like Hermann Beck credit the relationship between the DNVP and the NSDAP with bringing the Nazis into power. But despite the shared beliefs of these two parties, there was often strife, even attacks as they would both compete for votes. They also had different ideas on religion with the DNVP having a stronger religious element with members of the Protestant clergy in its ranks.⁸⁸ The combination of different conservative parties, such as

⁸² Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 36-37.

⁸³ Jürgen Hensel and Pia Nordblom, *Hermann Rauschning*, 21.

⁸⁴ Alan E. Steinweis, "Conservatism, National Socialism, and the Cultural Crisis of the Weimar Republic," in *Between Reform, Reaction and Resistance*, 339.

⁸⁵ Hermann Beck, *The Fateful Alliance: German Conservatives and Nazis in 1933*, 1st edition (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2011), 59.

⁸⁶ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 23.

⁸⁷ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 23-24.

⁸⁸ Beck, *The Fateful Alliance*, 6.

the Free Conservatives (which were considered the party of notables), with groups such as the Christian Socials, meant that the DNVP had a broad appeal among the German populace and was therefore quite influential in the Weimar Republic.⁸⁹ Although some of the earliest elements of the DNVP were firmly in opposition to the Weimar Republic, by the time their alliance with the NSDAP was considered, the DNVP's position on the Weimar Republic had softened.

The DNVP eventually started to face serious problems at the end of the 1920s as the result of this unstable synthesis. They had few victories they could point to in foreign policy, the new subject of their focus as they reeled from their disappointment in the Locarno Treaty and Dawes Act. A series of coalitions had some party members feel as though they were compromising their principles.⁹⁰ The DNVP had an internal power struggle between the fundamentalists and the others, but the party's defeat in 1928 marked the defeat of the party's monarchist ideas.⁹¹ Rauschning's eventual break from the DNVP could largely be explained by both their ineffectiveness and personal animosity. In his 1929 book, *Die Abwanderung der deutschen Bevölkerung aus Westpreussen und Posen*, he wrote about the de-Germanization of the newly created Poland. In his book he implied that his goal was largely serving as the defender of the ethnic Germans against the Poles, who used propaganda and the hypocritical foreign powers with ulterior motives to dispossess the Germans of their homes. In the chapter on "What We Expected From National Socialism" in his 1941 book, *The Conservative Revolution*, Rauschning wrote:

⁸⁹ Beck, *The Fateful Alliance*, 17-18

⁹⁰ Beck, *The Fateful Alliance*, 46-47.

⁹¹ Beck, *The Fateful Alliance*, 49.

Shall I give you a catalogue of all the things we wanted to achieve with the aid of Nazism? Tradition instead of radicalism, continuity instead of a rationally worked out fresh start. Evolution instead of revolution. A form resulting from growth instead of a manufactured apparatus. Self-government instead of bureaucratism. Decentralization instead of centralization. Variety instead of uniformity. Personal initiative instead of tutelage. The individual instead of the collective. Property instead of independence on incomes drawn from the state. A Christian basis instead of the “enlightenment” of rationalism.⁹²

His ideas after that point were far more philosophical rather than the nationalistic ideas of self-determination of several years prior. According to George Watson, Rauschning simply saw the NSDAP as a “bulwark” against the growing threat of Soviet Russia, but upon realizing that Adolf Hitler was just as revolutionary as any Marxist, he left the movement.⁹³ Marek Andrzejewski, on the other hand, notes that while he was concerned with the displacement of the Germans, his involvement with the party was likely just a way to meet his political aspirations.⁹⁴ Other Polish works cited by Pia Nordblum and Jürgen Hensel echo similar sentiments.⁹⁵ Albrecht Hagemann conversely writes that Rauschning reluctantly joined as he saw the only means to advocate for his farmer constituency within Danzig’s Nazi party.⁹⁶ Given Rauschning’s ambition, and the fact

⁹² Hermann Rauschning, *The Conservative Revolution*, 1st edition. edition (G.P. Putnam’s sons, 1941), 197.

⁹³ George Watson, “Orwell’s Nazi Renegade,” *The Sewanee Review* 94, no. 3 (1986), 486.

⁹⁴ Marek Andrzejewski, “Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze,” 1997, 1–15, http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~dnfg/images/Hermann_Rauschning.pdf, 3.

⁹⁵ See: Jürgen Hensel and Pia Nordblom, “Einfuehrung,” in *Hermann Rauschning: Materialien und Beiträge zu einer politischen Biographie* (Fibre, 2002), 22–26.

⁹⁶ Hagemann, *Hermann Rauschning*, 50.

that he joined at 1931, just as the NSDAP was rapidly becoming the largest power in the Senate, it does seem likely that he may have understood the party was in the best position to give him what he wanted.⁹⁷ While Rauschning's ability to spot the trends within the German Right did make him seem like an opportunist to many of his contemporaries and historians, it would be an overstatement to say that this was his main driver. Hermann Rauschning's ideology had remained consistent despite his attempts to reframe it over the years. Furthermore, his arguments with others about ideology drove wedges between himself and others who said they were on the right. It is possible that opportunism was a factor in his calculations. Nevertheless, if Hermann Rauschning was not attached to any kind of ideology, this would not explain why he went to such lengths to rehabilitate his ideology, nor would it purely explain why he began to conflict with the different elements within the German right and by extension the NSDAP. The NSDAP was a growing power by the beginning of the 1930s and the DNVP sought to imitate their success, though it gradually fell into infighting before allying itself with the Nazi party.⁹⁸

Despite the commonly held beliefs of the parties among Germany's far-right, there was often strife, even attacks as they would both compete for votes. They also had different ideas on religion, with the DNVP having a stronger religious element with members of the Protestant clergy in its ranks.⁹⁹ The combination of different conservative parties, such as the Free Conservatives (which were considered the party of notables), with groups such as the Christian Socials, meant that the DNVP had a broad appeal among the German populace and was therefore quite influential in the Weimar

⁹⁷ Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig: Biographie einer Stadt* (München: C.H.Beck, 2011), 191.

⁹⁸ Beck, *The Fateful Alliance*, 71.

⁹⁹ Beck, *The Fateful Alliance*, 6.

Republic.¹⁰⁰ The DNVP combined monarchism with populism, feminism with traditionalism, and authoritarianism with revolutionary rhetoric became a newer type of conservatism that focused more on grassroots activism. This was emblematic of a time and a conservative tradition that combined seemingly contradictory ideas. It harkened back to the days of the monarchy and the intense militarism and nationalism of the pre-Weimar period. This, combined with the numerous disparate ideologies, fighting for the soul of the party meant that the leadership would clash over the direction of the party throughout the mid-1920s. This party also espoused the importance of the German identity, which is what likely attracted Rauschnig to this particular movement in such a time. The DNVP thus took on a variety of different ideologies which combined the new and old conservatism as Rauschnig did; however, the party would not be able to stand on its own. Along with the nature of mass politics and how the parties on the right handled their response to Weimar, the DNVP evolved through the decade, after which point it would enter into alliance with other political parties like the NSDAP to once again stay relevant. Rauschnig would mostly align himself with the DNVP over all the other conservative parties until he made the choice to join the NSDAP in the Summer of 1931.¹⁰¹ The subsequent events would mirror the German right's transformation from their traditionalist nineteenth century nationalism to the vaunted post-Republic order

¹⁰⁰ Beck, *The Fateful Alliance*, 17-18

¹⁰¹ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 47.

Chapter 2: Herr Dr. Präsident Rauschning

Fire must be fought with fire. Before the advent of National Socialism, we had many political parties. One offset the other. Each new organization would roll up a few hundred or a few thousand adherents; then a rival group would spring up and steal away many of their followers.... Fomenting groups had an outlet. They harangued the populace from street corners, and they donned uniforms and drilled. They had secret passwords and hidden meeting places. It served to fill their time and it fed their need for action. Things might have gone on indefinitely had not a leader arise whose drive—I might say obsessing—objective, *unity*, gave new life and vigor to old party theorizing.¹⁰²

--Hermann Rauschning to Anna Rauschning, Fall 1931

By the end of the 1920s, Hermann Rauschning found the German right mired in infighting once more as a result of the unstable synthesis of interests and ideologies that composed the far-right's largest party in early Weimar: the *Deutsche National Volkspartei*. Moderates, radicals, Christian Socials, reactionary modernists, *völkisch* nationalists, and others started splintering off to back other parties or form new parties of their own. DNVP leader Alfred Hugenberg admitted that by 1928, he had failed to hammer the 'mush' of the right's internal divisions into a solid bloc which could oppose their internal and external enemies.¹⁰³ Like with many frustrated elites who stood on the German right, Rauschning's frustration in finding a new, usable form of conservatism

¹⁰² Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 1st Edition edition (The Bobbs-Merrill Co, 1942), 113-114.

¹⁰³ Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany*, 1st Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 144.

eventually had him turn somewhere new for solutions: the Nazi party of Danzig. Hermann Rauschning rode the coattails of the "Nazi Revolution" to what he believed would be a place of unity and national rejuvenation. However, in reality, his short-lived political career functionally ended in his break with Nazism, which would go on to catalyze his later exile and political resurrection.

To understand Hermann Rauschning's short, yet significant, political career necessitates understanding both his intellectual background and the political circumstances which formed it. It's impossible to tell the exact moment when he embraced Nazism; nevertheless, his beliefs and his tendency to find the rising currents within the German right's politics suggest that after being ejected from Posen for his German nationalist sentiments, and failed business, he embraced the NSDAP through his activities in the increasingly Nazified politics of early 1930s rural West Prussia. Dr. Hermann Rauschning was one of Danzig's outspoken proponents of Nazism in the early 1930s, but his pathway from his vague adherence to the DNVP to Nazism stretched from the end of the 1920s to the beginning of the 1930s. Like many leaders of the German radical right in this period, he came to rely on the NSDAP because of the consistent issue of disunity within a movement that claimed to value strength, nationalism, tradition, and centralization. By the beginning of 1933 he was thrown into the spotlight of international politics, and by May he'd become the first Nazi *Senatspräsident* (Senate President) of Danzig four months after the Nazi seizure of power in the Reich, what they called the borders that made up the Republic of Germany. His job with other Danzig Nazi leaders was to institute something similar under the watch of the League of Nations.

Despite the presence of the League of Nations in Danzig, Nazism began to rise there around the time Hermann Rauschning bought his new farm in the late 1920s. Recovery from the inflation in the Weimar Republic largely skipped the rural areas, particularly in West Prussia. Unemployment remained high and both farming and shipping were embroiled in a trade war with Poland.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the radical right back in the German Reich had shifted its focus from the parochial economic issues, to issues of foreign policy, such as the tensions with Poland during the recovery.¹⁰⁵ In these rural areas, many of the farmers had memories of violent confrontations with the Poles in the various uprisings during back in the 1919 Revolution. The repressive violence perpetrated by elements of these paramilitaries were heavily supported the the *Bauertum* (farming classes). A number of them even joined the *Freikorps* in perpetuating the White Terror of Central Europe.¹⁰⁶ All of this meant that throughout the 1920s, Danzig was a topic that was consistently in the center of the German radical right's rhetoric as a symbol of German dispossession. Any reprise from the difficulty the people in this region had from the humiliation and economic hardship of 1920s Weimar was not felt, making it fertile ground for the Nazi party to focus their efforts.

Due to both the nature of parliamentary politics and the restrictions put upon the Nazi party by the League of Nations, the Nazis could not succeed against their leftist rivals without forming coalitions with other parties. In 1931 their alliance with the DNVP took the form of the Harzburger Front alliance. The Harzburg Front, or rather Harzburg

¹⁰⁴ Herbert S. Levine, *Hitler's Free City: A History of the Nazi Party in Danzig*. (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1973), 55.

¹⁰⁵ Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism*, 215.

¹⁰⁶ Johnpeter Horst Grill, "The Nazi Party's Rural Propaganda before 1928," *Central European History* 15, no. 2 (1982): 153.

Rally, was a protest by a right-wing alliance opposed to the Weimar Republic under the Center Party affiliated Chancellor Heinrich Brüning. It was formed in reaction to the failure of a vote to dissolve the Prussian Landtag. On the 11th of October 1931, the most influential organizations of the radical right went to the spa town of Bad Harzburg in Lower Saxony to denounce Brüning, and lay the groundwork for the transfer of power to this new coalition. The idea for the rally came from the DNVP head Alfred Hugenberg.¹⁰⁷ The primary drivers of this rally, however, were the *Stahlhelm*.¹⁰⁸ As the plans for the rally became more complex, the left-wing elements within the NSDAP became increasingly nervous, while Hitler began to resent Hugenberg's perceived position as the leader of the rally. Hugenberg tried to alleviate the NSDAP's apprehension by meeting with their leaders and talking of their plans for the upcoming elections. This was unsuccessful. In addition, infighting started within the *Stahlhelm* itself.¹⁰⁹ In practice, while the Harzburg rally showed in which ways that the right was disunited due to the alliance of very disparate groups, lack of unity within this groups, and the self-importance of some of the leaders, including Hitler himself, it displayed a united desire within the right to oppose Weimar. The Harzburg Rally would not be the event that led to the dissolution of the Weimar government, which would remain in power for another two years, but it would shape what came after. The Harzburg rally showed the Nazi party who their allies would be going forward with their seizure of the German government.

In the face of all the infighting, the need for unity preceded all the various external divisions of the German radical right in the eyes of Hermann Rauschning. In

¹⁰⁷ Larry Eugene Jones, "Nationalists, Nazis, and the Assault against Weimar: Revisiting the Harzburg Rally of October 1931," *German Studies Review* 29, no. 3 (2006), 483.

¹⁰⁸ Jones, "Nationalists, Nazis, and the Assault against Weimar," 486.

