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College of the Liberal Arts

A NATION IN PERIL?
RETHINKING HOW FEAR INFLUENCED EVERYDAY LIFE AND POLITICS
IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

A Dissertation in
History
by
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ABSTRACT

In order to gain access to the experience of fear as a social fact, this dissertation project examines a variety of public, semi-public and private sources, including literary voices, local newspaper editorials, reports from municipal police, town councils, district attorneys and gendarmerie, collections of Catholic, Lutheran, Jehovah’s Witness and Jewish materials, and individual German writings, diaries, memoirs, petitions and photographs from central German communities in Thuringia and other neighboring regions.

The archival evidence indicates that fear was not necessarily particular to Germany or universally experienced by all Germans in the same ways at the same time. Fear had multiple historical sources that informed how different groups understood fear in a variety of ways and defined how people should feel fear and express those feelings (or not) in the politics of Imperial Germany. Much of this history of fear is not necessarily unique to German political culture, when compared to Western Europe and North America, and Germans were not overwhelmed by any one fear, but the prospects of defeat in the First World radicalized how Germans increasingly invoked fear in their politics after the war.

Activists of various kinds increasingly cultivated social realities of fear in the Weimar Republic in order to valorize certain “emotional economies” that framed how both men and women should feel and express their feelings. The most radical emotional economies sanctioned more aggressive forms of politics that threatened to undermine the dominant forms of respectable middle class political culture and any chances of cooperation with moderate working class activism or other opponents. Yet the threats that radical activists posed also led to a vigorous defense of the republic at the local level and a variety of alternative emotional economies to counter the fear emanating from the extremes.

Antisemitism was a key source for fear in the provincial Germany, but more so through ordinary, everyday life than currently understood in the scholarship, not only motivating Jewish and non-Jewish German resistance to increasing antisemitic violence, but also undermining Jewish and non-Jewish German relations and racially transforming local communities in the process.

Finally, the focus on central German communities demonstrates that nationalist economies of fear played a key role in forging nationalist solidarity in the latter years of Weimar Republic, suppressing nationalist dissent to the emergence of the Nazi movement in Thuringia, and informing a social reality of fear that must be considered more seriously in current thinking about the relationship of terror and persuasion in the Nazi seizure of power.
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfeld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EZA</td>
<td>Evangelisches Zentralarchiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>Freie Presse</td>
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<tr>
<td>IdR</td>
<td>Im deutschen Reich</td>
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<tr>
<td>KZ</td>
<td>Konzentrationslager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBI</td>
<td>Leo Baeck Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>MZ</td>
<td>Mitteldeutsche Zeitung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StVAE</td>
<td>Stadt- und Verwaltungssarchiv Erfurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StAN</td>
<td>Stadtsarchiv Nürnberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAZ</td>
<td>Thüringer Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
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<tr>
<td>ThStAG</td>
<td>Thüringisches Staatsarchiv Gotha</td>
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<td>USHMM</td>
<td>The United States Holocaust Memorial Archive</td>
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<td>VHA</td>
<td>USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive</td>
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Figure 1. 1920 map of Erfurt from Ilversgehofener Platz in north Erfurt to the central train station.¹

¹ Stadt- und Verwaltungsarchiv Erfurt (StVAE), 7-242/9.
Chapter 1

Introduction

*  
“What wells up so menacingly under the heart and gulps down the soft air’s sadness? Are you pleased with us, dark Night? What are you holding under your cloak, that grabs so unseen at my soul?”
- Novalis, Hymns to the Night, 1

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“Sometimes the father would call him to fetch something in the dead of night, and perhaps the way led through the churchyard or by a dismal place, and then he used to answer, ‘No father, I cannot go there, I am afraid.”
- The elder brother in “A Tale of One Who Traveled to Learn What Shivering Meant.”2

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“Ah, father!” […] I want to know what shivering means, for of that I can understand nothing.”
- The younger brother in “A Tale of One Who Traveled to Learn What Shivering Meant.”3

There is an ironic set of parallels between early 19th century expressions of the ancient fear of the dark that the Grimm brothers found in their collection of folktales or Novalis, the early romantic writer, turned into fascination with the menacing night and the attempt to render fear historically visible. In the folktale, the young man knew that the people around him expressed fear. The omniscient narrator’s voice even explicitly calls the older brother a coward, but somehow the younger brother does not know what it means to

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3 Ibid., 19.
shiver. In writing a history of fear in modern Germany and the Weimar Republic, I have found many scholars who attribute historical significance to fear. Yet I have still not found any overview of what fear actually meant from the perspective of the people who experienced the events that now comprise Germany’s early 20th century history and I have found no clear sense of how to approach a history of fear in terms of theory and method, or any comprehensive way to describe and measure how fear affected the everyday lives and politics of Germans during the interwar years.

Indeed, recalling modern German history continues to invoke vivid figures of fear and Nazism, in particular, has left a legacy of terror and genocide that still inform current public debates about terrorism, civil liberties and governance. Studying this history of Nazi terror remains morally compelling in a world in which the perpetrators of Nazi crimes consciously aimed to render themselves fascinating if not haunting for future generations and forms of persecution, terror and genocide continue to challenge contemporary societies. The historical study of fear in the case of modern Germany almost invariably comes back to the individual testimonies of survivors and continuing acts of bearing witness that still run counter to the perpetrators’ legacies of Nazi terror. But there is more to uncover about the social reality of fear in the case of modern Germany. Questions still linger about how to pierce widely held assumptions about fear based on our understanding of Nazi terror and how much the case of modern Germany reflects an exceptional or universal history of fear before we consider how to apply this historical knowledge of fear to contemporary events. Consequently, I argue that historians first need to develop a more comprehensive theoretical and methodological framework and then apply that framework to the case of modern Germany in order to see
if we can render fear historically more visible and judge whether or not a more nuanced approach to the history of emotions may further illuminate the historical record.

Defining Fear.

When writing about the history of fear and examining different kinds of archival materials for the evidence of fear, part of the problem facing the historian lies in the definition of fear. Drawing from the work of Kierkegaard and Freud, scholars often make a distinction between “fear” and “anxiety” in English and similarly, between Furcht and Angst in German. On the one hand, as the historian Johanna Bourke succinctly puts it, fear or Furcht refers to the immediate and concrete experience of an object that threatens the subject. In response to fear, people either reflexively take flight or fight, consciously or unconsciously accessing a given situation and then taking any necessary measures to deal with a threat. On the other hand, anxiety or Angst refers more to the condition of the subject, who does not appear to face any real source of threat, but anticipates danger. As a result, people who are so fraught with worry usually become incapable of reacting with any purpose.

As a note of caution, however, Bourke makes the point that historians have to be careful about applying such distinctions to emotional states that have taken place in the

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5 Bourke, 189-191.
past. What might be a diffuse and subjective experience of anxiety for one person may be a concrete and imminent threat to another. In both cases, the individual and his or her feelings and emotions are simultaneously caught up in the relations of power within historical communities, different social networks and notions of culture. Thus identifying expressions of fear and anxiety may not always reveal the emotional state of the subject and the language used may even express one feeling and really mean something else. In fact, my archival research indicates that people tend to express states of fear and anxiety in a variety of different linguistic terms like Not (peril) or Gefahr (danger) that are framed by specific historical contexts, and the examination of other seemingly unrelated discourses, such as Martina Kessel’s study of Langeweile (boredom), often yields more oblique albeit insightful views to the anxieties and fears in modern German society about other issues such as work, workers’ politics and the agency of women.\(^6\) Moreover, states of fear and anxiety do not necessarily become social realities through such clearly defined linguistic terms and locating the language of fear only begins to scratch the surface of its discursive history.

Delve further and scholars note other layers of activity underneath the linguistic ambiguities of fear. Bourke again points out that a whole range of people are actively involved in mediating anxieties and fears; some convert their worries about the nation or more everyday concerns into quasi visceral states of fear in the interests of other things like profit, influencing voters, mobilizing masses of people, legitimizing the use of force and persecuting people – what Bourke calls the “commercial work” of fear. Conversely, as Bourke also suggests, others turn actual dangers into sources of constant worry,

creating greater uncertainty rather than clarity about the specific nature of an immediate threat in ways that can undermine trust in social interactions, politics, ethics and morality.

Not all the commercial work of emotions, however, involves one to one translations between anxiety and fear, as if translating states of anxiety necessarily always directly leads to states of fear or vice versa as Bourke’s formulation suggests. In the case of the Weimar Republic, for example, some scholars such as Peter Fritzsche have observed political practices similar to the commercial work of emotions that Bourke describes, but contends that one of the things that made political movements like the Nazis so effective in their politics was their ability to “transfigure” the widespread sense of despair that rightwing populist groups had articulated before them into other feelings like hope and optimism about national renewal.7 My archival research shows that the commercial work of fear therefore involves ambivalent emotional translations, some meant to invoke fear or anxiety, some meant to instill fearlessness, enthusiasm or hope.

Rethinking the Terms of Fear, Emotional Economies and Regimes.

Drawing from their respective work in US and early modern European history, some scholars such as Peter and Carol Stearns and Barbara Rosenwein notice that societies or other definable groups maintain attitudes, standards and codes about what people should fear and how they should or should not express fear.8 Stemming from the intellectual sources of the German Enlightenment and Romanticism, for example, the 19th century ideal German man, according to Martina Kessel, was the inherently unstable

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model of the *Lebenskünstler*, i.e., a man who was supposed to be both rational and emotional, intelligent, sensitive, independent and sexually controlled all at the same time; whereas the ideal German woman was only conceived as purely emotional, timeless and unchanging in her ideal construction, thereby rendered incapable of independent action and revealing of a male anxiety that women would not accept their supposed place in such a regime.⁹

In other words, emotions are not universally constant or completely hardwired by human evolution; they have histories of social construction and there are historical explanations for the construction, appropriation and transformation of these ideals.¹⁰ One of the key analytical approaches in this project, therefore, involves locating important cultural sources of fear, identifying how both men and women should ideally express fear and tracing the continuities and changes in the discursive history of fear over time. Moreover, by deconstructing the discursive history of fear, through what the Stearns and Rosenwein respectively term “emotionology” or “emotional communities,” these scholars believe that they can then generate access to the underlying experiences of emotions and render emotions historically more visible in the process.

There are several problems, however, with these theoretical and methodological approaches to fear through the social construction of feelings. One problem involves the terms that I use for the discursive analysis of emotions and the history of their social construction. Both “emotional communities” and “emotionology” are attractive linguistic terms, but they do not necessarily illuminate how people produce emotions and inform how they experience, translate and express their feelings in their everyday lives and

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⁹ Kessel, 91-99 and 159-160.
¹⁰ See also Kessel, 257-330 and Radtkau, 263-353.
politics. Very often, in fact, my analysis of the archival materials in this project reveals the constellations of values that people want to assign to the experiences of emotions in ways that again resemble Bourke’s understanding of emotions in economic terms, or an “emotional economy,” i.e., the numerous activities involved in producing the discursive codes of fear for distribution, reproduction, consumption and exchange.

Indeed, much of my analysis is based on the identification of what I will call competing economies of fear that aim to attract people as religious believers, citizens, workers, soldiers, voters or activists by the various ways in which they invoke fear and convert it for political purpose. And my archival research indicates that emotional economies stem from a variety of cultural sources, some reflecting ancient human taboos, early modern European confessional histories or more recent developments reflective of the rise of modern capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, science and notions of health and race.

But this also reveals a blind spot in thinking about emotions in economic terms, for emotional economies suggests open, rational, and competitive practices of emotional exchange. My archival research suggests, however, that these economies cannot be completely separated from relationships of power and attempts to dominate, control, resist or even subvert opposing emotional economies, indicating that in some cases the use of the term emotional economy in fact reflects the attempt to foster an emotional community bound by shared sentiments or even establish an emotional regime to manage how people feel and express those feelings. In other words, some historical actors more systematically attempt to instill collective states of feeling among selected groups in order to influence the ways in which ordinary people make rational decisions through the
experience of their own emotions, and the idea of competitive emotional economies does not necessarily capture the political activities involved in the experience of our emotions.

Locating the Expression of Feeling.