¹⁰⁹ Jones, "Nationalists, Nazis, and the Assault against Weimar," 487.

truth, the different radical right organizations engaging in street agitation had much overlap between each other. The right-wing paramilitary organizations such as the *Freikorps* and *Stahlhelm* contained members from both the Nazis and the DNVP as did numerous other pressure groups on the German *völkisch* right.¹¹⁰ Politically, *Senatspräsident* Ernst Ziehm of the DNVP in Danzig had come to rely on the Nazi party so much that he was unable to get anything accomplished politically without them by 1931.¹¹¹ It was in this context that Rauschning signed up with the Nazi party through his involvement in West Prussian agrarian politics that same autumn.

Hermann Rauschning's reputation as a highly educated and cultured gentleman farmer led to his nomination to a post at the Danzig *Landbund*. The combination of the rural credit crisis and the disease that swept through the livestock that Summer meant that the local farmers needed an advocate. He told his wife Anna about the farming organizations' nomination: "I could not refuse them.... These men have known nothing but soil since there were children—they worked with their hands while I studied in universities. I can help them. I cannot, in common decency, refuse."¹¹² Rauschning's somewhat paternalistic approach to the *Bauertum* (farming classes) mirrored an 'old conservative' ideal of people such as Paul von Hindenberg. In some cases, their paternalism was quite literal: Hindenberg, who gained renown throughout the German right as a war hero, was often called "Father Hindenberg" by his supporters.¹¹³ Hermann Rauschning's drive to channel this ideal combined with his constituents' embrace of this new party made him a full-fledged member of that party at the beginning of 1932. It'd be

¹¹⁰ Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism*, 179.

¹¹¹ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 43-44.

¹¹² Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 106.

¹¹³ Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism*, 87.

up to Hermann Rauschning to replenish the losses of a fruitless year for all the farmers of Grosses Werder.

When Rauschning came back from one of his frequent trips to Berlin's Bureau of Agriculture and the Foreign Office, he noted to Anna that even Hindenburg was starting to "see 'something'" in Adolph Hitler's theories.¹¹⁴ While Hermann Rauschning was far from the Weimar infighting that had absorbed most of his friends in Berlin, thanks to a new era of mass communications, he could hear speeches from Hitler on the radio and bring home mass printed pamphlets. He seemed to appreciate the ability of the Nazi party to mobilize the rural masses. Members of the S.A such as Albert Förster had experience with running political campaigns in Germany's rural areas. Unlike many of the other parties, they also didn't put a stop to their campaigning during campaign season.

Rauschning was far from the only Danziger who had been won over by the Nazi party. In the year 1931 alone the number of Nazi party members increased tenfold in Danzig.¹¹⁵ The right in Danzig with its close connection to their right-wing counterparts in Berlin were both impressed and unnerved by the meteoric rise of this new political force.

Rauschning's rapid rise through the Nazi ranks put in him a favored position to succeed the previous president of Danzig's senate Ernst Ziehm. In January 1932 he officially joined Danzig's *Gauleitner*, Albert Förster, and became a known firebrand within the Nazi party.¹¹⁶ Rauschning began writing for the Nazis' campaign in their regional organ, *Der Danziger Vorposten*.¹¹⁷ He accepted his new position as the agricultural head of the district or *Gau*.. By this point, Hitler's own agricultural advisor,

¹¹⁴ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 108.

¹¹⁵ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 35.

¹¹⁶ Schenk, *Danzig 1930-1942*, 42.

¹¹⁷ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 48-49.

Walther Darré, who infamously popularized the *völkisch* nationalist concept of *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil), took control of the Agricultural League in Germany. Rauschning implemented Darré's plans on Danzig's farms. Both were great victories for the Nazis as they effectively gave the Nazi party massive influence in the corridor region. The Nazis thus declared themselves the champions of Danzig's farmers in 1932.¹¹⁸ They finally were on the track to the rural constituency to unseat their political rivals in the urban SPD and Catholic Center Party. Hitler was optimistic regarding the Danzig situation. In the April of that year, he visited Danzig with his entourage. In August of that year, Rauschning visited Hitler along with Förster and Linsmayer of the SS met with Hitler in Berlin; His first meeting with the leader that would make the subject of his later writing career.¹¹⁹

The international tensions regarding Poland only increased after Hermann Rauschning joined the Nazis. April 1932 saw what was later dubbed the 'Westerplatte Affair,' wherein the Poles brought 120 armed men into the Westerplatte garrison because the Polish government was afraid the Nazis would raid the Polish ammunition dumps. The League of Nations managed to defuse the situation. That same Spring, Pilsudski was reported to have sent a destroyer ship named the *Wicher* into Danzig harbor. The captain was instructed to bombard targets in Danzig's city center if Danzig authorities either interfered or insulted the Polish flag; However, the ship passed through Danzig without incident.¹²⁰ Members of the Nazi Party such as Albert Förster, Arthur Greiser, and even Rauschning himself exploited these incidents to great effect in their campaigns. For

¹¹⁸ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 49.

¹¹⁹ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 53.

¹²⁰ Carl Tighe, *Gdańsk: National Identity in the Polish-German Borderlands* (Pluto Press, 1990), 112-113.

example, they used these episodes to attack Ernst Ziehm of the DNVP for his weakness in confronting the Poles.¹²¹ Ironically, while the NSDAP spent much of its time campaigning against Ziehm, but Ziehm didn't attack the Nazis himself. He was much more fearful of the Polish government's threat than the domestic threat of the NSDAP. As a result of this strategy, Ziehm largely failed to hold onto his previous constituency, or more accurately, lack of a coherent policy, he couldn't hold on to the DNVP's base.¹²² Through the next few months the DNVP in Danzig would continue to wane until its dissolution four months later.¹²³

Although to some, the November 1932 elections held signs that the Nazi party was losing ground in Berlin, they managed to completely seize power at the end of January 1933. The DNVP and NSDAP joined forces in Berlin once again in a revival of the Harzburg Front called the Battle Front (*Kampffront*) or Yellow, Red, Gold (*Schwartz, Röt, Gelb*) Alliance. This would be the last of the *putsches* coming from the German radical right. Paul von Hindenburg was now a shadow of his former self. Suffering from senility and Kurt von Schleicher took his place. The two parties of the radical right charged him with failing the German people as now Germany was in the throes of the depression once more. Schleicher resigned in a private audience with Hindenburg on January 1933. Franz von Papen would take his place as Chancellor. Papen told Hindenburg that Hitler could be 'controlled', which in turn led Hindenburg to appoint Adolf Hitler the new Chancellor and effectively deliver the Prussian ministry into Nazi

¹²¹ Catherine Epstein, *Model Nazi: Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland* / (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2010), 56.

¹²² Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 55.

¹²³ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 60.

hands, and the military with it.¹²⁴ Hugenberg of the DNVP was afraid of losing ground to the Center Party and backsliding back into the infighting and parliamentary politics of earlier years. His desperation would pressure him ferment a revival of the Harzburg Front in yet another attempt to unite the German right. Hugenberg wrote to Hitler: “If that is not to happen, if all of our present accomplishments are not to be undone, then that requires above all else unity within the national movement. History will have a hard time understanding why in this serious moment unity is lacking.”¹²⁵ Thanks to this newly revived yet tenuous alliance, the German right was able to collapse the Centre Party’s new cabinet to usher in the *Machtergreifung*, or seizure of power.¹²⁶ Hugenberg was later sidelined and regretted the decision. Hugenberg came to view his alliance with the “demagogue” Adolf Hitler as the “greatest stupidity” of his life, as he confided to monarchist DNVP affiliate Carl Goerdeler.¹²⁷ The same dynamic within the German right that led to this need for unity also crippled any of their attempts to reign in the NSDAP.

Initially, the Rauschnings didn’t fully understand the significance of these events outside Danzig, largely because of personal issues.¹²⁸ Anna Rauschning had been hospitalized due to a miscarriage from Christmas 1932 to January 1933.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, in hindsight Hermann Rauschning began to assign significance to these events. In a later 1934 speech he bemoaned that Danzig’s NSDAP was not replicating the successes of the

¹²⁴ Larry Eugene Jones, “The Greatest Stupidity of My Life’: Alfred Hugenberg and the Formation of the Hitler Cabinet, January 1933,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 1 (1992), 73.

¹²⁵ Jones, “The Greatest Stupidity of My Life”, 69-70.

¹²⁶ Büllow, “No. 1: Circular to the Secretary” January 30, 1933” in *Documents on German Foreign Policy: 1918-1945* (Washington, US GPO, 1933), LXV.

¹²⁷ Jones, “The Greatest Stupidity of My Life”, 3.

¹²⁸ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 119.

¹²⁹ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 117.

Machtergreifung, although he believed some such similar day would come soon, a day which he'd hold in cherished memory.¹³⁰ The *Machtergreifung* came at a very unfortunate time for Senate President Ziehm as he was about to deport Gauleitner Forster and sue the NSDAP's newspaper for libel.¹³¹ Like Rauschning, Ziehm viewed Nazism as a form of revolution, but from different sides of the political conflict. Ziehm claimed in his 1947 writings that he knew Danzig would be at risk as a result of the 1933 *Machtergreifung*, which may have played a role in his reluctance to ally with the NSDAP again.¹³² Ziehm's political impotence made this issue irrelevant. After the *Machtergreifung*, the farmers around Grosses Werder took to the Nazi party with renewed enthusiasm. Years later Hermann Rauschning would ascribe the events to a people enraptured by a collective mania.¹³³

Hermann Rauschning was in many ways a perfect candidate for Danzig's Nazi party. When he was offered the opportunity to run for the Senate presidency his wife concurred: "The farmers will all vote for you. After all you know all their complaints by heart."¹³⁴ The Protestant German farmers had suffered under the trade war against the Poles for 8 years when the idea of a *Senatpräsident* Rauschning was put forward.¹³⁵ His new ideas represented a departure from the shortcomings of Ernst Ziehm's policy. Ziehm

¹³⁰ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3.

¹³¹ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 49.

¹³² Ernst Ziehm, *Aus Meiner Politischen Arbeit in Danzig 1914 - 1939* (Joh. Gottfr. Herder-Institut, 1957), 76.

¹³³ See: Hermann Rauschning, *Time of Delirium*, (New York; London: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1946).

¹³⁴ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 124.

¹³⁵ Tighe, *Gdańsk: National Identity in the Polish-German Borderlands*, 111.

could not appeal to the *Bauertum* like Rauschning could.¹³⁶ Rauschning invoked their language in his speeches: “One who wants to plant new seeds must strip away the old crop.”¹³⁷ He blended his own revolutionary rhetoric with the Nazi platform into a concept the *Bauertum* could understand. The NSDAP in the Reich tended to have its strongest support in rural areas. They also held plurality in primarily protestant areas like Pomerania and East Prussia where they made up 56% of the vote.¹³⁸ Due to this, of all the political parties in Danzig, Ernst’s Ziehm’s DNVP had the most significant failures of all, while the NSDAP’s new seats succeeded the rest of the other political parties combined. While the other parties gained a total of 34 seats. The previous Senate President from the DNVP admitted that he was not nearly as engaged with issues of foreign affairs or ethnic strife, to the detriment of the League of Nations. When Ziehm was asked if he could guarantee minority protection in Danzig he even seemed somewhat confused as to why he was being asked this question. Even though he eventually said yes, it was a promise he couldn’t deliver.¹³⁹

Even before he was officially elected, even international officials saw Hermann Rauschning as the likely victor.¹⁴⁰ At the end March 1933, the Nazis reportedly demanded that Ernst Ziehm be replaced by Hermann Rauschning. The party didn’t have Danzig under complete control with its international status under the League of

¹³⁶ Epstein, *Model Nazi: Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2010), 56-57.

¹³⁷ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 11.

¹³⁸ John Brown Mason, *The Danzig Dilemma; a Study in Peacemaking by Compromise*, Stanford Books in World Politics. (Stanford University, 1946), 73.

¹³⁹ “Free City of Danzig: Questions of Direct Actions: Guard Detachment for the Polish War Material Depot on the Westerplatte,” *League of Nations Official Journal*, Extraordinary Session of the Council Minutes Fourth Meeting (Public then Private), (March 14, 1933), *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, reel 203/60.

¹⁴⁰ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 124.

Nations.¹⁴¹ When Hermann Rauschning accepted his nomination, he and Anna went to Danzig where they were entertained by the League of Nations High Commissioner Helmer Rosting. They knew his real motive, of course. He wanted to see if the Rauschnings would be suited to the Senate post and were in fact representatives of the people. What little influence the High Commissioner could exert over the Danzig Senate was crucial. Rosting bemoaned the lack of authority that the League of Nations had over the Danzig Senate. If the High Commissioner was to affect the Danzig Senate, the post would need some sort of executive power.

Recent events in general seemed to be going poorly for the League the start of 1933. In addition to the *Machtergreifung*, two months prior Japan had left the League and the newspapers were contemplating who would be next. Germany answered that question when it gave notice of an intent to leave the League a few days prior to Rauschning's nomination the prior month.¹⁴² Rosting was starting to clash with Poland's quasi-dictator, General Inspector Józef Piłsudski, who slighted him at Warsaw. By the start of Spring Rosting was openly complaining about his own lack of power. As he departed Warsaw, Piłsudski bid Rosting farewell: "Goodbye High Commissioner without power."¹⁴³ The Polish High Commissioner Kazimierz Papée had already lost faith in the League at that point. He didn't believe the League could mediate in Danzig at all.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ "No. 127 Memorandum by the Director of Department IV, March 31, 1933," in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.*, vol. 1, Akten Zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik.English, C (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1934), 232–33, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000011254942;view=1up;seq=300>.

¹⁴² Paul McNamara, *Sean Lester, Poland and the Nazi Takeover of Danzig* / (Dublin ; Irish Academic Press, 2009), 51.

¹⁴³ McNamara, *Sean Lester, Poland and the Nazi Takeover of Danzig*, 49.

¹⁴⁴ McNamara, *Sean Lester, Poland and the Nazi Takeover of Danzig*, 31.

Anna Rauschning seemed to have a good initial impression of Rosting at the very least. She wrote: “Mr. Rosting was a Dane, a gay charming fellow with a wife who was formal and unbending. The visit was accomplished with stiff diplomatic routine, but apparently we came up to specifications and the nomination went through without a hitch”¹⁴⁵

With Rauschning’s nomination underway the campaign to Nazify the Free City of Danzig began in earnest. Brown shirted couriers roamed around in cars, Nazi banners decorated Danzig’s *Altstadt*, and radios blared the speeches of Adolf Hitler in countless homes. Patriotic songs from Berlin carried their way into the streets of Danzig and the Nazis organized various sports assemblies and calisthenic exhibitions.¹⁴⁶ A poster proclaimed: “On May 9th all of Danzig votes ‘Nazi’.”¹⁴⁷ The *Gauleiter* Albert Forster’s slogan was more direct about bringing Danzig under the Reich: “For or against Hitler”.¹⁴⁸ By the end of that month Danzig was essentially a Nazi outpost to many foreign intelligence officials. Among them was an American diplomat named Hamilton Fish Armstrong. Armstrong observed that during his time in Danzig during May of 1933, that this new era had a pronounced effect on the population of Danzig signaling a new type of politics conjoined with mass communication that could broadcast these pan-German ideas from Berlin to Austria to the Polish corridor.¹⁴⁹ While Armstrong noted the anti-Semitic and anti-Polish elements within his speeches, like numerous other analysts he agreed that by the time he was able to secure his post within the Nazi party’s

¹⁴⁵ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 125.

¹⁴⁶ Hamilton Fish Armstrong, *Hitler’s Reich: The First Phase* (New York, 1933), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b3484373> , 40-41.

¹⁴⁷ Dieter Schenk, *Danzig 1930-1945: das Ende einer Freien Stadt* (Ch. Links Verlag, 2013), 55.

¹⁴⁸ Wilhelm Löbsack, *Albert Forster: Gauleiter und Reichsstätthalter im Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen* (Danzig: Danziger Verlags-Gesellschaft, 1940), 23.

¹⁴⁹ Armstrong, *Hitler’s Reich, the First Phase*, 39.

administration Rauschning became a master of caution and moderation in the otherwise chaotic and radical politics of Nazism.¹⁵⁰ One British diplomat noted that Rauschning seemed more “like an English squire” than any of the uncouth louts like Forster who made up the ranks of the Nazi party.¹⁵¹ Anna distrusted Greiser and Forster, but to her husband they were “...well-meaning louts; louts who in the overflow of their feelings transcended the bounds of good form.”¹⁵²

With his election, Hermann Rauschning entered into a heavily divided atmosphere. Despite Anna’s misgivings about Forster, he was among the numerous people from around Grosses Werder who called the Rauschning estate to congratulate them on Rauschning’s electoral victory.¹⁵³ Their votes were cast at their neighbor’s house as he happened to be their village council president. The inauguration itself was only a brief ceremony after a formal lunch, but in celebration they threw a party with 50 guests, a band, and a photographer to commemorate the occasion. Following this came the family’s first appearance at a reception with the British consul general. They followed this by going to the presidential palace which Anna remembered as a girl. She used to be able to see the Crown Prince from her grandmother’s house.¹⁵⁴ Following this point, politics seemed to dominate life in Danzig. Even the nanny Anna Rauschning hired, a woman named Lotte, made it a point that she was a proud member of the Nazi Party.¹⁵⁵ Ziehm noted this heavily divided atmosphere when he wrote that one half of the Danzig

¹⁵⁰ Armstrong, *Hitler’s Reich, the First Phase*, 41.

¹⁵¹ Levine, *Hitler’s Free City*, 52.

¹⁵² Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 126.

¹⁵³ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 125.

¹⁵⁴ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 125.

¹⁵⁵ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 130-131.

senate said that “National Socialist was a danger for Danzig” while the other half said “Those who don’t vote National Socialist are no true Germans!”.¹⁵⁶

While the elections in Danzig were considerably freer than in the Reich, the Nazi party theorized on how to bring Danzig back into the fold to fulfill their pan-Germanic vision. Towards the end of May there were a string of Nazi victories in Danzig, while the Nazis back in Berlin set forth a proclamation that a full third of ethnic Germans were now living outside the Reich. While Rauschning didn’t advocate for the program of going back to the Reich explicitly, Forster saw his job as “holding Danzig for the Führer”.¹⁵⁷ Following their progress in May, Hitler was pleased with Forster, reportedly sending the message: “*Forster! Großartig!*”¹⁵⁸ Back in the Reich, Hitler functionally had taken control of all the trade unions in Germany by this point, however, given the nature of Danzig’s constitution this would be a much slower process.

The Nazis of Danzig for instance could not simply shut down the unions as they had in the Reich, so these unions became a large part of their power struggle. With the SPD’s trade unions now under Nazi control they had managed to subdue an important source of political support for the German left.¹⁵⁹ The drive to do the same thing in Danzig, unlike the Reich proper, would require a degree of collaboration. The League of Nations was in charge of making sure Danzig’s government abided by their constitution, which bluntly stated that whatever happened with the trade unions in Germany should

¹⁵⁶ Ernst Ziehm, *Aus Meiner Politischen Arbeit in Danzig 1914 - 1939*, 198.

¹⁵⁷ Armstrong, *Hitler’s Reich, the First Phase*, 41.

¹⁵⁸ Löbsack, *Albert Forster*, 25.

¹⁵⁹ Armstrong, *Hitler’s Reich, the First Phase*, 41.

have no bearing on the Free City of Danzig.¹⁶⁰ The Christian trade unions rallied behind the Nazi party which gave them the ability to crack down due to the *Koalitionsrecht* (coalition right) provision of Danzig's civil code.¹⁶¹

After May Danzig's Nazis made frequent attempts to subvert the constitution. While they could not reach the 2/3 majority needed to make any changes, the League of Nations were distracted by the Italian crisis in Ethiopia.¹⁶² Rauschning found himself in the good graces of the Nazi party and even went to Berlin to have coffee and cake with the Führer.¹⁶³ By June 22nd the Social Democrat Party was banned in the Reich, while the government deported the leaders of the Danzig *Rote Hilfe*: a Communist Party affiliated anti-fascist group back to Germany as they turned out to be German citizens.¹⁶⁴ It was actually commonplace for offenders in Danzig to serve their sentences in the Reich, but these were the first deportations in the Free City carried out for political purposes.¹⁶⁵ Rauschning in the meantime took control of the foreign department of the Senate while Arthur Greiser became his Vice President. Following these events, the government instituting "enabling laws," which essentially suspended due process.

In the late summer of 1933, Rauschning went to the resort town of Zoppot in Eastern Pomerania. Rauschning held a number of negotiations from the seaside area with

¹⁶⁰ “*Ch. 7 Free City of Danzig,” *League of Nations Official Journal*, no. 10 (October 1, 1933): 1141-1164.

¹⁶¹ “*Ch. 7 Free City of Danzig,” *League of Nations Official Journal*, no. 10 (October 1, 1933), 1151.

¹⁶² John Brown Mason, *The Danzig Dilemma*, 79.

¹⁶³ Hermann Rauschning, *Gespräche Mit Hitler*. (New York, [c1940]), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015004031178> , 83-84.

¹⁶⁴ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 52.

¹⁶⁵ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 68.

the Polish government.¹⁶⁶ During the first round of these Zoppot negotiations, other members of the Nazi party accused Rauschning of giving away too much to the Polish. Ultimately, these first few negotiations resulted in a deal to recognize artisanal and educational certificates from Poland.¹⁶⁷ The ultimate goal of the League of Nations was to give the Polish full use of Danzig's port. Still, the impact of Rauschning's negotiations was a resounding success for the League which concerned itself with the issues of minority rights.¹⁶⁸ This served to make Rauschning quite popular with the people within the League of Nations despite his affiliation with the Nazi party. Slowly he began to emerge as a figure within the Nazi party with whom this international body could negotiate. Their first impressions of the man were very positive, but the League of Nations workers still expressed skepticism in their ability to work out agreements between Poland and the Germans. On August 5th, 1933 the governments of Poland and the Danzig Senate under the League of Nations made a deal to:

- 1) Suspend duration of the 'present arrangement' concerning the Danzig port.
- 2) Polish government would take the steps to "prevent a *decrease* in the sea-borne traffic (imports, exports and transit)" passing through Port Danzig, taking into account the goods' quality/quantity.

¹⁶⁶ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 139.

¹⁶⁷ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 62.

¹⁶⁸ "**Ch. 7 Free City of Danzig," *League of Nations Official Journal*, no. 10 (October 1, 1933): 1156.

3) The Danzig Senate would cooperate in the Polish Government in developing the port. They would be in constant contact and could request to renew every 3 months.¹⁶⁹

The deal represented yet another stride in the relationship between the Poles and Danzigers, but Danzig was then beset upon by a series of internal struggles.

The League of Nations also was undergoing a change; a new Secretary General from Ireland named Sean Lester. Lester and Rauschning would slowly become close friends over the course of these negotiations. Their families would vacation together. Anna Rauschning who was closely acquainted with Mary Lester wrote:

The friendship with the Lesters was one of the bright spots of the Presidential term. I found Mr. Sean Lester a delightful person. His self-effacing charm, his logical, fine brain and his sporting quality in extending to others an almost exaggerated courtesy, all appealed to me. The Lesters came to Warnau with us for weekends and their children and ours had splendid times together.¹⁷⁰

Lester was quite critical of Danzig's German minority demanding rights even as they treated other minorities poorly.¹⁷¹

Lester was concerned about the growing influence of anti-Semitism and the new anti-Jewish laws of the Reich making its way into Danzig.¹⁷² As he was selected as a result of his experience with minorities (and to some extent a compromise of the

¹⁶⁹ "No. 25 Reichsgericht in Warn 1920," *League of Nations Official Journal*, Extraordinary Session of the Council Minutes Fourth Meeting (Public then Private), 14, no. 10 (October 1, 1933): 1157.

¹⁷⁰ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 139.

¹⁷¹ McNamara, *Sean Lester, Poland and the Nazi Takeover of Danzig*, 55.

¹⁷² Sean Lester, "Press Cutting," *Daily Herald*, May 31, 1933, 203/31 (61), Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin Archives.

League's leaders), there was a large amount of speculation of the man's potential biases. The British ambassador Sir William Erskine assured the Polish Foreign Minister that Lester wouldn't be overly sympathetic to British interests.¹⁷³ In the Danzig conflict it was not clear. Lester knew little to nothing about Poland or Germany. He mostly spoke French, which is how he communicated with Polish officials. One paper falsely speculated that his wife had Jewish ancestry, while the *Gazeta Gdansk* wrote that he clearly saw the need for Danzig to maintain its German identity.¹⁷⁴

Senatspräsident Rauschnig helped the League of Nations relax some of the political suppression done by his compatriots even as he defended them in the papers. In August of 1933 SPD Leader Arthur Brill was indefinitely put under 'protective custody'. The SPD filed a complaint to Helmut Rosting who in turn through Rauschnig was able to get Brill freed.¹⁷⁵ He was also respected by others on the right such *Regierungspräsident* of East Prussia Carl Budding. Budding was a member of the Zentrumspartei (Catholic Center Party), but one who accepted National Socialism.¹⁷⁶ Budding agreed with Lester that Rauschnig was able to understand aspects of the international situation that were frankly lost on other members of the party. Following in Japan's footsteps, Germany pulled out of the League of Nations on November 12th of that year.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ McNamara, *Sean Lester, Poland and the Nazi Takeover of Danzig*, 56.

¹⁷⁴ McNamara, *Sean Lester, Poland and the Nazi Takeover of Danzig*, 58.

¹⁷⁵ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 69.

¹⁷⁶ Sean Lester, "Lester to Secretary General-Danzig," October 17, 1934, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/33 (105).

¹⁷⁷ Tighe, *Gdańsk: National Identity in the Polish-German Borderlands*, 114.

The following January, Lester was invited to events with the Danzig Senate and he became further acquainted with Rauschning. A number of well-informed circles didn't believe that Rauschning's presidency would last to January 1934.¹⁷⁸ Rauschning had actually wanted to resign as early as December 1933, but members of the German government convinced him to stay.¹⁷⁹ Rudolf Hess even went so far as to arrange a 4-point compromise between Rauschning and Forster.¹⁸⁰ Since October Rauschning took sick leave to his farm in the Warnau region to a point which it became a somewhat common occurrence for Rauschning to be off "on his farm," as the political elites of Danzig often said. For Danzig to have any leverage at the negotiating table they had to present a united front even as the cracks started to show between Rauschning and the rest of the Nazi party by February 1934.¹⁸¹

"Ten Months of the National Socialist Regime in Danzig" was the title of Rauschning's speech on the 7th of April 1934.¹⁸² He greeted his audience as his *Volksgenossen* or "(racial-ethnic) national comrades," which was a phrase central to the NSDAP's platform since Hitler laid out his 25 Points during the 1920 meeting in

¹⁷⁸ "Interview with Mr. Koch, Danish Consul, and Dean of the Consular Corps" October 17, 1934, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/32 (8).

¹⁷⁹ "No. 102 Consul Koester to Ministerialdirektor Meyer DANZIG, December 5, 1933.," in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry., vol. 2, *Akten Zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik*. English (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1949), 177–79, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007054745>.

¹⁸⁰ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 62.

¹⁸¹ "Lester's (Confidential) Report (Feb 21, 1934)", *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/32 (36).