Another problem in the approach to fear through the analysis of discourse, whether through “emotionology,” “emotional communities” or, in this case, “emotional economies,” is the extent to which one can access the experiences of fear simply through what people have communicated as the sources of their fears and the discourses on fear that they have appropriated for the management of their feelings and their expression. Saying that one is afraid, as William Reddy suggests, is a performative act, in which individuals translate what they are feeling into words and body language that belie the more complex physical and cognitive processes of the individual, including his or her attention, the perception of the people and things around them, the physical sensations of their bodies, the memories of past experiences, internalized ethical and moral codes and the coordination of numerous personal goals, not to mention survival.11

Thinking of fear may seem like a simple case of identifying the concrete external threat that people face and tracing the way fear spreads through societies, but from Reddy’s perspective, the subjective experience of fear generally reflects the sense of conflict that results from a person’s coordination of all the “thought materials” firing inside his or mind and body during a situation at hand.12 For some researchers such as Dr. Antonio Damasio, the director of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California, our more contemporary knowledge of emotions therefore reflects

12 Reddy, 105-119.
a more rationalized, functional understanding of emotions and an acceptance that emotions are constantly involved in rational thinking. In a recent newspaper article, Damasio suggests “Not long ago people thought of emotions as old stuff, as just feelings — feelings that had little to do with rational decision making, or that got in the way of it. [...] Now that position has reversed. We understand emotions as practical action programs that work to solve a problem, often before we’re conscious of it. These processes are at work continually, in pilots, leaders of expeditions, parents, all of us.”

This contemporary knowledge of emotions may in fact motivate further questions about its own social construction, but Reddy’s theoretical approach suggests that the feeling of fear often occurs at the points of conflict in what people are thinking about in the context of their everyday lives, their social relationships, cultural influences, political activities and the decisions they continually have to make amidst numerous internal and external factors. Fear can involve fairly obvious situations of threat like the outbreak of politically motivated mob violence or the arrival of a uniformed representative of a dictatorial state at the door to a private residence, but my archival research suggests that fear just as likely involves a whole range of issues that often engross ordinary people in more common ways through their personal lives and goals, their sense of identity or status, and internalized expectations of how to feel and express those feelings.

However, Reddy like Bourke also cautions that these expressions of fear are not passive forms of description. An utterance of fear, in his opinion, has a descriptive appearance that suggests authenticity, but is in fact ambivalent and limited in its ability to reveal what someone actually felt. Being afraid, from Reddy’s point of view, is partly

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discernible through both physical and verbal forms of expression, physiological sensations like a fast heart beat, hair standing on end, an adrenaline rush, goose bumps, or other physical gestures. But people also directly transform, intensify or mask the sensations they feel and the things that come to mind, altering their individual goals and behavior when necessary in order to conform or even influence how others should feel and act.

My archival research therefore indicates that fear often appears obliquely visible through the historical record of people in the local context of space and place. Expressions of fear do not necessarily reveal authentic feelings of fear, but the oblique approach to fear requires reading across the grain of different kinds of archival forms of evidence in order to see not only the discursive history of fear in its mass media forms, but also individual and collective expressions of fear with an attention to the wider social, cultural and political contexts of fear and its expression, the local and subjective points of ordinary conflicts in people’s everyday lives and the practices of individual agency, i.e., the translations and expressions of fear or other feelings.

The Dynamics of Time and Space in the Selection of Erfurt.

Reddy’s theoretical considerations about the context of fear reinforce a view current among some historians that reemphasizes the importance of the everyday perspective in historical studies, in this case, the importance of an everyday approach to the history of fear. In other words, things like local time, space and place, homes,

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neighborhoods, streets, schools, work, festivals, and the practices and material culture of everyday life like greetings and clothing also matter in the social reality of fear.\textsuperscript{15}

The choice of Erfurt as the primary location for this study of fear happened in fact by chance and was first made possible by the availability of funding from the University of Erfurt for my dissertation archival research. Thuringia, both by design and chance, also happens to be at the center of modern Germany, and its towns and cities have often served as the sites for national political conventions and other activities. But it also turns out that the regional archives remain understudied and that stroke of good fortune happens to interest those scholars who have been calling for new projects that more closely examine what was happening in interwar Germany through its provincial records.\textsuperscript{16} And the archival collections pertaining to Erfurt and other towns in central Germany offer often striking and varied source materials for studies of fear and other emotions.

In some respects, the history of Erfurt appears rather representative of modern Germany’s develop in not too surprising or unusual ways, reflecting the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Erfurt was a medium-sized German city that rapidly grew in the latter half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, but still below the average of other cities in the Prussia sphere of influence over that same period. Erfurt’s population was predominantly Protestant; its municipal politics dominated by notable elites, social relationships and middle class values of respectability. Similarly, Erfurt also


witnessed the growth of a large working class with both revolutionary and moderate forms of socialism, significant minority populations of Catholics and Jews, Roma and Sinti and Poles, and opposing movements of more conservative nationalist, anti-socialist politics, ethnocentric activists and some antisemitic agitation.

After the First World War, Erfurt also did not experience too much of the violence and bloodshed that occurred elsewhere during the revolution and subsequent uprisings in the early years of the Weimar Republic; nor did people in Erfurt experience the resurgence of excessive antisemitic violence as dramatically as in some German cities and towns during the same time period. But as it turns out, Erfurt is rather representative of what happened in many communities because of the fears that people perceived and invoked in their everyday lives and politics and the ways in which they radicalized their ethics and moral values in the wake of defeat, revolution and counterrevolution, which makes the history of fear in Erfurt typical of the widespread attacks on civic bonds and the ways in which different fears and competing emotional economies changed local political and social contexts in towns and cities across Germany during the Weimar Republic.

Yet Erfurt also proves rather unusual in some respects, particularly in regards to the relatively late rise of Nazism in the town, especially when compared to the fact that the towns of Thuringia were arguably some of the most important sites for the resurgence of the Nazi activities after Hitler’s release from prison in 1925.¹⁷ There are several explanations for the late development of Nazism in Erfurt, but Erfurt provides another important, albeit oblique view to the fears that Nazis invoked in their politics and their

¹⁷ See Steffen Raßloff, Flucht in die nationale Volksgemeinschaft: Das Erfurter Bürgertum zwischen Kaiserreich und NS-Diktatur (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2003), 360-398.
effects before their seizure of power in 1933 that provides further insights about the Nazi assault on German communities and civic values beyond the analysis of Nazi election strategies and tactics that still predominate our view of pre-1933 Nazism.\(^\text{18}\)

This oblique perception of fear also raises another question about how fear manifests itself in social reality in terms of time and space.\(^\text{19}\) One theoretical model for the dynamics of fear stems from Georges Lefebvre’s study of the “Grand Fear” that occurred during “Reign of Terror” in the French Revolution.\(^\text{20}\) This model suggests that fear tends to crystallize in collective forms; assuming its shape in part from pre-existing experiences and memories of fear, and then spiraling out through the social relays of communities and institutions, e.g., fueled by word of mouth, telling stories, spreading rumors, discussing private correspondence, reading the newspapers, and glancing at some of the posters, handbills, fliers and graffiti spread across the town’s walls.\(^\text{21}\)

Some forms of fear share similar dynamics of radicalization, common narrative and performative forms of events with a clear temporal and spatial sense of beginnings and ends, advent horizons and crescendos with excesses spiraling out of control, only to end as abruptly as they began. Yet my archival research will also demonstrate that not all forms of fear are so singularly dramatic in experience; they do not all share the same sense of time and space; nor do they all spiral in their development or end in complete

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Multiple sources of fear tend to operate at the same time, yielding both synchronic and diachronic social realities of fear that also operate in more ordinary, everyday ways that can facilitate the building of stronger group bonds or prove just as destructive as any grand dynamic of fear.

This multilayered description should therefore attend to a broad spectrum of language and expressions that capture and convey the experience of fear. Even then, scholars should note the ambiguities and the grey areas in the language of anxiety and fear. Historians must keep in mind the activities and practices involved in invoking fear or anxiety, identify the key emotional economies that people recall in order to mediate the experience of fear and seek out ways both dramatic and ordinary, temporal and spatial, in order to measure the continuities and changes of fear over longer periods of time and place. This history of fear in the Weimar Republic therefore involves the presence of competing economies and politics of fear, individual and collective performances of fear, public actions intended to instill fear or counter it, and individual experiences and agencies that must struggle between the demands of competing emotional economies and their own personal goals and feelings.

Notes on the Sources of Fear.

The historical analysis of fear requires various types of archival source materials, but each type of source, each piece of archival evidence, also create different kinds of problems in their use as forms of evidence and assessing their historical significance. One of the most important and readily available sources for my study of fear in Erfurt is

the local newspaper collections and other print materials maintained in Erfurt’s municipal 
archive and confessional records kept in local and regional church archives, but also as 
far away as the Leo Baeck Institute in New York City or the United States Holocaust 
Memorial Archive in Washington, DC. By the turn of the 20th century, as some scholars 
have noted, Germany was well into a mass-media revolution that expanded the lines of 
communication through networks of distribution and the layered practices of reading that 
involved partial encounters with printed materials, public and semi-private assemblies, 
private conversations and other forms of text inscribed in the city. Both radio and film 
eventually became the media of mass communication in the late 1920s and early 1930s, 
but up until the last years of the Weimar Republic, local newspapers were arguably the 
most important means of mass communication and politics. 

Erfurt, again, was in some ways no different from other German towns and cities 
in regards to reading, and its citizens maintained a diverse array of daily newspapers, 
other periodicals, printed circulars and fliers that reflected the complex reality of a 
modern, industrial society with different socio-economic classes, professional groups and 
associations, confessional and ethnic minority populations and opposing points of view. 

Newspapers, however, only provide a very limited view for historical analysis. 
They offer access to competing editorial views about fear with editorial staffs often 
telling their readers what to fear or how to manage their fears, even inserting 
 misinformation or exaggerating for emotional effect, but newspapers often stop well short 
of revealing what people other than the newspaper editors or a few notable politicians

23 Compare Graf, 13-52. See also Peter Fritzsche, Reading Berlin 1900 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard 
University Press, 1996), 51-86. For German Protestant print culture, see Michael Trauthig, Im Kampf um 
Glauben und Kirche. Eine Studie über Gewaltakzeptanz und Krisenmentalität der württembergischen 
actually thought and felt. That said it is still worth perusing the pages of the various newspapers for the events that they reported, paying careful attention to how editors reported those events and the occasional publication of eyewitness testimonies or private opinions which may themselves reveal something more historically significant about the subjective layers of fear.

Other kinds of sources besides newspapers are therefore crucial for this study, particularly the confidential police reports prepared for Erfurt’s magistrate maintained in Erfurt’s Municipal Archive and related district attorney and police records housed at the State Archive of Thuringia in Gotha, as well as more subjective archival source materials like diaries, memoirs, journals and oral history testimonies. Each type of source yields its own view to the social realities of fear and carries its own set of limitations that will require further consideration below about how to read them across the grain as well for their authors’ perspectives and attention to feelings.

There are also several major holes in the historical records of Erfurt. For one thing, there is a rich and diverse archival collection of newspapers and other print materials, but even some of these such as the local Jewish weekly, entitled the *Israelitisches Wochenblatt*, the different Communist daily newspapers and the confidential police reports are not preserved in their entirety, thereby creating lapses in their coverage, especially in the crucial years of the Weimar Republic, which are the focus of this project. The newspaper collections originally prepared for the Agrarian League and its affiliates, the *Reichslandbundpressearchiv*, now housed in the Federal German Archives in Berlin, offer an alternative snapshot of important topics related to this study of fear like antisemitism or the defense of the republic, organized
chronologically and by region, and are often the source of the nationally distributed newspapers that I have examined, particularly from Berlin.24

However, there is a general lack of records on the subjective experiences of fear in the case of Erfurt, especially as one peers further back into the past before the Weimar Republic. Some records of subjective experience do surface in the newspapers, on the margins of police reports or through literary sources, memoirs and diaries from other people in other places, which offer important alternative perspectives, but nonetheless, more local records of subjective experience in Erfurt would be more helpful for their insights into Erfurt’s local context and dynamics.

The largest and most readily available collections of subjective experience are in fact found among mainly Jewish survivor testimonies that I have examined in the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive. A small subset of this research provides some access to the Jewish experience of everyday life and politics in Erfurt during the Weimar Republic and the Nazi regime, and demonstrates the everyday effects of antisemitism and Nazism rather effectively, most surprisingly among non-Jewish Germans. But this approach through the Jewish German archival sources also underscores the larger absence of other subjective experiences, particularly among non-Jewish German citizens. The archival records viewed so far only reveal glimpses of their experiences and provide almost nothing about other significant ethnic populations, especially Roma, Sinti and Poles, who were very likely present in and around Erfurt, but remain absent in the historical records.

24 Bundesarchiv (BA) R 8034 II, 1480 Antisemitismus, BA R 8034 II 2983-2989 Thüringen (1919-1932), BA R 8034 II 4373 DVP (1914-1929) and BA R 8034 II 5684 Bayern (1923-1924).
Overview of Chapters.

The second chapter broadly searches for the cultural sources of fear and complicates the notions still prevalent in the historiography that Germans historically have been overcome by their fears or that fear can be so easily reduced to late 19th century conservative nationalist activism and inevitably traced to the suppression of republican activism in the Weimar Republic and the rise of Nazism. The archival research and analysis in this chapter reveals a wide variety of cultural sources to fear in the context of late 19th century Germany and identifies a key change in German nationalist notions of the “Mighty Fortress” from a nation that felt secure and optimistic about its future to a nation embattled by its perceived enemies.

The third chapter examines the emotional impact of modern warfare on German citizens and soldiers and the emotional systems they maintained to deal with their feelings on the front lines and on the home front in war, defeat and ensuing revolution. The archival research in this chapter shows how the anticipation of modern warfare rekindled local prewar debates about how best to prepare children, especially young men, for future wars. The research in this chapter also demonstrates the ambiguities in the subjective experiences of the First World War and indicates that the nationalist emotional economy that many Germans had tried to maintain in the hopes of final victory already began to break down under the pressures of total war and the heightened expectations that sacrifice in the name of the nation created for different groups, particularly for working class activists, led to revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence that led some local leaders to sanction the transgression of their ethical and moral values intended to maintain law and order.
The fourth chapter examines how the fears and anxieties of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence influenced Erfurt in the early years of the Weimar Republic and demonstrates how invocations of citizens’ “courage” served to mobilize groups for different political agendas, but particularly in order to radicalize middle class notions of respectable forms of politics and promote more aggressive approaches among both male and female German citizens to more actively participate in everyday life and politics, which provided a significant albeit not insurmountable challenge to those local leaders who still sought to maintain more moderate forms of politics and eliminate more radical forms of politics in their midst.

The fifth chapter focuses on how both left and rightwing extremists, particularly Communist and völkisch nationalists, sought to translate different fears and anxieties into economies of fearlessness at the peak of political violence. One of the most striking archival findings in this chapter is the middle class translation of the fears and anxieties of national defeat, Communist revolution and the extraordinary concerns of hyperinflation and unemployment into alternative feelings of hope and enthusiasm for the early Nazi movement, thereby helping völkisch nationalist groups to proliferate at the local level and providing a harbor for antisemitic fears of the “Jew,” particularly among German Nationalist youth that led to greater frequency and intensity in local acts of antisemitic violence aimed at both Jewish and non-Jewish German citizens.

The sixth chapter, therefore, more closely traces the effects of antisemitic violence in the provinces of the Weimar Republic. Drawing from a greater range of archival materials, especially the visual history testimonies of Jewish Holocaust survivors from different communities in central Germany, this chapter not only illuminates how
antisemitic violence continued to intensify in more everyday forms for young Jewish people growing up in the provinces of the Weimar Republic, but also demonstrates how antisemitic violence began to instill fear among ordinary non-Jewish Germans by heightening the racial expectations in local social relations.

Finally, the seventh chapter turns the reader’s attention to the little understood but crucial place of Thuringian communities in Nazi politics and suggests the need to rethink how the rise of Nazism in Thuringia foreshadowed the coming of the Third Reich and affected the emotional states of both Nazi opponents and allies. The chapter begins with an examination of how the Nazis attempted to instill emotional effects through their activities and traces how people responded in the region to Nazi activism. However, rather than simply seeking middle class respectability as part of a strategic effort to seize power through electoral politics, this chapter shows how Nazi activism led to increased dissent, not only among socialist or Jewish opponents, but also among some middle class leaders whom they sought to attract. Consequently, the Nazis and their völkisch nationalist allies focused on suppressing dissent within their own ranks and enabled the control of key positions of police authority in Thuringia that removed the last lines of defense and security for local civic relations and democratic practice.
Chapter 2

Searching for the Sources of Fear in Imperial Germany

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“For the Jewish congregation of Erfurt these are auspicious times because of the nobler spirit which fills the law of the land and the friendly cooperation of the honorable city officials. May the good deeds of a new time with its upsurge in science and art also allow this congregation’s devices to come to something good and may we join in this effort with the earnest prayer that the peace and harmony, the inwardness (Innerlichkeit) and fraternity, the devotion and excitement for Jews, which once filled the congregation members during the rebuilding of the synagogue in 1840, remain a sacred inheritance.”

- Sermon by Rabbi Dr. Kroner at the dedication of Erfurt’s new synagogue in 1884

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“Under their scepter [of Martin Luther, the Hohenzollerns and Kaiser Wilhelm II] we must overcome all enemies who are active right now, everywhere.”

- Speech by Deacon Leib on the occasion of Erfurt’s Martin Festival in 1895

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“One could see curiously surprised faces at the windows as the May Day revelers passed by in unending groups through the streets. This is the workers’ movement which has been written off as dead? One could read this question in the astonished eyes of those people, their intellectual horizon wasted away by a press that has either slandered or systematically suppressed the meaning of the growing workers’ movement.”

- The editors of Erfurt’s Tribüne on the occasion of May Day, 1913

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This chapter explores the history of fear through the provincial records of Erfurt and other surrounding communities in Thuringia during Imperial Germany. Scholars have often invoked fear as a key factor in the debates surrounding modern Germany’s development, leading some to conclude that that Germans have not been able to overcome their fear. Fear, therefore, has continued to influence how Germans practice politics beyond Imperial Germany. But fear, ironically, remains more of a superficial figure of political history in the scholarship than a carefully understood affect in Germans’ everyday lives and politics.

Looking for the history of fear therefore requires different methodological approaches and different types of sources to go beyond the discursive analysis and provide access to other aspects of fear. The collective experiences of fear have proved easier to identify and trace via material print culture, public acts of speaking, police records and the activities of socio-economic groups, their public festivals and political acts. Yet the individual, private side of fear and its subjective experience are harder to come by, making it therefore more to difficult to see how ordinary, everyday life, emotions and politics have interacted.

Rather than suggest a singular continuity between one prewar mentality and the way fear affected everyday life and politics beyond the First World War, this chapter argues that people created diverse and even competing emotional economies informed by different memories, ideologies, cultural practices, socio-economic groups and politics that were strongly shaped by everyday life and locality. Consequently, Germans were not overcome by any one fear, nor quite masters of their fears. Fear was everywhere and nowhere, at times invoked, experienced, expressed, masked, suppressed or instilled. Fear
involved Biblical stories, early modern cultural recollections, 19th century social memories, and contemporary, ordinary concerns. Fear assumed the figures of childhood recollections, but also acquired a new language from more scientific understandings of the body. Fear gave way to discussions of security and safety, as well as hope and progress, debates of old threats returning, new enemies emerging, the summoning of more familiar heroic models of courage or new utopian visions, and practices of suppression, coercion and resistance within the nation. At the turn of the twentieth century Germany may have appeared particularly caught in the grips of all their fears. However, the fears that Germans felt were not so different from the fears expressed in other nations, especially in Europe and North America. There were also peculiarities to the fears that Germans felt, but not necessarily any predetermined outcome or special path for how Germans’ fears would inform their nation’s future.

Fear in the Historiography of Imperial Germany.

The debates on the continuities and discontinuities of modern German history and the role of socio-economic structural development in the history of Imperial Germany continue to shape the scholarly view to the roots of fear in modern German history and how fear affected the everyday lives and politics of Germans across different forms of government and war. Some have in fact suggested that Germany’s history of war has led to distinctive if not peculiar forms of modern German political culture and therefore a particular way to think about fear. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that the rise of modern German political culture stems from an original experience of war. Gordon Craig, for example, asserts that the seemingly timeless characteristics of Germans such as
their obedience, social integrity, parochialism and defensiveness have originated from the trauma of the Thirty Year’s War. From this view, that war was the collective experience of devastation which has shaped the way Germans have historically responded to problems with apocalyptic assessments of crisis, subsequent needs for security, calls for people to obey strong authority figures and intolerance for people and ideas deemed foreign.  

Yet some have suggested that the ways in which Germans remembered the experience of the Thirty Years War in their autobiographies served more to constitute an early modern German self identity as “God-fearing” and trusting in God’s plan rather than serve to recall any experience of fear itself or affect a state of fear about the future.  

The ways in which later generations of Germans remembered the Thirty Years War in their local cultures did not necessarily lead to renewed inter-confessional conflict and may have actually helped establish a level of inter-confessional peace between German Protestants and Catholics in the 19th century. The idea of excluding people, particularly Jews, as Helmut Walser Smith has recently suggested, stems more from the cultural memories of early modern antisemitic violence than the violence of the Thirty Years War.

The social and structural analysis of German history suggests that there are other key ways to think about how Germany’s history has shaped the feeling of fear. For example, the mid-19th German liberal, as Hans Ulrich Wehler has pointed out, expressed

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an aversion to popular movements based on their perceptions of early working class and agrarian activism connected to the political upheavals of 1848.\textsuperscript{31} Those experiences and their memories continued to influence German Liberals’ willingness to suppress “social rebellion”, when mass-based forms of politics threatened the political situation as they had in 1848, or later on in how the Reich handled its internal enemies while other groups invoked a sense of trust in the people.\textsuperscript{32}

Several historians have suggested that, in fact, Imperial German political culture evolved as a reaction to an emerging series of fears in the wake of national unification and the nation’s early financial history, which would continue to shape future politics and, thereby, how people thought about fear and mediated its affects. Heinrich August Winkler has argued that Germany’s late development as a nation state made imagining a German national identity a continuing source of insecurity in Imperial German politics and beyond.\textsuperscript{33} Unsure of their own relationship with the new German nation, leaders across the political spectrum evoked an array of threats from the “Black” Catholics to the “Red” Socialist Terror or the money-hungry, bloodthirsty Jew within their communities as a way to both define what it meant to be German and advance different groups’ political interests within Imperial politics. This political use of fear helped forge the alliance of agrarian and lower middle class interests and provided a working recipe for future leaders to sound the alarm of the enemies within.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{34} In the case of Erfurt, evidence in the municipal records also suggests that notions about other groups in the town and region such as Poles, Roma and Sinti as well as Jehovah’s Witnesses later on informed both public concerns and the development of policing activities into the Weimar Republic. See Thüringisches Staatsarchiv Gotha (ThSAG), Landratsamt Erfurt 40, “Zigeuner, Sklaven (1887-1931).”
Hans Rosenberg more strongly emphasizes the role of economics in Germans’ fear, suggesting that the financial crisis of 1873 undermined the unifying experiences of the founding generation and directly led to a more radically nationalist political culture.\(^{35}\) The social psychological consequences of the crash meant a climatic change in German consciousness and ways of reacting that persisted until at least the economic upswing after 1896, characterized by increasing worry, pessimism, complaint, social discontent, political agitation and aggression.

Winkler also stresses the role of Imperial political elites, most notably Bismarck, and their ability to manipulate perceived fears, more than the ability of uneducated mobs and masses to influence liberal politicians’ support for political repression or the capacity of economic shock to create a particularly German political culture of fear.\(^{36}\) From this view, Bismarck mastered the ability to generate plebiscitary pressures on National Liberals in support of anti-socialist laws because of their own distinct parliamentary fears of losing political influence and his ability to invoke popular fears in the politics of other emerging political blocks, more specifically, in crafting a new form of rightwing nationalist alliance between the Junker landowning class (traditionally anti-liberal and anti-nationalist), and the lower middle classes of craftsmen and small business owners who were afraid of economic crises, social unrest, the loss of property and the threat to their religious beliefs. The sum of these political manipulations of Germans’ fears

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created the social basis of support for all antidemocratic movements that persisted beyond 1918.

Since the historiographical debates of the 1980s and 90s, other scholars have questioned both these peculiarities and continuities of German political culture and their linear trajectories into Nazism, which raises the further question about the specificities of fear in its modern German context and its capacity to persist unchanged or without rupture. Certainly other industrializing nations had their own histories of fear in relationship to confessional, class, racial and gender conflicts. Other nations had had to deal with the traumas and memories of war, or had problems with antisemitism and the fear of the “Jew.” Some such as Geoff Eley have raised doubts about the persistence if not near permanent state of crisis that Imperial German politics invoked and the conservative nationalist continuities that resulted in an undetermined future to consider. And yet again, still others such as David Blackbourn suggest that the communal tensions that arose as a result of suppressing political Catholicism, or by extension from the suppression of other internal enemies at the local level, must be taken more seriously by scholars interested in understanding how Germans understood their feelings and practiced their politics in the years that followed.