¹⁸² Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig : Rede des Präsidenten des Senats der Freien Stadt Danzig“ in der Kundgebung der NSDAP, 7. April 1934, 3. <http://pbc.gda.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=11663>

Munich's Hofbrauhaus.¹⁸³ To Hitler, the significance of this meeting where he established these points was significant in that in his mind it brought the NSDAP's ideology the support of the wider public. He wrote: "the party burst the narrow bonds of a small club and for the first time exerted a determining influence on the mightiest factor of our time, public opinion."¹⁸⁴ The goal of these 25 points was to lay out the NSDAP's economic and social vision for the future. That meant establishing their views on *Völkisch* nationalism which culminated on the German right throughout the Weimar Years. Notably in the 4th point, it stated explicitly that citizenship should only be granted to the *Volksgenossen*. "*Volkgenosse* can only be where there is German blood."¹⁸⁵ This meant no one of Jewish descent, which Hitler explicitly stated. By this point, this particular brand of *völkisch* nationalism was familiar to most of the right. As Anna noted, Hermann Rauschning spent a great deal of time listening to the NSDAP on the radio and reading their pamphlets. Here he was effectively able to use their terminology, which served to bolster his reputation as a great speaker. His language had the implicit elements of the romantic nationalism that permeated the more extreme elements of the German right since the end of the war. Now that the Weimar Republic was in the process of dissolution, Rauschning was telling his audience to look towards the future.¹⁸⁶ His vision of the future promised an end to the problems of Danzig's economy as well as the issues in party politics.

¹⁸³ Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular Des Nationalsozialismus*, 2., durchgesehene und überarbeitete Aufl. (Berlin ; New York :, c2007.), 660.

¹⁸⁴ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (Boston : Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 369.

¹⁸⁵ Gottfried Fedder, ed., "Die 25 Punkte: Das Programm Der NSDAP," *Zentralverlag Der NSDAP*, Nationalsozialistische Bibliothek, 1 (1935), 11.

¹⁸⁶ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3.

Rauschning described the other political parties as weak and directionless.¹⁸⁷ Although he initially named none of these parties, his viewpoint echoed what had long been an issue on the German right. At the same time, according to Rauschning, Danzig was also caught within a web of inertia.¹⁸⁸ He voiced the anxieties of his *Volksgenossen* of the previous years. He called upon them to look back and remember the shame and humiliation of the years since, to face the fears that Danzig would become another lost cause like Austria.¹⁸⁹ He invoked the Spirit of 1914, declaring that not since then had the Germans enjoyed that collective feeling of pride and that now with the NSDAP to reenergize the *Volk*, his audience could now carry out their duty.¹⁹⁰ He repeatedly said that not even they were truly aware their significance in the events to come.¹⁹¹ Rauschning's opening remarks were a combination of nationalism, populism and the myriad issues that had been driving the German right since the end of the first World War.¹⁹² His words were largely consistent with the NSDAP party line laid out in the 25 points so far as their goal in making a modern political system worth conserving and unifying the Germans people. Rauschning was fixated on the humiliations of the past, their painful separation from the German motherland, and nostalgia for German people's

¹⁸⁷ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3.

¹⁸⁸ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3.

¹⁸⁹ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3.

¹⁹⁰ For more on the Spirit of 1914 see: Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹⁹¹ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3-4.

¹⁹² Ironically when Jeff Herf coined his term *Reactionary Modernism* he was largely arguing against Rauschning's post-exile formulation of Nazism as a “Revolution of Nihilism”

See: Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

sense of direction and natural pride back in the days of August 1914.¹⁹³ He told his audience to fixate on these same things, for this day, Rauschning proclaimed, would result in a rebirth of that national unity in the Spirit of 1914. Hopefully one that would result in a new *Parteistaat*, or party-state, that would actually be worth conserving, echoing back to the reactionary ideas of the conservative revolution coined by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal decades prior.¹⁹⁴ “Over there in the Reich” they had their seizure of power of January 30th and the Potsdam Days of March, when they reopened the new *Reichstag*.¹⁹⁵

Rauschning laid out the obstacles to the Danzig NSDAP as he saw them in his speech: “We have half the seats, the full power of the state apparatus, and the economic keys of Danzig are in the hands of the enemies of our movement.”¹⁹⁶ He recalled the “personal disparagement” in the election. To Rauschning the election was abominable.¹⁹⁷ The old parties were stagnant and counterproductive. The German people were spiritually alienated, humiliated, and torn apart through infighting.¹⁹⁸ As Rauschning saw it: “The political atmosphere gives us no way out of these dead-ends.”¹⁹⁹ This problem was multifaceted as it was one thing to affect the economic spirit of the German people, but spiritual alienation was an entirely different matter. Rauschning seemed to imply that he could address the spiritual problem through the economic problem. In his mind, the solution was inexorably linked.

¹⁹³ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Fritz R. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 6-7.

¹⁹⁵ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3.

¹⁹⁶ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3.

¹⁹⁷ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 3.

¹⁹⁸ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 4.

¹⁹⁹ Rauschning, „10 Monate nationalsozialistische Regierung in Danzig“, 4.

Despite having stated goals of spiritual healing and unity, Rauschning still found himself at an impasse with the religious minorities of Danzig, which consequently meant more struggling with Germany's center right. Catholics made up one third of Danzig's population, making them the most influential minority. The Jews were a minority group that were guaranteed protections under Danzig's law; therefore the Jews of Danzig were initially under far less pressure than the Jews in the Reich. Nonetheless, Commissioner Lester got numerous letters from Jewish leaders around Europe voicing concern for the Jews of Danzig such as Neville Laski of the London Committee of British Jews or Rabbi Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Ireland. Before Lester set foot in Danzig, he was already aware of many of the issues facing Jews in Europe at the time. In July 1934 Hermann Rauschning wrote in the *Danziger Vorposten* that many of the fears voiced by Danzig's Jewish community were largely unfounded.²⁰⁰ Rauschning's article guaranteed their safety, which won Lester's praise. Lester credited Rauschning with saving the Danzig Jews from the worst fates of the Jews elsewhere in Germany; However, Rauschning's presidency wouldn't last the rest of the year. With Rauschning gone, many Jews realized that any of those promises and reassurances were effectively moot. Rauschning later wrote sympathetically about the Jews, finding them strangely relatable in his eyes. He later wrote: "We Prussians are destined to be the Jews of the Fourth Reich."²⁰¹ It seemed feasible to Rauschning that just like the Jews bore the blame for the

²⁰⁰ Hermann Rauschning, "Senatserklärung Über Die Behandlung Der Bevölkerung Hinsichtlich Ihrer Abstammung Und Ihres Glaubens," *Danziger Vorposten*, July 2, 1934, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin Archives*, reel P203/33 (32).

²⁰¹ Hermann Rauschning, *The Conservative Revolution*, 1st edition. edition (G.P. Putnam's sons, 1941), 116.

Germany's problems after World War Two, Prussians would be the people to take the blame for the Nazi period.

With the death of Paul von Hindenburg, Rauschning perhaps experienced the symbolic death of the old conservative order. Hindenburg's death was a holiday-sized celebration in Danzig. It was also a source of great controversy between Danzigers and Poles. According to Lester, "Innumerable flags in the city have been flying half-mast for a number of days. President Rauschning went to Neudeck, where the body was lying in state, and with other leaders and some officials attended the ceremony at Tannenberg."²⁰² Lester did not attend these services and neither did most of the Polish officials. The German newspapers criticized the Harbor Board for not half-masting their flags. The Polish newspapers were quick to counter that Hindenburg had nothing to do with Danzig. For Danzigers like Hermann Rauschning, however, Hindenburg may as well have been an honorary citizen of Danzig. Rauschning commemorated Hindenburg in an article one month after his death. To Rauschning, Hindenburg was a patriot and among the best of his *Völk*.²⁰³ Hindenburg was Rauschning's idea of what a man should be: honorable, responsible, and above all—a patriot. The man's character was linked to righteousness in the mind of Rauschning. It was the last cry of a romanticized past in the Spirit of 1914 which harkened back to the most idealized interpretations of war and chivalry. Hindenburg was a true relic of the past—a knight in shining armor against the forces of evil and an example for all men young and old. Rauschning was among many in the

²⁰² Sean Lester, "Lester to Joseph Avenol," August 8, 1934, *Sean Lester Papers*, *University College Dublin Archives*, reel 203/33 (59),

²⁰³ Rauschning, Hermann, "Hindenburg Zum Gedächtnis," *Ostdeutsche Monatsheft* 15 (1934): 321.

German right who commemorated the man but in the *Ostdeutsche Monatsheft* it appeared as Rauschning was leading the ceremony.

Rauschning's animosity towards Forster only intensified throughout the Autumn of that year. When he complained about his various problems with Forster and the S.A the foreign minister was displeased:

I warned Herr Rauschning against becoming the center of any fronde after his resignation. This warning appeared to me to be necessary because the tone and expressions used by Herr Rauschning in speaking of his opponents in the Party lacked all moderation. He had the presumption to threaten me personally and tell me that I would be responsible for the consequences which might arise from the Führer's refusal to support him against his political opponents in Danzig.²⁰⁴

At this point Konstantine von Neurath ended the conversation. After October Greiser functionally controlled the Senate in Rauschning's stead. Rauschning spent more time at home in his "tent: as time went on. Rauschning was eventually presented with an ultimatum by the party:

- 1) Prohibition for several months of the Opposition press, especially the Jewish weekly paper "Danziger Echo", the Zentrum Party's organ, "Danziger Volkzeitung" and the Social Democratic "Danziger Volkstimme".

²⁰⁴Konstantine von Neurath, "Memorandum by the Foreign Minister, BERLIN, October 13, 1934.," in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry., vol. 2, Akten Zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik.English (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1934), 481.
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007054745>.

- 2) Expulsion from the Free City of the Editor of the “Danziger Echo”, Theodor Loevy.
- 3) Arrest of Catholic Priests against whom the National Socialist Party has evidence.
- 4) Immediate dismissal of three officials in the “entourage” of President Rauschning.
- 5) Liquidation of all organizations of the Opposition parties, particularly the “Sozialistischer Allgemeiner Arbeiterverband”²⁰⁵

If he could not fulfill these parts of the NSDAP platform as laid out by Forster and Greiser, he was told he should resign. One month later in November he did in fact resign. Lester lamented Rauschning’s resignation. For all his shortcomings he was a source of moderation in an otherwise radical regime. After his resignation, Rauschning was kicked out of the NSDAP, which functionally ended his political career for the time being. Rauschning was left without the support of his political party after a short, yet eventful presidency in one of the tensest regions in the world at that time. Despite making great strides as a diplomat and getting his political message across, Rauschning could not overcome his own party’s undermining of his hard fought negotiations. Sean Lester remarked: “Danzig has thrown over the man who in my opinion is the best, if not the only statesman within its frontiers...I am not at all sure that Rauschning’s career in Danzig is finished, but here again one must await the development of the situation during the next few months.”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Sean Lester, “Lester to Secretary General,” October 2nd, 1934, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin Archives*, reel 203/33 (86).

²⁰⁶ Sean Lester, “Lester to Secretary General, November 26th, 1934, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin Archives*, reel 203/33 (155), 3.

Rauschning's early political career in Danzig echoed the trends of the German right back in the Reich. The same disunity, infighting, and quest for unity largely defined politics in Danzig for it was connected at the hip with the German right in Berlin. Despite this, there were aspects of the Free City of Danzig which slowed down the Nazification process even as the region of West Prussia became an increasingly contentious issue. The result was a nearly forgotten early period within the German right in which members of the radical right struggled with other forces on the right, joined forces with the NSDAP all while courting international opinion just as Dr. President Hermann Rauschning did before his political fortunes plummeted.

Chapter 3: Rauschning the Renegade

Dr. President Hermann Rauschning's negotiations ended in his ultimately futile effort to moderate Nazism in order to advocate for West Prussia's *Bauertum*. Rauschning only would have the means to move forward both physically and ideologically by distancing himself from the NSDAP. This process was a gradual mental and physical one. As Nazism became part of the failed promise to those who stood with the German right, the self-conception of these German conservatives slowly became partly about defining themselves in relation to Nazism as it became the dominant political force. Towards the end of 1934 Hermann Rauschning began to finally make his long overdue exit from Danzig's increasingly contentious political scene. Consequently, Dr. Rauschning had to start again from scratch if he, and his ideas, were to survive. As Rauschning's break with Nazism finally became concrete towards the end of 1934, he began to ask what Nazism was under the spectacle, and what could drive the German nation forward. Rauschning's breakup with the NSDAP, for both personal and ideological reasons, turned the death of his political career into a springboard for a attempt at finding a new usable conservatism.

Rauschning's activities after falling out with the Nazi party necessitated the twofold process of escaping from his circumstances and finding a new means of political action towards the forces he saw as destructive. Understanding this requires following the path from where he resigned to the point at which he started to turn this break into a source of political action. This chapter will first go over the circumstances of Hermann Rauschning's resignation, the political fallout from his actions, then the reasons for why it was no longer possible for him to stay in Danzig, meaning that he would become

among the many German exiles from the Nazi period. The chapter then turns to the means by which he escaped from this intractable situation and eventually started his new writings.

Following Rauschning's resignation, Arthur Greiser took over as the new President of the Danzig's senate on the 28th of November 1934. He received 41 votes out of 72.²⁰⁷ The general consensus was that with Rauschning's exit, the only moderating element to the Danzig Nazi Party was Danzig's Constitution. The League of Nations struggled to hold the Nazi party to it..²⁰⁸ Greiser was still a moderate compared to others in the party like Albert Forster, but over time he came to embrace his role in this Polish-German conflict. This would be difficult for Lester as he didn't nearly have the same rapport with Greiser as he did with Rauschning. In fact, Greiser collaborated with Albert Forster to undermine the League's presence.²⁰⁹ This also meant that any assurances of protection of the minorities in Danzig made by Rauschning could effectively be made moot as the NSDAP back in the Reich continued its crackdown on minorities and political opposition.

The Jewish Daily Telegraph wrote that Rauschning's resignation was "an ominous sign of what is to come for Danzig's Jews."²¹⁰ This warning was warranted. Greiser got numerous complaints from Danzig's Jewish community about the harassment they faced daily on the streets of Danzig following his election. Pickets of Jewish stores,

²⁰⁷ Sean Lester, "Letter to Joseph Avenol, December 12th", 1934, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/40 (115).

²⁰⁸ Sean Lester, "Letter to Joseph Avenol, December 12th, 1934"

²⁰⁹ Catherine Epstein, *Model Nazi*, 105.

²¹⁰ "Danzig Head to Pursue Nazi Policy on Jews," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 27, 1934, <https://www.jta.org/1934/11/27/archive/danzig-head-to-pursue-nazi-policy-on-jews>.

anti-Semitic songs, and even attacks on Germans suspected of courting Jewish women were among the many concerns that the Jewish community had to contend with as Danzig was increasingly Nazified through 1934.²¹¹ Greiser's initial response was intimidation. The entire time during one 8th of November meeting, he had a pistol lying on his desk as he spoke to the Jewish delegation. Although Greiser initially listened to these delegations, by the start of 1935 he told Danzig's Jews that Danzig was now ruled by the National Socialist party and the Nazi party would not change its policy towards them or anyone else who disparaged the government. Rauschning was left isolated. Hermann did not even seek any of the compensation to which he was entitled upon his resignation according to Gauleitner Forster.²¹² Despite this, Albert Forster dubiously alleged that Rauschning inquired about how much he would be paid if he "caused no scandal."²¹³ The same party elements that undermined him during his presidency continued to turn against the man. People who put too much stock in Hermann Rauschning's ability to stay in power were now trapped in an increasingly tense political environment in the leadup to the war. Greiser undermined Rauschning throughout his presidency but would not tolerate challenges from his own subordinates.²¹⁴ Greiser disliked it when people brought messages directly to Rauschning as Rauschning

²¹¹ "IV. Petition from the 'Verein Der Jüdischer Akademiker' and the 'Vereinigung Selbständiger Jüdischer Danziger Gewerbetreibender und Handwerker in der Freien Stadt Danzig' Documentation relating to the Petitions considered by the Council", *League of Nations Official Journal*, Annex 1551. on May 25th, 1935, on the Basis of a Report submitted by the Rapporteur, the Representative of the United Kingdom 16 (April 8, 1935): 1-33.

²¹² "249. Memorandum by the Foreign Minister." *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry. ser.C V.3., October 13, 1934. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112005147241;view=1up;seq=559> .

²¹³ "249. Memorandum by the Foreign Minister. October 13, 1934"

²¹⁴ Epstein, *Model Nazi*, 61-62.

moderated his initial stances on cracking down on newspapers to the ire of the rest of the party. Gresier was unlike Rauschning, a model member of the Nazi Party, but not a zealot like Forster, who would continue to undermine and then replace Greiser as well.

The various minority factions were not the only ones unhappy about Hermann Rauschning's resignation. There were people in the Foreign Office and even within the Reich's government itself not pleased with his decision. General Otto von Radowitz said that he would have wanted Rauschning on board for at least another few months, even going so far as trying to block Rauschning's resignation after the initial announcement because Polish government wouldn't receive anyone coming after him as favorably in further negotiations.²¹⁵ Secretary of state in the Foreign Office Bernhard Wilhelm von Bülow also tried to patch together a compromise. Rudolf Hess, of whom Anna Rauschning was quite fond, was contacted to try and make a compromise between Rauschning and Gauleitner Forster as he did before.²¹⁶ Even Max Linsmayer, the leader of the SA, wanted to keep Rauschning where he was as he feared Arthur Greiser's accession. All of this without the backing of Adolf Hitler, however, was not enough to keep Rauschning's position.²¹⁷

The specter of Nazi party intimidation and spying hung over Rauschning for the next few months. Following his resignation, Rauschning also had to deal with the

²¹⁵Radowitz "No. 329 Consul General Radowitz to Ministerialdirektor Meyer, November 15, 1934," in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry.*, vol. 2, Akten Zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik. English (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1934), 632-33,
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112005147241;view=1up;seq=710>.

²¹⁶ Herbert S. Levine, *Hitler's Free City: A History of the Nazi Party in Danzig, 1925-1939* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Pr, 1973), 82.

²¹⁷ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 88.

suspicion he had of the people around him being Nazi informants. Anna Rauschning had already suspected Elsa and Lotte, the two-house servants who were proud Nazi party members. The two once feared that Elsa had overheard them during an argument in which Hermann called her an “ignorant peasant” and Anna also openly disparaged the party for its fanaticism.²¹⁸ The family’s suspicions had been raised back in the Summer of 1934, the time of the infamous Night of Long Knives. Then, a month after his resignation, while his wife was in the hospital having their daughter, Rauschning’s secretary Hans was arrested.²¹⁹ Sean Lester noted in his diary that Rauschning was under surveillance and for this reason the two avoided contact for five months. Hermann knew that the lunch they had together would be reported by the party’s agents.²²⁰

Rauschning’s writings, speeches, and position as an agricultural expert had led him into the party and to some extent these factors shaped Rauschning’s exit. As the German right was consolidated into the party, the Nazi party demanded more adherence to party orthodoxy. Resistance not only came from the various jilted and maligned leftists, but later from the right as well as the Catholics, National Liberals, and DNVP adherents were pushed to the sidelines of politics. In Danzig once more this process was slower, more delayed. Rauschning went from his initial conception of a conservative revolution against Weimar into a conservative revolt against the NSDAP. This left him few reliable allies. On November the 23rd 1934 the former Senate President’s farewell address was published in seven different newspapers.²²¹ Hermann Rauschning’s address

²¹⁸ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 210.

²¹⁹ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 235.

²²⁰ Sean Lester, “Sean Lester’s Diary” (December 12, 1934), P203/40 (115), *Sean Lester Papers*, University College Dublin Archives.

²²¹ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 248.

was an optimistic call back to the ideals that he espoused earlier in his presidency. In the well-circulated speech, the Senate President wrote:

I express firm confidence that Danzig's population will come together in the State of Danzig more and more in an indissoluble community of destiny. My departure will alter nothing in our great aims. Many hundred years of history, during which manly generations, standing on their own feet and depending on their own strength, preserved Danzig's way of life and her German character, remain for us a daily example and a grave obligation.²²²

Rauschning's words framed his ideology as a Nazi leader as his past speeches and reflected his familiarity with the Nazi party's lexicon of terms reflecting a *volkisch* spiritual community. The speech also reflected his background as a historian and advocate for Danzig's German character. Despite this, his speech also echoed a degree of separation from the Pan-German aspirations that he started to realize were central to the Nazi party's program. While he never spoke outright against the Nazis' "back to the Reich" program, he started to subtly reflect a distaste for it. In his words of resignation, he reflected upon his view of how Danzig should be in the future: strong, independent, and most of all, German.

In 1935 the Nazification of Danzig intensified, though in fits and starts. Since the fall of 1934 the sick leave brought upon by the stresses of the job combined with the 47-year-old Rauschning's heart condition enabled Forster and Greiser to crack down on their political opposition. Rauschning's attempts to appeal to the Reich fell on deaf ears, so his

²²² Cited in Hermann Rauschning, "The Resignation", *The Conservative Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), 29-30.

isolation and personal difficulties functionally took him out of the equation for a five-month period from September 1934 through February 1935.²²³ During this time the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and DNVP were to be functionally removed as political threats to the Nazi party.²²⁴ Meanwhile, the Center Party was marginalized from the numerous actions against Danzig's Catholics, including the banning of Catholic youth groups. In the face of their political suppression the Center Party detailed these problems, then demanded the restoration of constitutional conditions. Greiser responded in the expected fashion by accusing the Catholic leaders of treason. In response the Center claimed that Greiser's NSDAP did not truly represent the population of Danzig. Greiser held new elections on the 7th of April 1935 to 'disprove' this claim.²²⁵ The election campaign was spent viciously attacking political opponents including affiliates of the League of Nation like Sean Lester, even going so far as threatening to expel Lester from the city.

Danzig was suffering from great economic problems which devalued Danzig's currency by 42.37% by from the end of April to the beginning of May 1935. Due to these financial problems, support for Danzig's Nazi party plummeted drastically.²²⁶ The government statistics projected that they might end up with as little as 18% of the vote in the following election.²²⁷ With such a poor beginning it was no wonder that the process of Nazifying Danzig was so much slower than the officials in the Reich had previously anticipated. The NSDAP leadership was holding on to Danzig for the *Führer*, but the

²²³ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 79.

²²⁴ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 85-86.

²²⁵ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 82.

²²⁶ Epstein, *Model Nazi*, 87-88.

²²⁷ Epstein, *Model Nazi*, 87-88.

year of 1935 their grip seemed to be ever weakening. In a familiar pattern among the parties of the far-right, the Nazi party consequently shifted their focus to the various ethnic grievances of the Germans and stepped up their campaigns against Jews and Poles. By this point even a *Schutzpolizei* officer was caught trying to push the anti-Jewish boycott.²²⁸

The election displeased the political opposition made up of the Communist Party, Social Democrats, Center Party, and the DNVP who called for the elections to be voided as they were angered by the Nazi party's terroristic tactics and suspected voter fraud.²²⁹ The austerity programs that Greiser had instituted over the summer of 1934 also had the side effect of alienating the working classes and government employees.²³⁰ He extended the invitation for the ethnic Germans to migrate to the Reich. The League of Nations also became increasingly unpopular as rumors circulated on the Irish Sean Lester being a secret Jew. Lester maintained contacts with the opposition in Danzig but kept a safe distance. That's why the formerly close confidant of Rauschning hadn't seen him in months. Unfortunately for Lester their connection had already damaged their respective reputations, which only worsened following Rauschning's exit.²³¹

The relief that the family felt from Hermann finally being out of politics was short lived. Rauschning joined with the opposition to the Nazi government with an open letter to Forster. The letter was opposed to the despotic rule of Albert Forster, the treatment of minorities, the abandonment of Christian values and the lack of sober judgement, clear

²²⁸ "IV. Petition from the 'Verein Der Jüdischer Akademiker' and the 'Vereinigung Selbständiger Jüdischer Danziger Gewerbetreibender Und Handwerker in Der Freien Stadt Danzig'. (C.193.1935.VII.)," *League of Nations Official Journal*:16.

²²⁹ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 105.

²³⁰ Epstein, *Model Nazi*, 61-62.

²³¹ Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 103-104.

authority or a sense of order. Months of animosity from the Nazi party were put before the public as he turned his pen on the Gauleiter in an open letter he sent to Danzig's newspapers.²³²

Until now I have considered that it was only fair to keep entirely in the background in this election and at least to give no public expression to keep my deep anxiety about the political events in Danzig, although in doing so I suffered severe pangs of conscience, sharing the concern for the security of the state and the statue that has become a duty for every citizen. I have held back, even to the point of sacrificing my personal honor....I caused no further steps to be taken when the satisfaction demanded for the dishonoring charges repeatedly made by you in a wide circle denied to me. Charges coupled with the menacing statement that I deserve to be shot.²³³

Rauschning wrote that he would have wanted a free, democratic administration which opposed Nazism. He also implied the current administration was purely incompetent while the Germans of Danzig were intoxicated by Nazism. Rauschning's words were a clear break from the optimism and nationalistic ideas in his earlier works. Before the local authorities from the *Gauburo* searched his house and confiscated the letter, Hermann fled to his father-in-law's house in Torun.²³⁴ Following the events Anna was left to run the farm which as they had been banned from the Agricultural Breeders Association, she struggled to sell off the family's prized livestock. The heads of the organization told her she could rejoin if she divorced her absent husband, but she

²³² Hermann Rauschning, "The Resignation", *The Conservative Revolution*, 30-32.

²³³ Rauschning, "The Resignation", *The Conservative Revolution*, 32.

²³⁴ Rauschning, *The Conservative Revolution*, 32.

refused.²³⁵ His family was left behind to face the stigma of being an enemy of the party. Their home was vandalized, and they were constantly threatened on the telephone.²³⁶ Ultimately Forster did manage to maintain influence in Danzig through his campaign of intimidation and numerous purges within the NSDAP. Rauschning's attempts to win back a place in Danzig were largely a failure and so he had to go into exile alongside the Poles, Jews, and other political opposition that his party had maligned.

Newspapers outside of Danzig started to use the term "Free City of Danzig" with an ironic tone now that the level of political suppression by the Nazi party increased. When Hermann Rauschning returned from Torun to his home in Warnau bei Kalthof that year, a friendly member of the Nazi party warned him that he was no longer safe there.²³⁷ Rauschning was toying with the idea of leading a new oppositional party in Poland that he'd call the "Danzig Party," but these plans never really materialized.²³⁸ Rauschning's opposition from Poland in the late 1930s suggested that he believed he could perhaps salvage the situation in Danzig. He joined up with a number of dissidents from the German right, led by Carl Spieker of the Central Party. The "Danzig Freedom Party" was established at the end of 1936 with the expressed purpose of being the political organ for right-wing dissidents who refused to collaborate with the communists.²³⁹ The Nazi party was showing signs of weakness at the critical juncture when they kicked him out of the party, so his family remained even though his actions made life unpleasant for them. While in Torun he started working on a book that would

²³⁵ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 251.

²³⁶ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 255.

²³⁷ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 255.

²³⁸ Andrzejewski, "Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze," 7-8.