Locality, then, appears to be one of the relatively understudied ways to access how Germans felt fear and responded to that fear over time. Yet as other scholars have demonstrated, peering more deeply into the contexts of emotional history reveals further

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problems to consider. For example, in his study on the documented cases of neurasthenia and how notions of nerves influenced Imperial German society and politics, Joachim Radtkau, has illuminated a complex landscape for scholars to think about in their examination of an emotion like fear, showing how medical professionals generated knowledge about nervousness and how that knowledge permeated popular culture, even private diaries, in both everyday experience and national politics.

Radtkau asserts that the concern over nervous disorders, which many contemporary health professionals and popular writers believed were spreading like an epidemic in German society and politics, heralded a new era of fear that displaced the decreasing threat of actual epidemics which had plagued German cities earlier in the century. Yet Radtkau has also been quick to point out the salient ambiguities about nervousness in Imperial German discourse, not to mention the lack of evidence for direct links between actual conditions and psychic states, and the presence of competing discussions over the nature and value of nervousness. For one thing, Richard J. Evans has demonstrated that the threat of contagion did not go away with the rise of scientific knowledge and the treatment of bacilli and viruses in his study of Hamburg, even showing that as contagion persisted, so too did a mix of medieval and modern notions of what was really happening and how people should respond.

However, from Radtkau’s view what mattered more was the perception of nerves and the realities this could generate in everyday life and politics. Many contemporary observers believed that nervous conditions did in fact stem from modern, industrial, urban society or the crisis of imperial politics. They influenced how people conceived of

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39 Radtkau, 263-353.
their own thoughts and feelings in terms of nerves and nervous conditions and invoked larger thoughts of hopeless cultural decline, decadence or downfall. Yet Radtkau also points out the ambivalence about these nerves in German society and politics. There were also those who sought to reclaim older romantic German values of sensitivity or Gemütlichkeit, or valorized nerves as an advantageous prerequisite for great ideas and general progress. And there were still others who countered with alternative German discursive traditions about security and health, or even proclaimed a new type of German person, one who conveyed a cooler, less nervous and more hardened image of men and denigrated nervousness as a sign of weakness.

Imperial German Discourse, Memories and Dreams of Fear.

For some German intellectuals, probing the emotional experiences of growing up in Imperial Germany became an important way to comprehend how Germany had seemingly erred in its development, but for some probing fear was still more personal and detached from larger political questions. Writing of Germany’s catastrophe in the last years of Nazi Germany, the historian Friedrich Meinecke recalled the excitement and glory of watching the German troops return in June 1871 victorious over France with an urge to choke – a bittersweet feeling mixed with other memories of hearing defeated troops returning to Berlin in 1918.\textsuperscript{41} For Meinecke, life had begun in Imperial Germany fearless, full of excitement and glory, but it was ending engrossed in searching for how things had gone wrong.

Writing on the cusp of Imperial Germany’s defeat, the author Heinrich Mann more directly grounded his nation’s problems in the German boyhood experience of fear. For unlike Meinecke’s recollections of his Imperial childhood, the world in which the men of Mann’s generation had grown up was populated by a whole host of frightening figures as described from the childhood perspective of Diederich Hessling, the main character of Mann’s novel, *Der Untertan*:

After so many frightening powers to which one was subjected, after the fairy toads, the father, the dear Lord, the fortress ghost and the police, after the chimney sweep who can drag one through all the chimneys until one is also a black man, and the doctor who may poke one in the neck and shake one when one screamed – after all of these powers Diederich encountered one still more frightening, which consumed a person all at once: the school.  

Most of these figures suggest a world in which ordinary fears had been captured in cultural forms intended to excite the imagination of a child, as well as edify and entertain social relationships. There were the fairy tales of children’s storybooks, the story-telling of family and friends and the ghostly figures haunting nearby castles. Yet there were also figures constructed to exude authority and control. There was the authoritarian father-figure of the German home, the powerful figure of a God, who thundered from pious people in their pulpits and everyday encounters with towering policeman. And there were other figures of everyday life that frightened a child growing up in this world, the black and dirty soot of the chimney sweep, the needle of a doctor, and the peers and teachers waiting at school.  

In the words of Diederich, all of this *Angst* does not make him more industrious or less of a dreamer. Instead, he figures out how the preparatory high school worked, that

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“inhuman”, “machine-like” “organism,” and then Diederich makes himself master over his fears. He learns to imitate those who have power and then projects his own terror on his younger sisters who work in his father’s factory. When Diederich returns years later to his hometown as an educated young man from Berlin in order to take over his father’s company, the figures that frighten him include a factory labor organizer, his father’s surviving peers of respectability, the eligible women of local middle class society, the Jewish lawyer, men who have completed their military service and the authority of the Emperor Wilhelm II. Diederich again seeks to overcome most of his adult fears and asserts himself in his home town’s social relationships and politics, but as an expression of Mann’s criticism of Imperial German society and politics, Diederich remains a hypocritical coward, susceptible to radical rightwing politics and dangerously obedient to authority.

Writing from the vantage point of Nazi Germany, Walter Benjamin also returned to his childhood memories of life in Berlin at the turn of the century, a life which was intended to convey security, but in fact revealed to him the middle class suppression of their fears:

Poverty could have no place in these rooms, where death itself had none. There was no place in them to die; and so their occupants died in sanatoriums, while the furniture went directly to a dealer as soon as the estate was settled. In these rooms, death was not provided for. That is why they appeared so cozy by day and became the scene of bad dreams at night.

This kind of place was supposed to be free from all fear. Servants seemed to hover at the entrance to his Aunt Lehmann’s home and execute his aunt’s every command unseen.

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43 Mann, 12-13.
Toys would appear before him, Benjamin recalled, such as the glass cube that contained a complete working mine with miniature miners, stonecutters, inspectors, small wheelbarrows, hammers and lanterns, all conveying a clockwork sense of order that Benjamin recalled.45

However, material culture could only provide a fragile feeling of security and order. The fears of poverty and death resurfaced through his dreams in the most intimate spaces and material things meant to dispel them, leaving Benjamin with a question about the suppression of fear in middle class culture. But the death of a childhood female friend also transformed the familiar landscape, imbuing a flowerbed along the stream bank next to her home with a feeling “so resplendent and inviolable” that it became “the cenotaph of the departed child”.46 From Benjamin’s view, the fear of death was therefore natural, even innocent, and capable of imparting bittersweet memories in the world around him, but also suppressed and therefore troubling.

In Käthe Kollwitz’s diary entries, by comparison, people appear full of emotions. Kollwitz noted her own mixed feelings and different worries as a wife, mother, artist and activist in Imperial Germany. She knew that emotions were supposed to be controlled and detached from her work as an artist, but she also found life to be instinctual and her sensibilities delightful, even restorative and more capable of making her work effective. Her husband, Karl, “cannot spare himself or conserve his energies,” […] “all bargaining, weighing and holding back in the realm of emotions is alien and repugnant to him”. His love and kindness were inexhaustible.47 Her sons burgeoned with sensuality. She

45 Benjamin, 65.
46 Benjamin, 67-68.
pondered how young people in general would discover the struggle with their instincts, never “entirely free of sensuality; often they will feel it their enemy, and sometimes they will almost suffocate for the joy it brings.” She became appreciative of the vegetative life that old people led, “one far removed from the needlessly passionate emotional life of the young.”

Working class people appeared in Kollwitz’s diary entries to have their own emotional cultures and problems with feelings. Kollwitz visited with a working class woman who had been battered by her husband after he had flown into a rage, and noted that the story always seemed to end the same way. The husband had lost his job, began to drink excessively and become sick. He had sought treatment. His feet were swollen. He suffered from melancholy and nervousness. His family cursed him. He remained “in a state of hysterical misery much longer than his wife.” He longed for death because he could not support his family and he would probably take his life. As for the wife, Kollwitz observed the misery was always the same. “She keeps the children whom she must feed, scolds and complains about her husband. She sees only what has become of him and not how he became that way.”

And of her self, Kollwitz described her struggle over the place of sensuality in her work and the concern over the capacity of her work to affect people:

No longer diverted by other emotions, I work the way a cow grazes; but Heller once said that such calm is death. Perhaps in reality I “accomplish” little more. The hands work and work, and the head imagines it is producing God knows what; and yet formerly, in my so wretchedly limited working time, I was more productive because I was more sensual; I lived as a human being must live, passionately interested in everything. […] working on the second plate of Death] Then there seems to me nothing

48 Ibid., 55-56.
49 Ibid., 56.
50 Ibid., 51-52.
special about what I have done. That torments me. Potency, potency is diminishing.\textsuperscript{51}

Concern over her work led Kollwitz to reconsider the effects of controlling of her own emotions and the numbing sensation in her work. Kollwitz began to suspect that her life as an artist demanded the restoration of her sensuality, as something instinctual, naturally healthy and necessary to make her own work more effective. The expectation to suppress or control sensuality and feelings appears strong, and echoes the problems of emotional control and suppression that Benjamin recalled in his memories of German middle class culture. But pondering emotional life was not so closely linked with debating the aberrance of Germany’s path, as it was for Meinecke, or noting the middle class suppression of emotions, as it was for Benjamin. Kollwitz was drawn to the plight of the workers, the rural weavers and peasants, the urban industrial workers and their families, and found the working class emotional culture debilitating and violent. Her own emotional freedom and the bittersweet sensuality of her own family life emerge then as a rare ideal when set against the emotional memories and frightening figures of the historian and writer, full of personal pleasures as well as not so pleasant confrontations with life.

The Mighty Fortress of the Nation Secured.

In the case of Erfurt, expressions of fear most readily surface through the archival records of local print media, rather than the more private records of subjective experience, and Judeo-Christian cultural sources appear to have played an important role in shaping how people perceived the world around them in terms of threats and safety.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 53.
and articulating how they should manage their feelings. For example, Pastor Bärwinkel from Erfurt’s *Reglerkirche* drew from the Old Testament Book of Nehemiah (4, 1-9) to tell his listeners at the Convention of the Protestant Union in Halle in 1875, as well as his readers in a pamphlet published afterwards, that “We are all in agreement that the City of God which we would like to build here must have walls.” The pastor explained that “It is necessary to give the city a secure boundary so that people know how far its territory reaches and where foreign land begins,” and he added that it should be “a solid wall through which the foxes themselves cannot sneak.”

For some contemporary readers and listeners the choice of passages must not have been lost from their years of reading the Bible and related confessional literature. According to the Old Testament, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem from Babylon in hopes of rebuilding the old Holy City with the support of the Persian king Artaxerxes who also welcomed the refortification of Jerusalem in the interests of his empire. Reconstruction of Jerusalem’s walls provoked other groups in the surrounding area to militarily oppose the city and spread confusion within the city walls. Aware of these threats, Nehemiah organized the arming of the men of Jerusalem and spurred their families to fill all the gaps in their city’s walls. He told the people of Jerusalem not to forget that their god was a great and terrible god. He continued to reassure them that their god would not forsake them in their time of need and would fight for them. And if they needed any further motivation, Nehemiah reminded the men of Jerusalem that they fought for their kin, their sons, their daughters, their wives, and their homes (Nehemiah 4, 14).

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For Pastor Bärwinkel’s audience the self-reference was supposed to be clear: Germans had assumed the legacy of the Old Testament, if not usurped the mantle of the chosen people, and they were to understand their work in terms of building and defending the new nation’s walls. Pastor Bärwinkel’s sermon also evoked the hope of restoring ancient foundations, faith in a people’s covenant with god, the re-establishment of community, the need for constant vigilance and the call to action. But the wall also contained the threat of potential penetration, the loss of divine sanction, the destruction of community, and the fears of human death, masculine impotence and dispossession.

In regional towns like Erfurt the idiom of building city walls had a long and ambivalent emotional history of both security and danger, which continued to inform how people experienced national politics later on in Imperial Germany. In the late medieval and early modern period of Europe, the citizens of Erfurt had sought to assert their political autonomy and defend their independence through the establishment of the city’s structural defenses. In the course of the Thirty Years’ War, international military engineers and local leaders continually improved on the medieval fortifications of Erfurt against the threat of clashing armies in central Europe, and eventually capped them all with the Petersburg Fortress, a masterwork of 17th and 18th century military fortifications that provided a commanding view of much of Erfurt and the surrounding plain. With the final defeat of Napoleon’s armies in 1815, the Prussian state secured possession of Erfurt and continued to maintain a strong military presence as part of the Prussian and later German Empire’s defense in central Europe.