²³⁹ Andrzejewski, "Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze," 13.

be called *The Revolution of Nihilism*, which was largely critique of the Nazi ideology and its roots in both revolutionary rhetoric and the philosophy of Frederick Nietzsche.²⁴⁰ It was his first major book on the topic that would make up his career afterwards. He dedicated most of his time to writing those years, staying in correspondence with whichever political figures were still friendly. His book on *The Revolution of Nihilism* was one among numerous other projects including another book, a series news articles, and essays. Rauschning remained optimistic in 1936 that his writings could have some impact. Some of his writings were published, but he was selective about which ones were published under his name.²⁴¹

During the first half of 1936 the NSDAP's foreign policy was mostly focused on Western Europe while the process of the *Gleichschaltung* continued quietly along with the political suppression of any remaining opposition. Assaults were still common, but arrests were less common. Instead, the line between the Nazi party and the city-state of Danzig was eroded by voluntary retirements of nonmembers.²⁴² The elision of party and state was something that members of the League of Nations were already quite aware of.

The League sought to counter the *Gleichschaltung* process by holding meetings with the opposition, which now included Hermann Rauschning. These meetings alienated the Nazi establishment, who had always suspected the League of Nations of favoring the opposition among other things. The opposition wasn't entirely satisfied either.

Rauschning was frustrated by the fact that men like English Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden even considered meeting with men like Forster. The opposition was greatly

²⁴⁰ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 263.

²⁴¹ Hermann Rauschning, "Letter to Herr Brost, December 28th", 1936, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/40 (115).

²⁴² Levine, *Hitler's Free City*, 114.

displeased with the conciliatory nature of the meeting with Eden. The Social Democratic Party threatened to rise to revolt, but ultimately the opposition forces in Danzig failed to make the case that the British needed to listen to any of their considerations.²⁴³ While Rauschnig did not threaten to revolt like his left-wing counterparts, he instead lamented that the “bourgeois democracies” were just sitting there as the NSDAP engaged in its murderous activities.²⁴⁴ Lester was also deeply insulted by the event. October 1935 Italy had invaded Ethiopia, which took much of the League of Nations’ time and energy away from the Free City of Danzig.²⁴⁵ Whatever influence the League of Nations had in Danzig was on its last legs and was virtually irrelevant. The League’s fate after the Autumn of 1936 was a foregone conclusion as Sean Lester privately disclosed: “The ultimate future of Danzig was settled.”²⁴⁶

Rauschnig was paying keen attention to the events in Danzig, particularly the foreign affairs angle. The *Danziger neue Nachrichten* published a series of articles by him in January 1937 entitled “The Germans in Poland.” According to him, the League of Nations had an urgent need to act that month or face an implosion. His criticisms of the government once more brought up a party counterproductive to its job as a state entity: “The government methods prevailing in Danzig are not helping to restore order but are designed merely to create the conditions necessary for settling the Danzig question by means of accomplished facts.”²⁴⁷ Essentially this meant that the NSDAP were

²⁴³ Levine, *Hitler’s Free City*, 114.

²⁴⁴ Rauschnig, “Letter to Herr Brost, December 28th”, 1936

²⁴⁵ Levine, *Hitler’s Free City*, 110.

²⁴⁶ Sean Lester, “Letter to Joseph Avenol, November 11th”, 1937, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/45 (15), 2.

²⁴⁷ “Press Summary January 1st 1937”, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/44 (3)

purposefully trying to bring Danzig into confrontation with other powers to speed up the ‘back to the Reich’ program. It is worth noting that while this was one of the main promises of the NSDAP, the idea of going ‘back to the Reich’ still did have lasting appeal with some elements of the other political parties; however, the NSDAP failed on this promise functionally making their claims of being the one party who could accomplish this moot. Responses to the final installment of the “Germans in Poland” series were harshly critical according to the press summaries. They accused Rauschning of inciting the League of Nations with the plan to hand over Danzig to another country. The author wrote that Rauschning displayed “an extraordinary lack of decent feeling and national honor and that in acting as he has done he has been playing the part to the separatist leader on the Vistula.”²⁴⁸

Rauschning received a warning from the Polish authorities that Nazi agents were looking for him. After the warning he fled to Switzerland to another property of his father-in-law. In Zurich his family managed to join him for the time being. While there, he managed to get his manuscript of *The Revolution of Nihilism* published.²⁴⁹ Eventually, in the autumn of 1938, Rauschning went to France, where he published his book *The Conservative Revolution*. He sent Sean Lester a copy of his new book and thanked the man for giving him advice about obtaining Irish citizenship.²⁵⁰

Rauschning’s memoir contrasted with his political writings, suggesting that the events of the family’s exile reinforced his long-held belief in the importance of *Kinder*,

²⁴⁸ “Press Summary January 18th 1937”, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/44 (5)

²⁴⁹ Andrzejewski, “Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze,” 8.

²⁵⁰ Hermann Rauschning, “Letter to Sean Lester, June 6th, 1938, *Sean Lester Papers, University College Dublin*, 203/45 (16)

Küche, und Kirche (children, kitchen, church—a well-worn phrase dating from the latter nineteenth century) as cornerstones of German conservative identity. On January 1939 his family had their citizenship revoked.²⁵¹ His wife and five children fled one of the boats going through the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal which carried the Jewish migrant children from the country. From there they went on to Paris. Hermann Rauschning had contacts with Pastor Forell at the l’Eglise de l’Ascension, which allowed the family to attend church services in German before they once more had to flee from Nazi occupation of Paris.²⁵²

As Hermann Rauschning became a writer on international affairs, war broke out both on the streets of Germany and between the nations of Central Europe. The Night of Broken Glass in November 1938, the consolidation of Danzig, and the occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, all coincided with his new writing career from Switzerland and then his arrival in England. Less than one year later, news came over the radio waves on the Nazi invasion of Poland and Rauschning turned it into validation of his various lessons about Nazi militarism. As Hermann Rauschning wrote in the journal of *Foreign Affairs*,: “Hitler could not stop.”²⁵³ It was at that point that Hermann Rauschning believed that there was no longer any chance that Adolf Hitler and the NSDAP would be overthrown.²⁵⁴

During this time Rauschning managed to get more books published, including *Voice of Destruction* (1940) on Adolf Hitler and *The Conservative Revolution* (1941),

²⁵¹ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 269.

²⁵² Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 273.

²⁵³ Hermann Rauschning, “Hitler Could Not Stop,” *Foreign Affairs* 18, no. 1 (1939): 1–12.

²⁵⁴ Andrzejewski, “Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze,” 11.

which he was able to finish with some help from the Foreign Office in England.²⁵⁵ As the family was crossing through Bordeaux they were identified by authorities as one of the police recognized Rauschning's name from his book the *Voice of Destruction*. According to Anna, the police prefect realized the danger that they were in because of Rauschning's publications. He phoned the prefect of Mont de Mar-San and secured the Rauschnings permission for visas to travel to Casablanca. That night they found shelter in a Catholic church in Dax.²⁵⁶ Like many of the German exiles who had to move from country to country, it seemed as though the only way they could be safe from the war was if they were as physically isolated from it as possible. This meant going to America, which they were able to do from Lisbon.²⁵⁷

Rauschning wrote a series of somewhat influential works in the two-year period from 1939 to 1940. *The Revolution of Nihilism* established his theoretical framework on Nazism. Rauschning's other works also attributed a philosophical angle to the Nazi behaviors, but ultimately this ideology was about despotism and was inherently anti-conservative according to his views. In each of his works there is a kernel of fear of how the world might judge Germany for the actions of the NSDAP. Bismarck was a sharp contrast to Hitler because Hitler lacked pragmatism even if Bismarck was ordered by the less levelheaded Wilhelm II during the First World War.²⁵⁸ Rauschning wanted to make it clear to the world what made Nazism the ideology that it was. Ideology was his way of distancing himself from the Nazi regime.

²⁵⁵ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 304.

²⁵⁶ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 291-292.

²⁵⁷ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 298.

²⁵⁸ Rauschning, "Hitler Could Not Stop," 1.

As Danzig was militarizing against Poland he wrote in the English newspaper, *The Spectator*, “I know that this desperate appeal of a maltreated and oppressed nation will not easily receive a hearing. But it is also an expression of the real sentiments of the German people, which is as anxious for peace as any other people on earth.”²⁵⁹ Hitler’s policy was a policy of destruction and a despotic order that only brought about disorder. The axiom that Nazism was a decent idea that was poorly executed was stated by at least a few Germans. Rauschning wrote about how Hitler’s policy started out as an ordinary nationalistic policy. These nationalistic ideas of German expansion that Rauschning seemed at least partially sympathetic to a few years early was espoused by Otto von Bismarck and lived “in the mind of all German patriots.”²⁶⁰ At this point he wasn’t discrediting nationalism. The problem was the revolutionary aspects of National Socialism. The revolutionary aspects brought new ideas which toyed with immorality, atheism, degeneracy, and terrorism. It was the revolutionary aspects that turned Germany towards something more resembling bolshevism rather than the strict, religious based order of the Prussian military elite. For these reasons he had failed to moderate the extremist character of National Socialism.

Rauschning concluded, “The National Socialist movement could not be reformed. It was obeying an iron-bound law of its own being. It was following the relentless urge toward extremism to which every revolutionary movement is destined.”²⁶¹ With that Rauschning went from a participant to one of the significant theorists around this

²⁵⁹ Hermann Rauschning, “THE DANGER AT DANZIG » 26 May 1939 » The Spectator Archive,” *The Spectator Archive*, accessed November 29, 2017, <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/26th-may-1939/9/the-danger-at-danzig>.

²⁶⁰ Rauschning, “Hitler Could Not Stop,” 4.

²⁶¹ Rauschning, “Hitler Could Not Stop,” 6.

revolutionary movement. moderate figures he shunned, he found himself on the same boats as them. As a 'moderate Nazi' if there ever was such a thing, he managed to make inroads that many others could not with international figures, business leaders, and people from other parties. While he was in the same position as many of the leftists and others of less privileged stock, it did not spare him the wrath of the NSDAP. As the French would have said: revolutions devour their children.

Hermann Rauschning's break from Nazism for both personal and ideological reasons turned the death of his political career into a springboard for a new attempt at finding a usable conservatism. The self-conception of these German conservatives became just as much about defining Nazism as it was about defining what is worth conserving. The very question of what Nazism was, why it was dangerous, and why it was wrong, became the subject that Rauschning was able to best capitalize on in the wartime environment. During this time of turbulence Rauschning made a shift from a political figure to an intellectual. He may have been physically removed from Danzig, but the Free City was still a preoccupation of his. Rauschning turned his thoughts to what could have been, what should have been, and finally, he would ask the most important question of all: what kind of political solution would drive the German nation forward when the smoke cleared.

Chapter 4: Rauschning the Thinker

Zero hour came early for Hermann Rauschning. He had been anticipating the changes years before the *Stunde null* finally came in 1945 and the clock reset for politics in Germany. Rauschning was now a German dissident, but unusual in some respects as he was a right-wing dissident rather than one of the adherents of the heavily suppressed communist and socialist organizations. Per his new view, the combination of modernity and the fundamentally revolutionary characteristics of the Nazis made them too much like the Bolsheviks that the German right strove to protect Germany from. In this context his works constructed a conservative vision of what Nazism was. He used this conservative vision of Nazism to make a new, usable conservatism in opposition to Nazism that was closer to the premodern ideal that drove his antipathy towards Weimar Germany. This new conservatism saw these new radical movements such as communism and fascism as symptoms of a disease stemming from modernism and secularism. Following his exile, Dr. Hermann Rauschning was able to use his position as a former Nazi when he started writing about Adolf Hitler and the NSDAP. His works such as *The Voice of Destruction* and *The Revolution of Nihilism* were among the first to analyze Nazi Germany from the German right's perspective. Rauschning's writings went on to formulate and reflect the ethos of a new German right that opposed Nazism, as he saw it, as a godless, totalitarian product of nihilistic modernity and revolution.

The Revolution of Nihilism was unique among Rauschning's works in that it not only criticized Nazism but was also among the earlier books to systematically criticize misconceptions of Nazism on a philosophic level. Rauschning wrote the preface for *The Revolution of Nihilism* in Paris 1939 at a time and place when the threat of invasion

seemed imminent, so it became a “runaway bestseller.”²⁶² In this book Rauschning laid out the central argument that Nazi movement should not be understood simply in terms of persecution and anti-Christian behavior. He argued that instead we should look at the relationship between the elites and the masses. The argument here is that this was a movement of opportunism and that Prussian imperialism had not changed. He calls back to his own time in the military as well as the influence of the *Stahlhelm*. He wrote that the revolution became possible when the ruling class lost its power, creating this ‘new elite’²⁶³ Pareto was incidentally notable for being one of Mussolini’s favorite economist and the 80/20 principle. Rauschning credited Mussolini with facilitating the acceptance of Nazism. According to Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, the elites were ‘biologically’ inclined to struggling with the masses. These struggles, in the Nazi mind at least, would lead to a new ‘elite’ under the promise of *Volksgemeinschaft*.²⁶⁴ The new elite would be inherently unstable as they gained their power through a coup and the inherently destabilizing force of revolution.²⁶⁵ Per Rauschning, these new elites used the new revolutionary ideology not as a set of guiding principles, but a tool to mobilize the masses. The philosophy of Nazism was, in essence, “for show.”²⁶⁶

To Rauschning, it was more important to look beyond ideology into underlying motivations.²⁶⁷ The only true philosophical force behind the Nazi movement, according to Rauschning, was nihilism. Nihilism was tantamount to the cause death for ‘real’

²⁶² Jean-Michel Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America* (Verso Books, 2017), 611.

²⁶³ Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, 29.

²⁶⁴ Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, 56.

²⁶⁵ Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, 59.

²⁶⁶ Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, 49.