In the following years, the town’s leaders transformed the architecture of Erfurt as a reflection of the sense of optimism and progress among city leaders for the rapidly
industrializing city, tearing down or transforming large sections of the city’s old fortified walls in order to tame the “wild” Gera River, laying out a more modern traffic infrastructure and improving the general standard of living for city residents with a modern drinking water system, new parks, a new municipal hospital and schools, electricity and the region’s first telephone network 9 (Figure 2).  

Figure 2. Photo of Erfurt’s fortified walls in 1878, including the new tunnels for the city’s expansion by the Schmidtstedter Gate. 

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53 Raßloff, 40-41.
54 Christine Riesterer, Harald Baum and Horst Stecher, ed., *Die Reihe Archivbilder Erfurt* (Erfurt: Sutton Verlag, 2000), 45.
City leaders also recast the town’s public architecture as a celebration of Imperial Germany (Figure 3). When the soldiers of the Prussian Fourth Artillery Regiment and the Seventy-First Infantry Regiment returned from fighting in June 1871, they marched through a victory arch in the center of town, known as the *Anger*, dedicated by the town to the victory and glory of its soldiers. Some of the earliest photos captured the efforts of local families of prominence posing with the wounded they had tended and the captured

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55 *Die Reihe Archivbilder Erfurt*, 62.
officers and enlisted French men they had held within their walls (Figure 4). The town’s leaders hosted formal receptions of the royal family, annually convened public memorials for the nation, organized veterans’ associations and constructed a tower to Bismarck on the town’s southern ridgeline in a romanticized vision of the nation as a watchtower and beacon.  

Figure 4. Photo of Erfurt’s civilian aid Committee of Erfurt during the Franco-Prussian War (1870/71).

The Memory of Fear and Hope in Erfurt’s Jewish Community.

The potential openness that a Biblical reading lent to the building of Imperial Germany as a New Jerusalem was also not lost on Erfurt’s Jewish leaders and the hope they had to recast their history in a new, more positive light. Despite a wave of antisemitic agitation and pogrom-style violence in western Prussia in the early 1880s, the leaders of Erfurt’s Jewish community publicly expressed their belief that the Prussian

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57 Die Reihe Archivbilder Erfurt, 63.
state’s advocacy for Jewish emancipation and local support for Jewish culture heralded a new era for Jewish life in the city, even as their public actions expressed a more guarded sense of optimism and concern rooted in medieval fears.

The building of the first synagogue since the return of Jewish people to Erfurt at the turn of the 19th century expressed a soft spoken sense of Jewish theological reform and feeling of acceptance in the town. The “Little Synagogue” of 1840 was built in a neo-classical style that included an inconspicuous façade with tall arcing windows in three walls of the sanctuary. The design shifted the *bimah*, the raised platform or table from which the Torah is read, to the eastern end of the sanctuary and integrated it into the Ark of the Covenant, which was traditionally kept at the eastern end, in order to convey, as some scholars have suggested, an end to the duality between the land of the Diaspora and the Holy Land.58 The seating was also reorganized from a set chairs and benches concentrically arranged around the central *bimah* to longitudinal rows facing eastward toward the *Bimah/Ark’s* new position, further mimicking the local arrangement of Christian churches, the soft-spoken feeling of assimilation and the relative modernity of the Jewish townspeople.

In his sermon for the dedication of the 1840 synagogue, the Rabbi Dr. Ludwig Philippson from Magdeburg declared that Jews would stand firm and not waver in the face of future possible prejudice and defamation.59 Not yet legally emancipated, but under the protection of an enlightened government and the favor of just authorities, the rabbi continued, Jews would be able to build a house of worship unhindered to the one

and only God. And in closing his sermon, the rabbi asked that God mercifully watch over their new house of worship and protect it from danger, accident, fire and storm, so that future generations could gather there. He asked that God bestow favor on those who worked to erect the new building and finish it so that it would always remain as a sign of their blessing.

In the years that followed the Prussian state’s emancipation of Jews in 1869, Erfurt’s Jewish population increased more rapidly. By 1884, 479 people were registered as Jewish residents of the city, roughly 0.8 percent of town’s population. Erfurt’s Jewish leaders chose to build a larger synagogue south of the old inner city and on the Kartäuserufer. By comparison, the architect of the larger synagogue chose a more conspicuous “Moorish” style, whose façade clearly proclaimed a more “Oriental” image of Jewish identity that expressed both the optimism of inclusion in the community and the freedom not to totally conform or convert to Protestant Christian culture.

In dedicating the newly built synagogue in 1884, Rabbi Dr. Kroner recalled the history of Jewish life in Erfurt in more detail and invoked the Jewish memories of fear to underline a new period of hope. Like Pastor Bärwinkel, Rabbi Kroner drew comparisons to the Jewish return from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. By contrast, however, Rabbi Kroner recited the medieval history of antisemitic persecution. Since Kaiser Otto IV had guaranteed the protection of Jews in his realm in 1212, the rabbi explained, Jews had watched the lies spread about them that

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62 Leo Baeck Institute, DS 135 G4 E74 K76, “Festschrift zur Einweihung der neuen Synagoge in Erfurt am 4. September 1884 auf Wunsch der Gemeinde-Collegien verfasst von Dr. Th. Kroner.”
63 On catastrophic national religious violence, national belonging and the massacre of Jews in German social memory see Helmut W. Smith, The Continuities of German History, 74-114.
Jews were deceptive; Jews poisoned fountains and herring. Despite antisemitism, they stood to face the waves of pogrom-style violence more than once by their fellow townspeople or people from other towns, ending in plunder, sacred desecrations, expulsion and murder in 1221, 1266 and 1349.

The dedication of Erfurt’s new synagogue, as Rabbi Kroner indicated, would serve as a monument to more “fortunate times,” which had returned in the early 19th century. He praised the new building’s progressive architectural style and beautiful location in the old city of Erfurt, and he drew attention to the Prussian state’s legal recognition of the Jews, the prevalence of a “nobler spirit” of law and cooperation with local officials. In this space, Rabbi Kroner asserted, Jews could once again serve and honor their God and the “highest ideals of humanity.”

The Jewish Threat to the Nation.

It becomes more difficult to probe below the surface of these Jewish public declarations of optimism and the presence of fear beyond the invocation of medieval memories because of the absence of more private kinds of source materials in the case of Erfurt. Contemporary media focused on more dramatic antisemitic violence elsewhere in Imperial Germany, even surfacing in the coverage of an outside observer like a reporter for the New York Times, which was not yet the liberal newspaper it would later become, and his warnings of Germany’s potential to regress back into a medieval state of barbarity. In other communities, especially in western Prussia and the Pomeranian provincial city of Neustettin, waves of antisemitic violence began to affect the openness and diversity of Imperial space and any Jewish sense of security in the early 1880s. In

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64 Moritz, 27-29 and Peterseim, 24-26.
the words of the *New York Times* correspondent, antisemitism had increasingly become something more than popular prejudice in Germany.\(^{65}\)

Antisemitism had in fact become a “national passion,” the New York Times correspondent explained, which assumed “practical forms” in the local suppression of Jewish candidates for public office and their exclusion from the national parliament. And the “ablest, most dignified and learned men ranged themselves on either side.” For the New York Times correspondent, it seemed odd for a land of so much “intellectual and liberal pretension, and in the year 1880, too.” Some non-Jewish Germans, the correspondent noted, spread the charge that Jews controlled the trade. According to these rumors, Jews ruled the money market and ate up the country with their avarice and usury. Yet the *New York Times* correspondent was quick to dispel the rumors. There was no monopoly on money; commerce was in fact noble. So the correspondent could only conclude that Jews offended because they were rich. He pointed out that Jews were not more wicked or criminal than other people; racism was not without precedent, but it was unprecedented that the “ablest and most scholarly should be so violent and virulent without any just or tangible cause.” Germany, in the correspondent’s estimation, had “slipped back several centuries.”

Some historians such as August Winkler see the origins of this “modern” antisemitism in the financial crisis of 1873 and with that the end of a brief initial period of tolerance for Jewish emancipation and the proliferation of intellectual, plebian and political forms of antisemitism.\(^{66}\) Based on his research on antisemitism in the German tourism industry during the 19\(^{th}\) and 20\(^{th}\) centuries, however, Frank Bajohr concludes that


\(^{66}\) Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. 1, 226-236.
German antisemitic activity shared a mainstream culture with European and North American countries characterized less by liberal tolerance than by intolerance of Jews. Antisemitism in Germany was radical for sure, Bajohr writes, more so than in Great Britain or the Netherlands and on par perhaps with France, but lagging far behind eastern and central Europe and even the US based on his statistical comparisons of openly antisemitic hotels.⁶⁷

Others such as Christhard Hoffmann sketch a more complex set of factors including employment structure, socio-economic tensions and frustration surfacing from the rise of industrial production and marketing competition for small-scale producers, antisemitic agitation from regional papers like the *Norddeutsche Presse* and the traveling lecture series by Ernst Henrici, and the “misunderstood signals of cynically manipulative government” by Bismarck and other conservative leaders for the waves of violence that occurred and the consequences that followed.⁶⁸ Some people continued to resort to the old myths of blood libel and well poisoning that Rabbi Kroner had mentioned. Others couched their hatred for Jews in more contemporary arguments of modernity, usury, viruses, linking them to the ills of unproductive forms of capitalism, liberalism and socialism. By 1879, Imperial Court Minister Adolf Stoecker was using his pulpit to call Jews a “people within the people, a state within the state, a tribe for itself under a foreign race.”

In his essay entitled, “Our Views,” which set off the well known “Antisemitism Debate” in Berlin, the historian Heinrich von Treitschke captured both the anxiety over

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⁶⁷ Bajohr, 167.
Germany’s nascent national identity and the desire to lift “the ban on a quiet untruth,” open the “discussion of an evil that everyone felt,” and famously declare “the Jews are our misfortune!” In the early 1880s, the old chants of “Hep! Hep!” incited a new wave of Jew-baiting, mass rallies and violence that reduced Jews in western Prussia and Pomerania to second class citizens and forced many to immigrate to Berlin, the Ruhr Valley and elsewhere. The Prussian state officials wrote the waves of violence off as the actions of misguided youth, antisocial elements or the Jews themselves for their usury and their provocation of the people’s “violent emotions.” Despite their role in advocating Jewish emancipation, the Prussian state proved incapable or unwilling to address the reality of the problem and persecute the actual agents of antisemitic violence.

Middle class citizens tended to look down on the violent excesses that they associated with the lower class elements of their communities, but increasingly tolerated an antipathy toward antisemitism and the acceptance of distinctions such as the “good” and “bad” Jew. Conservatives learned that they could exploit antisemitic sentiments toward their aims of building mass-based forms of politics and they gained important concessions from the Prussia State such as limitations on the integration of the state civil service and military and expelling some Eastern European Jews in return for toning down more radical calls for further expulsions and the revocation of Jewish citizenship. Some Germans in other places would resort to the strategies of antisemitism again in other waves around Xanten on the Ruhr in the early 1890s and again in West Prussia in Konitz in 1900. But Frank Bajohr has also pointed out that despite all the new outbreaks and waves of antisemitism in Germany, people with antisemitic sentiments generally still had

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to find their own places of refuge in resorts like the North Sea village of Borkum during Imperial Germany.\textsuperscript{70}

However, for the Jewish citizens of Erfurt, dramatic events reported elsewhere in Imperial Germany more likely affected them less than the more pervasive, everyday forms of antisemitism. Shulamit Volkov suggests that antisemitism more likely affected local Jewish life in Imperial Germany as a “cultural code,” through everyday forms of behavior and exclusion not necessarily motivated by socio-economic competition. Steffen Raßloff concludes in his study of Erfurt that antisemitism had become \textit{salonfähig}, i.e., something one could quite readily express among like-minded social circles.\textsuperscript{71} Moreover, Erfurt’s middle class press and political elites generally kept antisemitism from motivating public discussion or sustaining itself in more organized political forms, enabling Jewish citizens to rise to some degree of prominence in Erfurt’s society and politics.

From this view, antisemitism remained as a latent set of prejudices amongst circles of the middle classes, certain religious authorities, the old middle and new middle classes. The editors of Erfurt’s Social Democratic newspaper, the \textit{Tribüne}, noted that open expression of antisemitism rarely surfaced in their years of public coverage in acts of what they termed, \textit{Gefühlsroheit}, but they still wondered what local Jewish business owners had to expect from their employees, when they belonged to an organization such as the German Nationalist Commercial Employees’ Union (\textit{Deutschnationaler

\textsuperscript{70} Bajohr, 165-167.
\textsuperscript{71} Raßloff, 122-124.
Handlungsgehilfen-Verband) whose leaders could publicly express their antisemitism with apparent impunity.72

As part of its assigned task to register all official organizations, Erfurt’s police department did build a brief file on the short-lived Thüringer Antisemiten-Bund, listing members’ names and professions.73 Not surprisingly, those local citizens who had registered as members included representatives of the lower middle classes, three merchants, several pastors and a professor. According to the police report, the organization based its program on the Antisemitic People’s Party and stood for the development of a “German nationalist” perspective. The organization’s rules declared that its members would pursue this goal as a fight against international Jewry and their destructive influence on the German people and state, with all legal means available, in all areas of public, economic and social life, and more concretely, in the suspension of Jewish emancipation and their placement under the national laws for foreigners.

Local newspapers tended to limit their coverage on antisemitic political activity in the region. In October 1895, the antisemitic German Social Reform Party chose to hold its national congress in Erfurt. 118 delegates, including the Reichstag representative Liebermann von Sonnenberg, Pastor Werner from Cassel and Professor Doctor Förster from Berlin, met in the “König von Preussen” behind closed doors. Yet the local middle class Allgemeiner Anzeiger only reported a short note on the event with a statement by the German Social Reform Party that the Prussian three-class election system favored the Jews.74  The local Social Democratic newspaper, the Tribüne, chose not to report on the convention at all, choosing instead to point out an antisemitic crowd that turned the

72 No title, Im deutschen Reich, October 1907, 648-648.
73 StVAE, 1-2/124-40, 3-12.
74 “Lokales,” Allgemeiner Anzeiger, October 24, 1895, second supplement, 10.
Reichshallentheater Theater in the Vogelsgarten into a Tummelplatz (“a place for romping”). Working class editors thereby chose to emphasize the mob-like consequences of antisemitic politics, thereby denigrating such behavior in order to uphold more respectable values of middle class society and politics. It is therefore also important to point out that the German Social Reform Party took the time at its national convention in Erfurt to define the “Jew”, by tracing Jewish blood back three generations in a family’s genealogy. This same German Social Reform Party later called for the political elimination (Vernichtung) of the Jewish people as a goal in 1899 Hamburg Convention.

Although the organization of antisemitic politics fluctuated on the periphery of local patrician circles, and spilled over into violent crowds, antisemitism served to mobilize significant numbers of local voters for several years and tended to surpass the national averages for antisemitic campaigns by wide margins. In 1898, 18.6 percent of Erfurt’s voters cast their ballots for antisemitic party representatives in the national parliament (as compared to 3.7 percent nationally). In 1903, 11.4 percent of Erfurt’s population (as compared to 2.6 percent nationally) voted for representatives of the antisemitic parties. The master bookbinder Kittel, the chairperson of the local German Social Reform Party, received 1272 votes alone in the elections of 1902, and another antisemitic candidate, the textile manufacturer Koch received 1273.

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75 “Der antisemitische Pöbel,” Tribüne, Sunday, October 20, 1895, 2.
77 See Raßloff, 30.
78 No title, Im deutschen Reich, August 1902, 450.
Only the working class newspaper, the Tribüne, continued to report on local antisemitic activity and provided coverage of events like a remarkable assembly in 1903 of the German Antisemitic Union and the Volksbund in Erfurt in order to shed a further disfavorable light on violent, mob-like antisemitic activities in the area, perhaps even serving a warning to its readers about local antisemitism, and starkly contrast the unruly nature of local antisemitic activities with more respectable forms of middle class culture. The antisemitic remarks contained therein have become all too familiar in the scholarship, but it is the description of the speaker’s interaction with his audience that proves revealing of how antisemitic activists interacted with a sympathetic audience and articulated a völkisch emotional economy by invoking the non-Jewish fears about their fellow Jewish citizens, Liberal politics and working class activism, raising the expectations for a more ethnocentric ideal of German manhood and inciting antisemitic activity and even violence among his listeners, who validated the speaker’s claims with their own responses.

The speaker was the editor of an antisemitic newspaper, the Staatsbürgerzeitung, named Wilhelm Bruhn, whom Helmut Walser Smith made famous for his role in inciting the antisemitic activism that took place in Konitz in 1900. Interestingly, Bruhn first made the claim that the union of antisemitic parties, which was the goal of the meeting, would make “German men” out of those antisemitic activists in attendance. Then he focused on warning his audience about the constellation of enemies that they faced. The “Reds,” as he referred to Social Democratic activists, were gaining adherents among the working classes and wreaking discontent with their “social politics” like “a sickness of

79 No title, *Im deutschen Reich*, September 1903, 545-547.
80 Smith, *The Butcher’s Tale*, 56-68.
the times.” He pointed out that he was a friend of the workers, and insisted that his workers were content. He paid them adequate wages because he had to do so, he explained (the *Tribüne* reporter noted shouts of “Too bad!” from the audience). Much had improved for workers, he declared, but little for the craftsmen, who attended his meeting in large numbers.

Bruhn also drew attention to the threat that Liberalism posed to his audience and then linked middle class fears of modern capitalism and liberal economic policies to local Jewish businessmen. He explained that the Liberal political parties had created the misery of the old German middle classes, and he villified another local politician named Hagemann as a liberal, which drew the response of “o – o – o!” from the audience. The most terrifying thing (*Das Schrecklichste*), however, was the large capitalists, who, as he pointed out, were naturally Jewish with the names like Wertheim, Tietz and Lubasch. Bruhn then focused his audience’s attention on local Jewish businessmen and demonized them. He claimed that he had visited a Wertheim department store the day before (to calls of “Hear! Hear!”), but did not buy anything (“Ah!”). Nor did the Jewish storemanagers recognize him, suspecting that if they had, they would have set him right out in the street (“Pfui!”). He told his audience not to go into a Jewish department store. Otherwise, he mysteriously explained, it would begin to burn from top to bottom, citing a case in Budapest.

As an aside, Bruhn even shamed non-Jewish citizens who frequented Jewish businesses. He had seen military officers frequenting Wertheim’s department store, he informed his audience, once even, drinking hot chocolate (“Pfui!”). The speaker insisted
that they should be ashamed of themselves and he demanded that all “national men” should buy at the *Kleinkrämer* stores of small businessowners.

According to Bruhn, the demonized figure of *Juda* was becoming even more dangerous. According to another one of his stories, the German queen had once been encircled by Jews at an exhibition, to which people in the audience replied, “Horrifying!” (*Grässlich!*) The “Jew” clearly had his hand in Pomeranian affairs and it was the “Jew” who forced out the antisemitic banking firm of Schulz and Romeick as the court bankers of the queen. In response to this growing danger, however, Bruhn claimed that the other, supposedly “German” political parties did not seem to care about the threat that Jews posed to the nation, implying that most Germans were letting their guard down against the Jewish threat and needed to consider more aggressive politics to counter the Jewish threat. The National Liberals only protected their “big business.” The Conservatives were “very large men” who did nothing against the government. The representatives of the Centre and Social Democratic parties were all powerful in the Reichstag. In fact, he believed, Social Democracy was founded for the use of the Jew. Jewish leaders, he pointed out, stood at the top and “stupid, blind masses” followed them. Social Democracy was, therefore, not harmless and the situation, he warned, could still bring a great big “clash, bang wallop” (*Kladderadatsch*). In order to counter this threat, Bruhn vaguely demanded “other means,” the “great means of Bismarck,” against the “enemies of the fatherland,” and explained that they had to stand together against their enemy, which, according to the *Tribüne* reporter who may have been exaggerating for effect, the audience greeted with “thousands of cheers.” What would it hurt, Bruhn asked, if the Jew “took a hard blow” (*eins feste darauf kriegen*), but, interestingly, he stopped short of
suggesting that his audience act more violently, reflecting their awareness of the law and possible political consequences for more violent statements deemed illegal under national laws. After all, Bruhn explained, they lived in a state of law, so that was not allowed, to which his audience responded “Too bad! Too bad!” In Bruhn’s closing remarks, the Tribüne’s reported wryly noted, there was some “movement in the voice,” then pathos and hand waving among the audience with calls of “Out with the Jewish snake!” “Great History!” “Holy mission!” “German unity!” “Freedom!” “Heil!” ending in thousands of cheers.

These kinds of interactions usually did not surface in middle class press reports with the notable exception of the antisemitic outbursts that made it to the pages of the local Social Democratic newspaper. In this case, the speaker clearly used the issue of antisemitism to profile his political organization at the expense of the established parties, as well as to distinguish himself from other local antisemitic activists, which helps explain why antisemitic parties tended to fragment over interpersonal rivalries and become absorbed through the social networks of conservative middle class politics rather than establish a more consistent and effective political movement or party.

Yet the antisemitic activities that this source describes also reveal how the interactions between antisemitic activists and audiences created an atmosphere that raised the supposed expectations for “German” men in ethnically exclusive terms and sanctioned more radical notions for how to deal with the Jewish threat. It is striking that the speaker first invoked the “Red” threat of working class activism as a way to more fully map out the class-based threat, and then link the threat of Social Democracy to a more veiled Jewish conspiratorial danger and the unguarded behaviors of fellow citizens,
officers and leaders. The speaker managed to walk a tightrope as an employer, creating a moment of cognitive dissonance among his audience in the process. He identified himself as a supporter of workers’ rights out of necessity, in turn revealing his audience’s strong animosity toward working class activism, while simultaneously invoking the resentment of neglected craftsmen, declaring his support for small business owners and distancing German employers and business owners like himself from the ranks of big business.

The speaker identified a wide list of enemies, even specific groups and individuals that his audience should target, even modeling specific responses according to nature of the threat. On one level, he urged his audience to withhold further electoral support from the National Liberals, who supported big business, as well as from Conservatives, who were too timid to question the imperial government’s authority or defend the nation’s strategic interests and the honor of the queen from the sexual rapacity of Jewish capitalists. Even military officers who frequented Jewish businesses did not escape the view of the speaker, serving as a way to publicly shame non-Jewish Germans, encourage listeners to more actively make racial choices as consumers, question political leaders’ authority and physically assault Jewish citizens. Most striking, then, is the evidence that some people in the audience were ready to consider such legal transgressions and thereby set a tone that threatened the safety of individual citizens, perhaps even their neighbors.
The Catholic Enemies of the Nation.

In contrast to the optimistic message of local Jewish religious leaders, regional Catholic leaders portrayed a whole host of rising threats to German Catholics in the founding years of Imperial Germany and offered little sense of hope for protection or sense of how Catholics should manage their fears beyond their prayers. Wilhelm Emmanuel, for example, the Bishop of Mainz, explained to his Catholic readers in 1873, which included many that lived in the Catholic Diaspora communities of northern Thuringia that their mistake was trusting in a constitution that could last and a state that supposedly guaranteed the protection of their rights. The bishop also pointed out that some scholars such as Dr. Emil Friedburg at the University of Leipzig had begun to declare the Catholic Church as an institution that had to be “suppressed, eliminated and crushed with force.”

Despite the label on the Catholic Church as a threat to the state and the increasing attacks on their religious freedom, the bishop assured his readers that they were Christians and men. He reminded them that the Prussian constitution of 1850, especially articles twelve through fifteen, had prevented the state from intervening in religious matters and guaranteed the same equality for all confessions recognized by the state. Yet, as the bishop also pointed out, German Catholics faced a liberal plan that threatened to take away their religious freedom and subjugate them to the “liberal religion of the state” with the help of the Protestant Church. As a result, the bishop argued that the war on Catholicism amounted to a denial of the historical positivist development of law in Germany, the corruption of the constitution and a violation of the inner truth and

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81 Wilhelm Emmanuel, Die preussischen Gesetzentwürfe über die Stellung der Kirche zum Staat (Mainz: Verlag von Franz Kirchheim, 1873), 3.
82 Ibid., 10-14.
constitutional rights of the people. “May God protect our German fatherland from this havoc,” the bishop concluded, “which these laws are designed to wreak.”83

As with the Jewish sources, it is also difficult to probe below the surface of Catholic public declarations for the presence of fear due to the lack of archival sources. By the early 1870s, some Protestant and National Liberal leaders believed the Papacy had already extended its reach too far into the schools and politics of the nation and Catholicism threatened Germany on its borders with France, Italy, Austria-Hungary and particularly Poland. In response to the fear of Ultramontanism, the Prussian state designated restricted space for the activities of parish priests, expelled the Jesuit Order, threatened Catholic leaders with arrest and expatriation and placed the education of Catholic clergy and children under the auspices of the state.