²⁶⁷ Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, 15.

conservatism that Rauschning espoused. The reasoning behind this was that nihilism by his definition of it, rotted away the foundations of Western civilization that were supposed to be the very values 'worth conserving' in his eyes.²⁶⁸ The destruction of these foundations, meant that they were in essence, conserving nothing. Therefore, it was not a conservative revolution, but instead a revolution for the sake of revolution. This was not the rebirth of the old Prussian conservatism of Otto von Bismarck which he earlier bemoaned as having been on a slow decline since the mid-nineteenth century. He posited his own brand of pre-Weimar conservatism as the true legacy of conservatism, with a few small omissions. After all, Rauschning could not espouse German nationalism and militarism in exile, even though the German exiles had a much easier time embracing their idea of German patriotism from abroad after the war. This non-ideology of Nazism made any ties that it had to the German right effectively moot. While he admired the youthful energy that revolutionary ideas gave to the political process, it should not risk alienating the intellectual class, which Nazis totally dismissed. Rauschning's new solution touted a rebirth of the state from a Christianity and the tradition Western soldiery. In other words: a conservative revolution against the revolutionary nihilism of the NSDAP.²⁶⁹

For the German right, the term conservative revolution referred back to the idea coined by the Austrian writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal at the earlier part of the century. In Rauschning's words, the idea of a conservative revolution is contradictory, but the reason it is revolutionary is because of the means, which is where Rauschning says he started to take issue with the idea. *The Conservative Revolution* was unlike his other big

²⁶⁸ Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, xii-xiii.

²⁶⁹ Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, 158.

work on the Nazi revolution in its autobiographical elements, and its connection between the continuities between the old and Weimar era conservatism. The work stated what he expected out of Nazism. Rather than being a passive observer, the book stands to be a closer analysis of the German right through himself as a lens. While *Revolution of Nihilism* and *Voice of Destruction* made Rauschning reputable in the English-speaking world in addition to Rauschning's other works on Adolf Hitler, this work contains a level of political thought and agency in Rauschning unseen in most of his other works. He writes in his chapter on the relation between theory and practice: "I WILL DO as you [the reader] ask and try to provide a few glimpses of our practical work. But do not grow impatient now I go rather too much into detail. The moment we come to the practical work it is the detail that matters. Broad sketches are easy, but they are not enough."²⁷⁰ Unlike the *Revolution of Nihilism*, this book took on an autobiographical element. Rauschning wrote that he still believed his initial considerations that led him to the movement were correct; however, the means led down a path of destruction. This book mainly outlines the myriad of problems that Rauschning says led people to embrace National Socialism: bad policies, monarchism, opposition to Weimar, bankrupt farmers, and a failing liberal economy. In the end he poses three main points in regard to his solution: Firstly, there could be no compromise with Nazism; secondly, the solutions could not be merely economic, but rather there must be a treaty made in the spirit of reconciliation; and thirdly, economic order must be restored.

In the same vein as this, Rauschning also wrote *Hitler's Aims with War and Peace* on the subject of Nazi foreign policy. Here he began drawing the parallels between

²⁷⁰ Hermann Rauschning, *The Conservative Revolution*, First edition. edition (G.P. Putnam's sons, 1941), 63.

Nazism and Bolshevism as global movements. It was at this point Rauschning believed that the war was largely coming to a close. He discussed the past of German imperialism and the present of Nazi propaganda in the youth movement. As in the previous works, he cited Ernst Junger and *Mein Kampf*. One of the potential solutions he put forward was the cooperation between the European powers.²⁷¹ Once again he hearkened back to the ideas of Bismarckian pragmatism that dominated the foreign policies through systems of alliances in the last century.

In 1944, Hermann Rauschning asked the biggest question on the public's mind; "When Germany Cracks, What Will Happen?" Rauschning started out by stating that it would be foolish to say that the aftermath of World War II would mirror the aftermath of World War I. He doubted that the military would capitulate and in general expected a great amount of unrest. He claimed that the UN was underestimating the generals at the helm of the German military. Rauschning notes the emigrants who predicted a type of socialist uprising to come out of this aftermath. He says this is unlikely and his appraisal of the situation is quite bleak. The main quote he put on in a similar article on *Maclean's Magazine* was: "A lasting peace, like a stable regime, cannot be based on force, power, and terror. Hitler has proved that."²⁷² With all the events surrounding the world, that statement alone might suggest that the extreme nationalism and militarism of the Nazi party had been discredited to that. With the end of the war and the old Nazi order being destroyed it was up to the dissidents that never truly went along with the NSDAP's

²⁷¹ Hermann Rauschning and E. W. Dickes, *Hitler's Aims in War and Peace*, (London; Toronto: W. Heinemann, Ltd., 1940).

²⁷² Hermann Rauschning, "What to Do with Germany?," *Maclean's*, April 1, 1944, Hermann Rauschning, 1941-1981. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York. Unsorted.

program for a variety of reasons. Due to the nature of the persecution of the center-right parties and the fact that the NSDAP could not easily crack down upon churches, religion would be a large new part of the post-1945 right, but the German nation still had some time before that infamous *Stunde null* or “zero hour.” An article written by Rauschning a few years earlier had called upon the Christians of the English-speaking world, as the church had a post-war task. In this task, Rauschning called for Christian unity across races, nationalities, and languages. He called for the church to be the new moral authority of the world. It was ambitious, but the basic idea of Christian unity is what underscored the new CDU which would lead German conservatism for the next few decades.²⁷³

Now that the Rauschning family was safe in America and Hermann Rauschning was busy providing his perspective on the German question, Anna Rauschning launched her own writing career and her own crusade in concert with Hermann’s. Her 1942 memoir entitled *No Retreat* was reviewed favorably by the *New York Times*. She was able to stir up the visceral sentiment against what she saw as the betrayal of Germany’s children.²⁷⁴ In her eyes the goal should be “to bring these human animals back to something resembling the youth of other countries is not the work of years but of lifetimes for it is almost impossible to conceive the vast evil Nazism has wrought in a once great nation....With the first bugle notes of Allied Victory another, and greater war, begins—the conquest of Germany’s lost souls.”²⁷⁵ Ann Rauschning timed her book’s

²⁷³ Hermann Rauschning, “The Church and the Postwar Task,” *The Christian Century*, May 13, 1942, 628-629.

²⁷⁴ “The Betrayal of Germany’s Children; NO RETREAT. By Anna Rauschning. 309 Pp. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. \$2.75.,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1942, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1942/05/10/archives/the-betrayal-of-germanys-children-no-retreat-by-anna-rauschning-309.html>.

²⁷⁵ Anna Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 1st Edition (The Bobbs-Merrill Co, 1942), 308-309.

publishing with the first major Allied Victories. Upon solidifying their new place in the United States, *The New York Herald* wrote: “Anna, like Hermann embraced the United States in May 2nd, 1942.”²⁷⁶ The Office of Strategic Services sought out Rauschning a few times in the early 1940s even though the head of the organization Bill Donovan apparently “didn’t like the man.”²⁷⁷ The OSS interviewed Rauschning in 1943 and set him up in a hotel room two years later. The brief few details outside the contact info and the instruction, “Refrain from interviews by newspaper reporters.”²⁷⁸ Rauschning stood out among the German exiles as one of the more conservative leaders in the exile community. He closely corresponded with Heinrich Brüning and Gottfried Reinhold Treviranus. The three had intended to create a political organization for conservative German exiles, but the idea fell through.²⁷⁹

By 1948 Hermann Rauschning bought a farm near Portland, Oregon by the banks of the Hood River and continued to write from there.²⁸⁰ His son wanted to follow in his footsteps and be a farmer as well, so going back to the farm life seemed plausible for the family.²⁸¹ Despite the similarity, Oregon was likely about as far as one could get from the Reich. From the Oregon farmhouse Rauschning wrote about Germany’s central problem. The article he wrote about it was somewhat of a play on words given that the World War

²⁷⁶ “Dr. Rauschning Takes U.S Oath of Citizenship” *New York Herald Tribune*, May 1st, 1942: 456. *M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York.*

²⁷⁷ Alexander Stephan, *Im Visier des FBI: Deutsche Exilschriftsteller in den Akten amerikanischer Geheimdienste* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995), 154.

²⁷⁸ “Martin Easton to Hermann Rauschning May 30th 1945”: 456. *M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York.*

²⁷⁹ Palmier, *Weimar in Exile*, 568-569.

²⁸⁰ Marek Andrzejewski, “Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze,” 1997, 14. http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~dnfg/images/Hermann_Rauschning.pdf.

²⁸¹ Anna Schwarte Rauschning, *No Retreat*, 205.

was giving into the Cold War and initiatives are being proposed to tie Europe closely together. This hurt Germany's security and the political climate in his eyes.²⁸² His moment of fame had passed by this point, but his work still certainly had influence and he continued to write. He was still appearing in the German language *Neue Politik* and once in the English language *The Christian Century*. His interests were mostly in German politics, but also included religious education, particularly German protestant. In some ways it is possible to see how he carved out a niche in that area as there were a number of influential philosophers (such as Paul Tilich or the Niebuhr brothers) who took inspiration from German-style Protestantism. During the late 1940s and well into the 1960s, his focus seemed to turn back over to Germany as he continued to write from his farmhouse in Portland. Rauschnig also wrote for a local German-language paper centered in Oregon, *St. Joseph's Blatt*.

Golo Mann, writer and son of celebrated German author Thomas Mann, wrote a glowing review of one of Rauschnig's more popular wartime books, *The Redemption of Democracy* (1941). Mann wrote: "Today, the concepts whose purpose he has designated by the word "nihilism" have been so widely accepted that we are likely to forget that he first expressed them and documented them with a wealth of evidence."²⁸³ The two became close friends and corresponded over the post-war years. They had long swaths of correspondence about politics during the 1950s. Rauschnig continued to correspond with Golo Mann in the early 1960s and in general was what one might consider a lifelong

²⁸² Hermann Rauschnig, "Das zentrale Problem Deutschlands," *St. Joseph's Blatt*, May 16, 1949, *Hermann Rauschnig, 1941-1981. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York*.

²⁸³ Golo Mann, review of *Review of The Redemption of Democracy*, by Hermann Rauschnig, *The American Political Science Review* 35, no. 3 (1941): 548.

friend to Golo. Mann was usually trying to shift the conversation away from politics and towards their families and personal lives. In general, Golo Mann's family may have been too liberal for the Rauschning family in many respects as a number of them were sympathetic to communism. Golo noted that Rauschning was usually dismissed by those in opposition who stood on the political left such as the communists or even the social democrats. One Social Democrat Party leader referred to Rauschning as "an East-Prussian music teacher,"²⁸⁴ according to Mann. Golo and Hermann always wrote glowingly of one another. To exiles like Golo Mann who had more conservative sympathies Rauschning's work was invaluable when it came to his theories on how the German right should proceed. Despite the bias, or perhaps because of it, Golo Mann best described the appeal of Rauschning's writing when he wrote:

Rauschning certainly must be counted among the most intuitive living writers on politics. His thoughts revolve around central problems-state and morality, technological organization, power, liberty. These are problems of fearful complexity-so complex, indeed, that the author at moments seems to give way to the temptation of solving them by the simple dicta that no "ism" holds salvation and that government ought to be as good, modest, limited, and effective as possible.²⁸⁵

Rauschning disavowed the restoration of the monarchy, signaling that after Nazism he would not go back to his political roots. Monarchism was a system that could be written off at that point in time. Nevertheless, he still proposed a "conservative

²⁸⁴ Golo Mann, *Zwölf Versuche* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer S. Verlag GmbH, 1973), 170.

²⁸⁵ Mann, review of *Review of The Redemption of Democracy*, by Hermann Rauschning, *The American Political Science Review* 35, no. 3 (1941): 550.

solution” rather than a revolutionary-liberal one. Over time there does seem to have been a transformation of Rauschning’s beliefs, though his adjustment to this new paradigm was a difficult one. Rauschning had a number of publications in English and numerous other languages both during and after the war. The reason for his relative irrelevance politically after the war can be attributed to both his geographical circumstances and to the fact that his reputation largely hinged on dubiously presenting himself the man who understood Hitler’s mind. As a result of these factors, Hermann Rauschning was on his way towards to the fringes after the war in Europe on May 8th, 1945 when it came to the current events, but his look back at Nazism provided a new perspective for the burgeoning political right.

Rauschning unsuccessfully tried to ingratiate himself to the new CDU. He sent letters or occasionally his new book to CDU officials such as Heinrich Brüning. The CDU never fully trusted Rauschning because they saw him as an opportunist.²⁸⁶ Rauschning also didn’t care for the CDU president Konrad Adenauer, who he thought was not doing enough to reunite Germany.²⁸⁷ Hermann and his family were detached from these matters even though mass media and modern communications allow him to keep up even though was all the way in the United States far off from the troubles of the Germans rebuilding during the occupation. Danzig wasn’t seen as a part of Germany anymore, nor was it called Danzig, but G’dansk instead. This however didn’t mean that Rauschning let go of Danzig completely.

²⁸⁶ Marek Andrzejewski, “Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze,” 1997, 13, http://www.staff.uni-marburg.de/~dnfg/images/Hermann_Rauschning.pdf.

²⁸⁷ Andrzejewski, “Hermann Rauschning. Biographische Skizze,” 14.