Parish priests had to avoid public pronouncements on the imperial politics or face systematic suppression. Many went underground and or faced arrest, court procedures, hefty monetary fines, imprisonment or exile. For the lay Catholic communities they served, opposition to the Prussian state meant the loss of their parish priests, bishops and church property, administration by Prussian commissioners, closure of seminaries, expulsion of the Capuchin, Franciscan, Jesuit, Minorite and Redemptorist missions and surveillance of organized practice and political activity. In his study of Marpingen, David Blackbourn notes that 250 priests appeared before the courts; 230 of the 731 parishes in the diocese were “orphaned” and 150,000 Catholics were without a priest as a result of the suppression of Catholic politics. Local police and municipal leaders had to draw upon the 1850 Prussian Law of Association to furnish lists of Catholic associations, membership rolls, leaders, goals and any interactions with other groups, especially

83 Ibid., 52.
workers’ political organizations. However, within this disruption of everyday life for Catholics, Blackbourn also points to the consequences for local communities including the increased confessional tensions, a heightened sense of Protestant superiority and Catholic minority status as relatively understudied questions that require further research.84

The Kulturkampf, as is well known, did not have the results that Bismarck, some National Liberals and local Protestant leaders had intended. In fact, the consequences of dealing with the threat of Catholic politics were ambivalent in terms of the development of Imperial Germany and central German communities. On the one hand, the definition of Catholics as internal enemies of the Empire had led to increasingly localized surveillance and persecution, greater communal polarization, a heightened sense of Catholics as potentially disloyal and untrustworthy citizens, the subsequent mentality of minority confessional status and feelings, underground forms of politics and an active culture of resistance. On the other hand, Catholics responded with more active involvement in national politics, the creation of the Centre Party which transcended class and regional lines, the defense of their rights based on their understanding of the German constitution and an increased cultivation of Catholic cultural activities and social networks.

The records of Erfurt show that some Protestant leaders continued to view their own neighborhoods as battlegrounds over spiritual and moral authority with Catholics, other Christian sects and Social Democracy. Roughly 85 percent of Erfurt’s population (by 1907, ca. 108,000) was registered as Protestant. Jews and the millenarian Christian

84 See Blackbourn, 85-91.
sects each made up roughly a little less than one percent of Erfurt’s population.\textsuperscript{85} Catholics, by comparison, comprised roughly ten percent of the city’s population, but according to the historian Steffen Raßloff, they enjoyed relative integration and even some prominence in Erfurt. On the other hand, Catholic Diaspora communities in the region like Heiligenstadt faced persecution similar to that described above, and memories of that persecution continued to inform Catholic views beyond 1918. In 1875, Prussian officials closed the Franciscan monastery in Dingelstädt near Heiligenstadt, which the monks had established in 1864. In Paderborn, the seat of the Catholic diocese which oversaw the Catholic Church in Erfurt, Prussian officials sealed the lecture halls of the theological faculty, closed the seminary in November 1875 and revised the philosophical and theological departments through a presiding state-sponsored commission.\textsuperscript{86}

Even as late as 1929, regional Catholic activists continued to remind their readers about the state-sponsored suppression of their religious activities in Imperial Germany, even as they began to couch the \textit{Kulturkampf} as a preliminary stage in the final struggle between “Leninist Moscow” and “Petrine Rome.”\textsuperscript{87} As Ernst Mehler, a business school master in Dortmund, recalled the events in the Catholic Diaspora around Heiligenstadt, local police had carried out the aims of the German state in the hopes of improving their own career prospects. They had conducted numerous house searches and interrogations, forced lay Catholics to testify against their religious leaders and imprisoned many for several months.\textsuperscript{88} In 1929, Mehler explained, Catholics faced the storm of Bolshevism and its terror (\textit{Schrecklichkeit}) from Eastern Europe. This new threat was unimaginable,

\textsuperscript{85} See Raßloff, 120-126.
\textsuperscript{86} Michael Matscha, “Jakob Feldkamm (1849-1922),” in \textit{Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte und die Alterskunde von Erfurt} 60, no. 7 (1999): 89-120.
\textsuperscript{87} Ernst Mehler, \textit{Der Kulturkampf dem Eichsfelde} (Duderstadt: Aloys Mecke Verlag, 1929).
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 13-16.
he claimed, but it would overturn all existing relationships and yield all power on earth to the “mass humans” (Massenmenschen), the “soulless and godless human beasts” (Tiermenschen). That, he concluded, would be the end of the occident and Christian culture. Only a deep faith in God, moral strength and true love for the Heimat and fatherland could withstand this new threat.89

The Mighty Fortress Embattled.

Erfurt’s Protestant religious leaders continued to play a key role in instilling a more general sense of the nation’s fear in the Wilhelmine years of Imperial Germany and prescribing how Germans, particularly young men, should respond. Fritz Fischer has suggested that German Protestant cultural activities led to a dominant set of traits among the nation’s Protestant citizens, characterized by their servility and obedience to state authority and God.90 The militant emotional economy that German Protestant activists articulated seems peculiar to German political culture, but when more closely compared with the rest of Europe, particularly Great Britain, German Protestant political culture does not necessarily appear so aberrant either.91

In both cases, Protestant religious leaders played important roles in pointing out the threats that their respective nation faced, advocating obedience, piety, active service and sacrifice to the nation in the face of these threats, and thereby wedding Protestant citizens to the aims of the nation state, most crucially in times of war. Moreover, the

89 Ibid., 35.
90 Trauthig, 25. See also Manfred Gailus, Protestantismus und Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Durchdringung des protestantischen Sozialmilieus in Berlin (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2001).
militant emotional economies of Protestant faiths in Europe and North America do not look so different when compared with some Catholic national political cultures and their support of national governments or incitement of rabid antisemitism. The hyper-masculine activity that religious leaders often demanded in the face of the nation’s fears transcended confessional lines and shared similar traits of fearlessness drawn from traditional heroic models. If anything then set the German Protestant emotional economy apart from its counterparts in the latter years of the nineteenth century, it was the sense that the German nation had been both compromised from within and surrounded by its enemies.

Popular religious holidays served as one key way of shifting the imagination of Germany from a mighty fortress secure in its possession to a nation under attack from within and in need of heroic young men to defend it from assault. Erfurt’s annual celebration of Martin Luther’s birthday provided townspeople with an ostensible form of entertainment that also invoked a range of fears that Protestant leaders perceived in the nation and recalled the fearlessness of important historical figures, particularly heroic men, in order to instruct ordinary people in how to manage their fears. Erfurt’s celebration of Martin Luther, it should be noted, is unusual for its integration of the Catholic festival for the medieval Saint Martin with the commemoration of the Protestant Reformer, who had studied in Erfurt as a young monk. Yet Erfurt’s Martinstag was decidedly a national Protestant festival in its forms, as Steffen Raßloff points out, that functioned as a mass protest in front of the “Ultramontane” Cathedral steps on the Kaiser-Friedrich-Wilhelmsplatz.92

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92 Raßloff, 121.
At the beginning of 1895, for example, thousands of children and adults filled the streets of Erfurt with their paper lanterns and torches and listened to the Seminary choir sing the “usual” selection of songs. At the Luther Memorial, Pastor Schmidt reminded his listeners how important the father of the Protestant Reformation was for them and people then overflowed the galleries at the town hall for dinner and further amusement.

There they heard Deacon Leib champion the Kaiser as the just protector of the Gospels and call for Germans to rally to his scepter in order to defeat their enemies who were active all around them at that very moment. In what the author of the article saw as the highpoint of the evening in Pastor Köhler’s speech on “Luther – a German Man,” the perception of enemies in their midst offered a way to convey expectations about how young men should feel and act as both Protestants and Germans. According to the report, Pastor Köhler asserted that a celebration of Luther had to be both religious and national because Luther was not only a religious reformer but also a friend to the German fatherland, a German of heroic proportions, and a “first class” man. Moreover, Luther unified all of the characteristics and virtues of the ideal German man with courage, peace of mind (Gemüt), love of nature, cheerfulness, loyalty and humor. And it was the duty of every German, according to the pastor, to protect the alms (Gaben) that Luther had given them from the hands of their enemies.

Changing local context in part explains the origins of this Protestant community of fear in Imperial German political culture. The Protestant churches faced dwindling church attendance in the latter half of the 19th century, increasing expression of piety outside the official church, emerging Christian millennial sects like the Adventists and

93 “Die Feier des Martinsfestes,” Allgemeiner Anzeiger, November 12, 1895, second supplement.
94 For protestant attitudes in Württemberg toward the devil, socialists, French and Catholics, compare Trauthig, Im Kampf um Glauben und Kirche, 189-220.
later Jehovah’s Witnesses, decreasing authority on issues of morality, and the rise of an aggressive form of atheism in Social Democracy. Ideological wings within different churches also began to emerge on a range of issues from education reforms to social reforms, the rights of women and antisemitism.95

Yet some local Protestant leaders continued to actively invoke the image of religious enemies and more everyday concerns in order to influence how people felt and how they should respond individually and collectively to the renewed threats that faced the nation. As another Protestant author described what his Christian readers faced in the world around them in an article in a Sunday weekly in 1903, there was an army of dark powers that made their lives miserable.96 The compassionate enemy (barmherzige Feind) was often still death, the author explained. More dreadful was hopeless sickness, debilitating peril, the tireless malice of humanity and the horde of demons in one’s own breast.

At the same time, Protestant literature continued to perpetuate the image of the fearless young Christian man well beyond the First World War as a suggestive way to respond to the fears that Protestants felt they faced (Figure 5). In this depiction in a time of national defeat, young German men remained clad as medieval knights standing victorious over their fallen enemies with swords drawn and their gaze upwards to the light of God.

Yet other Protestant leaders continued to invoke fear in ways that did not always reflect the more spiritual aims of the Church, but still perpetuated confessional and class-based tensions. In a request to the Protestant Consistory for the Province of Saxony in 1926 for financial assistance, for instance, the leaders of the Andreas Church in Erfurt made it known that Protestants were still surrounded by a wide cast of enemies in their own neighborhoods as a way to bolster their request financial support. In this case, they argued that the construction of the pastor’s house and the congregational building was a dire necessity given the existence of an “intense war” (*in scharfem Kampf*) with the
Catholic Church, the alternative Christian sects and other “anti-church” elements in its district.  

At least one local Protestant leader, Pastor Breithaupt, also played a key role in invoking old concerns and pointing out new ones at German Nationalist meetings after the First World War. Local police records reveal the pastor singling out the growing presence of Jehovah’s Witnesses and their increasing proselytizing in the region, suggesting that they were in fact agents of Jews and Socialists.  

Erfurt’s main middle class newspaper in the years before the First World War, the Allgemeiner Anzeiger, also began to play an important local role in influencing how people were supposed to feel about the nation and express their feelings for Imperial Germany. As the veterans of the Wars for Unification began to age, the editors hoped that the people of Erfurt would create a Sedantag celebration in September 1895 that would, in their estimation, probably never be matched again for its brilliance because of the participation of so many veterans and townspeople who could remember the founding years of the empire.  

Some scholars have suggested that Germans were mostly passive spectators in the nationalist celebrations of the Imperial period, their nature as subjects to the crown symbolically reinforced by the forms of the pageantry surrounding nationalist holidays like Sedantag. But the Anzeiger’s editors clearly hoped to create the impression of an active people united in the commemoration of the founding act of the nation, thereby

97 Compare EZA, 7.9210 Augustinergemeinde Erfurt, EZA, 7.9221 Andreaskirche and EZA, 7.9223 Lutherkirche.  
100 Compare Peter Fritzsche, Rehearsals for Fascism. Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 83-92. See also Confino, 52-72.
limiting the focus of individual subjectivity and agency to national authority, but nonetheless encouraging citizens to increase their activity for the nation, not their passivity or servility.

The editors of the *Anzeiger* called upon the townspeople to actively celebrate that year’s Sedantag with full enthusiasm, urging their readers to hoist flags outside their homes, wave torches in the procession and ring bells across the city.\(^{101}\) The editors conveyed to their readers the sense that a festive atmosphere had begun to take hold in the city and highlighted how hard the residents of Erfurt had worked over several days to create a “forest of flags” in the streets and install lighting on the sides of the homes in preparation for the torchlight procession through the town.

That year the editors even published a chart detailing how Erfurt’s associations should assemble on the cathedral plaza for the beginning of the torchlight procession and, interestingly, even included places in the order of procession for some of the town’s working class unions alongside more middle class associations (see figure). From the editors’ view, it was time to call the patriotic together for prayers of thanks in the House of the Lord, who had bestowed such greatness on the German people, and express appreciation for those who had fought, especially for those who had given their lives on the fields of France for the fatherland.