Germans after the war held a deep nostalgia for the places that were no longer a part of Germany from East Germany to parts of Poland. This gave rise to what is known as the *Heimatsfilme*. Hermann Rauschning made multiple magazine spreads of G'dansk now that it was locked down under the Soviet Union's Iron Curtain in the 1950s.²⁸⁸ For this reason, which the notion of German irredentism drove factions of the German right, the less stringent concept of a lost homeland had cross-party appeal. Rauschning published an article simply called: "Die Heimatssuche" or "search for homeland."²⁸⁹ This did not mean he was not attuned to the present. He wrote to the newspapers that the Americans need to give the German *volk* better living conditions under the occupation. He also stuck to the German nationalist ideas, albeit cautiously, saying there was nothing wrong with remedying this bad "national feeling," especially if it is "within boundaries." He ended with a callback to the situation Prussia was in during 1807, once more reflecting that long-held idea that the German right had not been in good condition since much earlier in the nineteenth century.²⁹⁰ It was the kind of romanticism of these old Prussian ideals which held what little legacy was left of the old German right. After this short-lived National Socialist experiment, the German right would have to rebuild within the boundaries set for them by a fractured international climate.

Rauschning's statements about Adolf Hitler make some historians skeptical.

There was one incident when a Swiss journalist named Wolfgang Hänel proclaimed that

²⁸⁸ Jeffrey Peck, "No Place Like Heimat," in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

²⁸⁹ Hermann Rauschning, "Die Heimzuchung," *Merian*, 4, no. 7 (1952): 28–38. *M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, SUNY Albany*.

²⁹⁰ Rauschning, "Die Heimzuchung," 28–38.

²⁹⁰ Hermann Rauschning, "Der deutsche Oste im kuenftigen Frieden," *Schlesische Rundschau: die Zeitung aller Schlesier*, 5, no. 2 (1953): Stuttgart, 719.

Hermann Rauschning was a fraud.²⁹¹ While some historians rose to defend him, the inconsistencies in Hermann Rauschning's story made for a plausible case that parts may have been manipulated or fabricated. The evidence was enough that prominent historians like Richard Evans and Ian Kershaw concede that Rauschning is an unreliable source.²⁹² Given the charged nature of some self-proclaimed revisionist organizations, Hänel's research, which discredits Rauschning, is consequently used as the proverbial weak link in attacking all historical narratives about Nazism that he appears in. Using Rauschning's works where he's a Hitler confidante is different from carefully analyzing his more autobiographical or theoretical pieces like the *Conservative Revolution*. Given increasing the number of fabrications, falsehoods, and manipulations citizens are subject to in modern times, the importance of looking at events critically is more significant than ever. The article "Hitler Told Me This," which was written just after *Revolution of Nihilism*, essentially repeated his same ideas of the *Revolution of Nihilism*, but for an American audience. He painted Hitler's goals as global and claimed that Hitler once remarked that it would be simple to provoke a revolution in the United States. Finally, he noted that Hitler largely destroyed the concept of human and civil rights.²⁹³

. While Rauschning was likely better equipped to answer the large questions than many scholars, the fact remains that he was used as a tool by the Allied Forces. He had a pattern of opportunism that other political parties noted. He joined the NSDAP just as

²⁹¹ „Zitat, Zitat, Zitat, Und Nichts Weiter“ - *DER SPIEGEL* 37/1985,” accessed October 7, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13514710.html>.

²⁹² Richard J. Evans, “The Conspiracists,” *London Review of Books*, May 8, 2014.

²⁹³ Rauschning, Hermann, “Hitler Told Me This.,” *American Mercury* 48 (December 1, 1939): 385–93. 456. *M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York*.

they were rising to power in Danzig. As soon as they took losses in 1935 is when he decided to officially turn on them because at that point their position looked like the weakest it had been in years. As for *The Revolution of Nihilism* itself, the appeal of book was as one Jean-Michel Palmier put it: “limited theoretical interest”²⁹⁴. That does not lessen the impact that his work on the nihilistic revolution has had on the history of Germany during the Nazi and Weimar periods. In party, Jeffrey Herf’s work on how politics, culture, and technology were all intertwined in the Third Reich and Weimar was a rebuttal to Hermann Rauschning’s claim that Nazism was in effect a non-ideology. The issue in this dilemma is asking whether Hitler’s actions match his words.²⁹⁵ Hermann Rauschning and many others who joined up with the party may have had reasonable motive in disguising the fact that the Nazis were actually very clear about their ideology. Rauschning also had an impact on some of the more philosophical aspects of studying Nazism. One writer theorized that he might have influenced George Orwell of *1984* fame.²⁹⁶

Hermann Rauschning simply adapted to new contexts and stayed remarkably consistent as he shifted from a party member to the opposition. After World War II the German right and in fact the right in general tended to portray Nazism in a strange and modernist light. They flouted sexual norms. They worshipped the state to the exclusion of religion. They were people of low character who blindly obeyed secular powers to the exclusion of conservative moral values. To this end they were two sides of the same

²⁹⁴ Palmier, *Weimar in Exile*, 611.

²⁹⁵ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 7.

²⁹⁶ George Watson, “Orwell’s Nazi Renegade,” *The Sewanee Review* 94, no. 3 (1986): 486–95.

authoritarian coin to communism. Hermann Rauschning as both a historian and opponent of Nazism helped codify many of these ideas to the point where he was one of the Allied powers' assets in identifying this threat. .Fritz Stern became one of the prominent German historians of his time and his notes made it clear that he deeply admired Hermann Rauschning's observational skills. Fritz Stern's book *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, later even tied Rauschning to youth movements of the 1960s when he wrote the book to the "spontaneous and nonintellectual" movements that were becoming increasingly radical towards the middle of the 1960s

In his own indirect way Hermann Rauschning managed to shape a political discussion through history and the comparisons that history can sometimes invite.²⁹⁷ According to Fritz Stern, Hermann Rauschning was the archetypical Conservative Revolutionary, even as he remained unconvinced that one could stray from one revolution to another.²⁹⁸ Fritz Stern's view on Rauschning was informed by his work on the *Revolution of Nihilism*. Even though Stern overlooked Rauschning's own views of adherents of the German Right like himself, Stern's summation of the man as a type of revolutionary was not inaccurate. Both Rauschning's actions and writings did seem to have a revolutionary quality to them even as he considered himself fundamentally opposed the modernistic forces that would upend that which he wanted to conserve. In a sense Rauschning never really stopped rebelling ever since the beginning of the Weimar Republic. First, he rebelled against Weimar, then the Nazi party, and following that he

²⁹⁷ Fritz R. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, First edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

²⁹⁸ Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 225.

seemed as though he was still rebelling against the partition of Germany if he was powerless to stop that too.

Conclusion

Hermann Rauschning and his role as an intellectual and politician served as an echo of greater forces within Germany. While he revolted against Weimar, and then revolted against Nazism, he formulated a new conservatism fundamentally opposed to the concept of revolution. Rauschning's conception of Nazism, shaped through his background and experience fundamentally shaped the post-war conception of Nazism among conservatives. His political biography is both representative and has a great degree of significance given the position of Danzig in the relations between Germany and Poland, Germany and the League of Nations, and by extension Germany and the rest of Europe. Following the events in Danzig leading to his ousting he continued to advocate a version of his largely antimodernist conservatism which drew on the power of historical memory to plot forward a path of what the German right should be based on his idealized perceptions of what the German right was. As Danzig and Rauschning echoed the political changes of the Reich, Rauschning's writings in turn were echoed in the German right's response to Nazism. He had a number of publications in English but after the war, seeing as his reputation largely hinged on ,the man who understood Hitler's mind. He seemed to be pushed to the fringes, appearing in the German-language *Neue Politik*. His interests were mostly on German politics after the 1940s, but also religious education, particularly German protestants. In some ways, it is possible to see how he carved out a niche in that area as there were several influential philosophers (such as Paul Tillich or the Niebuhr brothers) who took inspiration from German style Protestantism. After 1945, his focus seemed to turn back over to Germany even as he was writing from his farmhouse in Portland well into the 1960s.

Here Rauschning wrote on the situation back in Europe. He published the following appeal from an anonymous person in Danzig:

We are painfully impressed by the separation of Danzig from its mother-country but we do not wish our return to the German Reich to be bought at the cost of war and destruction. We are prepared to fulfill the duties laid upon us by the geographical situation, to assure the Polish people of free access to the sea and to reconcile the German and Polish vital interests in our capacity as a Free City, once the German character of the city is confirmed for all time.²⁹⁹

The statement perfectly echoes Rauschning's sentiments, but it is also notable in that he was able to serve as an authority on Danzig's situation.

Through the time of the war, the quarter million of Rauschning's fellow ethnic Germans in Poland were displaced. The city was virtually destroyed in many areas. The metaphorical wall that the Danzig NSDAP had placed between Germans and Poles was torn down and an Iron Curtain ascended in its place as Danzig was re-Polonized and rechristened G'dansk, then subsequently absorbed into the Eastern Bloc. Hermann Rauschning wrote that these events "made us Danzigers homeless."³⁰⁰ The term "home" (*Heimat*) in German had a particular meaning which was one that Hermann Rauschning was acutely aware of and to some extent every German political movement had exploited to this idea in one form or another from the NSDAP and DNVP, to the more moderate groups like the Center Party or its post-War equivalent in the CDU. On the feeling of losing the home or *Heimat* that was Danzig, Hermann Rauschning wrote that the

²⁹⁹ Hermann Rauschning, "Eyes on Danzig," *Living Age* 356 (July 1, 1939): 456.

³⁰⁰ Hermann Rauschning, "Die Heimzuchung," *Merian*, Merian, 4, no. 7 (1952): 36.

“wonderfully profound” word *Heimweh* has virtually any real equivalent in other languages due to the particularly deep double meaning of this word. The word nostalgia originally meant a kind of “homecoming” however, and this was apparent in many of the works from Germans on Danzig.

Following the war, Rauschnig had a level of correspondence with the journalist Ernst Jaeger in Hollywood as he was living in Gaston Oregon in the early 1950s. He corresponded with Golo Mann in the early 1960s. Mann seemed to be trying to shift the conversation away from politics and towards their families and personal lives from my brief assessment but that is by no means a sure thing. Another interesting figure he corresponded with was Rolf Gardener, an English folk revivalist sometimes speculated to have Nazi sympathies. He also wrote to CDU members: Rudolf Pechel, and Dr. Gerstenmaier. There were a few with Bert von Heiseler. Some with Gottfried Reinhold Treviranus of the former DVNP. The German right’s post-war transformation (or lack thereof) is a source of historical debate.

In the field of history, the genre of representative biography and intellectual history are often combined to analyze this question of the right’s transformation, as was the case with Jerry Muller’s book on Hans Freyer, *The Other God that Failed*. Muller’s book on Freyer suggested that there was a process of deradicalization of figures on the German right. This helped explain why figures such as Freyer could have a shifting degree of influence from the 1920s to 1960s and linked the continuities in the interwar and postwar years using specific figures on the right.³⁰¹ Other works such as Daniel

³⁰¹ Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 1987).

Morat's work on Hans Zehrer, who was similarly active in the German right, argued that this idea of the German right's deradicalization was overblown and they instead got used to the new political context.³⁰² Zehrer, for example, took to publishing long and incomprehensible works on Christian humanity in the Modern World.³⁰³ Rauschning was hardly a unique case, which is likely why Hagemann entitled the first major biographical work on him *Ein deutsches Leben (A German Life)*. Hagemann's appraisal of Rauschning does generally explain where Rauschning stood after the war and his place in the German historical narrative as a person. Where the work is lacking is on the topic of what led him to his position as a post-War conservative. The work does not deal with the question of ideology. While it did accurately explain where he went, it did not adequately explain how his ideology linked back to the threads of conservatism which went all the way back to the 19th Century. In essence, by humanizing, even rehabilitating Rauschning, Hagemann functionally depoliticizes Rauschning which whitewashes the more problematic aspects of his political trajectory. Hagemann believes that Hermann Rauschning was an example of a generation, not a political movement which is where this work would disagree.

Hermann Rauschning ultimately left behind a complicated legacy, but a legacy which epitomizes many of the issues surrounding German identity and the greater issues in Europe that he struggled with in Danzig. In the 1980s there would be a resurgence of German populist right politics, but also the presence of figures like Gunter Grass who

³⁰² Daniel Morat, "No Inner Remigration: Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, and the Early Federal Republic of Germany," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (November 2012): 661–79, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244312000248>.

³⁰³ Payk, Marcus M., "A Post-Liberal Order? Hans Zehrer and Conservative Consensus Building In 1950s West Germany," *Modern Intellectual History* 3, no. 9 (November 2012), 691.

advocated for a new look at the German Danzigers through his work on the *Danzig Trilogy*. His work won him a Nobel Prize and his writings continue to suggest a struggle between the various competing ideologies within this region that Rauschning wrestled with years ago.³⁰⁴ While Rauschning was largely inactive by the 1980s, the criticism against his works intensified through the works of the new wave of German historical revisionism from the likes of figures like Dr. Alfred Schickel and Wolfgang Hänel. Their work was covered in major German publications as they took apart Rauschning's work on Hitler. Hänel even reportedly confronted Rauschning's daughter on the matter. She responded: "A vendor doesn't care if the person on the next street is a man or a woman."³⁰⁵ Hänel implied that the family's desperate circumstances at the beginning of the war may have led Rauschning to publishing propaganda, and yet, Rauschning never quite entirely denied it. He merely said that he was relaying the essence of his words to his editor, sometimes credited as his ghostwriter, Emery Reves who had previously come under scrutiny by the revisionists for his other works.³⁰⁶ Rauschning always preferred to work on a theoretical level in all of his other works, whose ideological roots reached far beyond one German dictator. He was after all, firm believer of the power of ideas.

³⁰⁴ Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig: Biographie einer Stadt* (München: C.H.Beck, 2011), 253.

³⁰⁵ "Kümmertliche Notizen," *Die Zeit*, July 19, 1985, <http://www.zeit.de/1985/30/kuemmerliche-notizen>, 5.

³⁰⁶ "„Zitat, Zitat, Zitat, und Nichts Weiter“ – *Der Spiegel* 37/1985," accessed October 7, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13514710.html>.

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