In drawing their readers’ attention to the threats that the nation faced, the editors of the *Anzeiger* also focused their attention on instructing the next generation of German youth about how the founding generation had acted in order to ensure that Germans would know how to respond to danger in the future. Since the time of the founding generation had blown in like a storm, the editors explained, the love of the fatherland had

\(^{101}\) “Zum Tage von Sedan,” *Allgemeiner Anzeiger*, September 1, 1895, first supplement.
been outpaced by the appreciation for material things and a new society had emerged without any ties to the fatherland or willingness to sacrifice, which in turn threatened to destroy the joy of their nation’s achievements.

As for how to respond to the threats of increasing materialism and the disappearance of the founding generation, the editors asked their readers to remember the stirring figure of the heroic Kaiser Wilhelm I, that “unadorned and humble leader who was a bright model of great character, patriotism and the loyal fulfillment of duty, a whole man, a whole hero”, the personality of his heroic son, Wilhelm II, and all the “paladins,” who had stood like one mighty oak which the storm of the time could not shake. The people of Erfurt, according to the editors, had to actively point out the great deeds of those men to their children and teach them to respect that generation’s devotion and love of the fatherland. They also had to teach them to trust in their almighty God, remain loyal to the Kaiser and express their love for the Reich. If the youth maintained honor, discipline, chastity and order, then strength and unity would never fail them and the nation would be secure. So the editors urged people to spark excitement in their children’s young hearts and show them the true greatness of their ancestors’ deeds at the commemoration of Sedantag, which from their view, was the most important historical marker of the nation. For both the young and old, the editors hoped that the commemoration would serve as a reminder to rally to the fatherland, work peacefully, fulfill their duty and sacrifice their lives if necessary.
A Counter Emotional Economy at Work.

The growth of German working class political activism created another important new source of fear, which in turn led to reciprocal effects and feedback loops in the state practice of censorship, both increasing the presence of the state in the everyday life and politics and simultaneously perpetuating the very subversive activities deemed a threat to the nation. Erfurt’s police had been keeping track of working class and democratic political activity for almost thirty years by the time Bismarck crafted Germany’s Anti-Socialist laws in 1878. Erfurt’s police had started monitoring democratic activity among the railway workers in the 1850s. In 1863, they began following representatives of Erfurt’s working classes who attended the first national workers’ convention in Frankfurt am Main and in 1866 they expelled railway employees for “anti-Prussian” activities.

So by the time Bismarck sought to craft parliamentary legislation against the rise in working class politics in 1877, he could call upon widespread fears of socialism in his speeches with rhetorical questions such as, “How shall trust and the desire for commerce awaken in Europe, when Communism gropes about like ants, when one must fear losing one’s achievements to fire and plunder and one expects a massacre for what one possesses?” in order to put plebiscitary pressures on national political parties like the National Liberals. At the local level, Erfurt’s police monitored most of the town’s leading working class representatives and expelled at least five of them between 1880 and 1885.

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102 StVAE, 1-2/120-1 Polizei Amt (1834-1885).

Bismarck is reported to have once remarked in private that, “one cannot rule a land from below. It is against the natural order of things and as the lower classes continually grow, the hungry… [they] will eat us up.”
At the international level, however, the specter of Prussian oppression served to mobilize transnational working class networks to articulate a working class emotional economy for dealing with the fear of state authority. At a reception of German socialist leaders in 1880 at the Germania Assembly Rooms in the Bowery of New York City, for example, a former German socialist reporter named Max Stöhr described the German government’s systematic persecution of working class political leaders since Karl Eduard Nobiling’s attempt to assassinate Kaiser Wilhelm I on June 2, 1878 in Berlin. According to Stöhr, large numbers of working class leaders suspected of revolutionary sentiments had been arrested and imprisoned; socialist newspapers and literature had been suppressed; the mail of socialist leaders had been censored and police had broken up many socialist assemblies. In contrast, other people had spread fearful rumors about socialists: they wanted to distribute property among the community; they wanted to break up family ties and they rejected the patriotic sentiments of the fatherland. Despite this systematic persecution, Stöhr noted that there were still many socialist committees throughout Germany and he implored his audience to help facilitate international moral support for those socialist activists still in Germany to resist the despotism of the German government.

In turn, the international network of working class political activists forced German authorities to more closely censor national borders for foreign literature. In August 1881, the president of the police in Berlin wrote to the police department and Lord Mayor of Erfurt and the criminal police in Berlin to inform them that a letter containing a copy of the banned socialist newspaper, Freiheit, and a copy of the pamphlet, Eigentums-Wahnsinn (Property-Madness), had been confiscated by the postal

censors at the borders near Mühlhausen in Elsäβ.\textsuperscript{105} The letter was addressed to a Janni John Nelson at Fischersand 44 II in Erfurt and the authorities in Berlin wanted the local police to investigate the case.

Among the materials confiscated in the investigation of the Nelson case was an 1880 copy of an international German-language, Socialist newspaper, \textit{Die Freiheit}, which was published in cities like London and New York. That particular edition featured a lead page article on “Fear” (\textit{Furcht}) that reflected the growing international sensibility to working class politics under a Prussian system of oppression. From the anonymous author’s perspective, “tyranny” manifested itself in the columns of military, altar and throne, which created a system that isolated workers and suppressed their political activity. The fear of losing jobs and the ability to support families, the author asserted, kept many men from involving themselves in politics at all and, in fact, made those men indifferent to the interests of humanity, led them to retreat behind the four walls of their little rooms, crushed every independent breath, robbed them of their manliness, debased them of their humanity and eventually reduced them to slavery.

In challenging the manhood of his readers, the author offered an alternative “socialist” emotional economy that would destroy fear and lead working men to freedom through a counter vision of community.\textsuperscript{106} The author believed that some men needed to learn that these dangers only hovered over them because they stood alone and not together with other oppressed workers. Those who had lost their jobs and the means of their existence because they had openly expressed themselves proved their manhood and their courage. Those who withdrew from everyone were cowards who only reinforced

\textsuperscript{105} StVAE, 1-2/154-1, Transcribed by Astrid Rose, 87.
the arbitrary powers of their oppressors and made themselves weak and isolated. Instead, working class solidarity would create strength and it would make men, as the author put it, out of those who were afraid to be hit around the ears, or worried about their material situation, the cannon and the bayonet. As another anonymous poet encouraged his readers in a copy of the working class bi-weekly satirical newspaper The *Glühlichter*, which was also confiscated in Erfurt, “Away with all slavery / Let go of torment - / We want to be free men” (Figure 6).

![Figure 6. The ideal socialist man as depicted in a May Day edition of the *Glühlichter*.](image)

The person handling this case of confiscated materials intended for delivery in Erfurt made a handwritten note in September 1881 that Janni John Nelson was in fact Hermann Benda, the seventeen year old son of the merchant Benda from Wilhelmsplatz 92. The investigation had determined in their report to Berlin that Hermann Benda was a careless young man (*leichtsinniger Bursche*) who had already caused his parents too

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107 “May Greetings,” *Das Glühlichter*, May 1, 1890.
much trouble. According to the one and only record of the case, Benda had made a trip to Geneva without his father’s knowledge in order to purchase the copy of the newspaper *Freiheit* from 4 August 1881, now attached to the investigation’s file, and had hoped to add it to his private newspaper collection.

Benda made arrangements to receive more copies of the newspaper in Erfurt. He asked the mailman who worked at the *Wilhelmsplatz* post office to accept mail under the name of Janni John Nelson at Fischersand 44 II and then bring it to Benda on his route. This arrangement worked twice before the police confiscated one of those letters in Elsaß, which then led to the investigation in Erfurt and the police decision on how best to handle the case of the young man interested in illegal literature. The person handling the case in Erfurt indicated that the mailman had been instructed to tell Benda to immediately bring any further such deliveries to the police.

This attempt to access socialist literature does not appear to have been such a clear cut case of interest in Social Democratic activism, but the young man’s actions do illuminate how some people actually became increasingly interested in censored information at the height of German antisocialist policy because of the forbidden nature of the activity, and how the Prussian surveillance state then set itself into motion and led local authorities to devise a way to deal with a young man’s interest in illegal literature.

Benda may have been immature in respect to his parents, the Imperial German police state and his desire to expand his private library, as the report’s author suggests, but it was apparently worth the risk and perhaps even part of the excitement. Whatever the case may be, Benda believed he could circumvent the state’s surveillance system and
his own parents’s authority by constructing a rather conspicuous pseudonym and making special arrangements with the local postman for the delivery of Janni John Nelson’s mail.

The report is also striking in its description of how the local police felt they could micro-manage one young individual by simply involving the neighborhood postman in a closer monitoring of Benda’s mail and conveying the expectation to Benda that he should turn over all other illegal materials in the future. Despite more detail, Benda’s case also reveals the failings of parental, local and state attempts to cultivate an emotional economy intended to control alternative political activities, especially young men interested in socialist literature.

Illegal materials continued to surface through police surveillance sweeps of Erfurt’s readers, which poked fun at frightening portrayals of socialism (see figure). From the view of one illustrator, socialism had become a “modern horror story” (*Eine moderne Schauerballade*) that reflected little about the realities of working class activism. The cartoonist suggests that the frightening figure was a creation of the media, sung by the “new free press,” which was depicted as a teary-eyed old woman with guitar on the right, and pointed out through the lead articles of the “foreign press” portrayed on the left as an even more haggard-looking woman. The result of their combined efforts was “the red ghost” of socialism and anarchism that invoked familiar old tropes of fear much more than any real reflection of contemporary working class activism. The caricature of socialism had wide staring eyes, a large mouth with white, sharp teeth, a hatchet in one hand and a torch in the other, recalling the old signs of threatening populist mobs and even older figures of childhood fairy tales (Figure 7).
By the end of the Anti-Socialist laws in 1890, Erfurt was well on its way to becoming a larger city with a complex industrial base, expanding working class neighborhoods, a growing working class culture and increasing Social Democratic activism. In fact, central Germany, in particular Gotha and Erfurt, became important meeting points for the evolution of the Social Democratic program in Germany and its shift from revolutionary to parliamentary forms of politics. Local working class activists established a branch of the Allgemeinen Deutschen Arbeiterverein (The General German
Workers’ Association) in 1865, only two years after that organization’s creation and organized a Social Democratic Party office by 1869.109

Ironically, the enforcement of the Anti-Socialist legislation also led to the arrival of the Schneidermeister Paul Reisshaus, who had been forced to leave Berlin in 1880. Reisshaus went on to found Erfurt’s socialist newspaper, the Tribüne, in 1889 and continued to play a leading role in local Social Democratic politics until his death in 1921, most notably in opposing the evolutionary revision of the Social Democratic platform, advocating more revolutionary rhetoric and thereby strengthening more middle class concerns about the persistence of radical working class activism in the years before the First World War.110

As a result of Erfurt’s location in central Germany, Social Democratic leaders convened their national meeting of working class leaders in 1891 in one of Erfurt’s most famous meeting halls, the Kaisersaal, under the auspices of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht. According to the foreign correspondent of the New York Times, those meetings began with their disruption by a “few noisy extremists,” who displayed a “mob rhetoric” and a general “mental incapacity” with their “commonplace denunciations of capitalism.”111 They denounced the Social Democratic Party leaders as “tyrants and self-seekers” with “doubtful relations” to the enemies of Socialism, but their actions were met at times with laughter or silent scorn from the majority of the other Social Democratic delegates in attendance, and eventually led to their expulsion from the convention’s proceedings.

109 Raßloff, 77-78.
110 See Raßloff, 77 and 119.
From the *New York Times* correspondent’s view, the Erfurt Congress platform of “constitutional radicalism” heightened the reputation of the Social Democratic leaders and most of the delegates present by emphasizing more rational and pacifistic methods to their politics and starkly contrasting these values through the expulsion of more radical activists. 112 Regardless of their ideals, the correspondent optimistically believed that the tact and moderation which the Social Democratic leadership demonstrated freed the party from the stigma of revolution and forever put to rest the specter of socialism as anarchy, which had for long haunted the minds of the upper class German bourgeoisie, journalists and bureaucrats. These “few noisy extremists,” however, continued to play an important role in sustaining a more radical and revolutionary form of socialism in Erfurt and surrounding working class communities and the local antisocialist networks who vehemently opposed them.

By 1907, as Steffen Raßloff has shown, local workers appeared poised to flex their political muscle with the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the city. 113 Blue collar workers numbered 23,790 in an overall population of 100,000. They made up almost sixty percent of income earners and almost two thirds worked in heavy industrial organizations of between 500 and 1000 workers (Figure 8). The metal industry employed over 6022 workers. While another 4675 worked in machine building; 1347 in metal working; 5826 in clothing manufacturing; 3965 in shoe production; 2314 in building and construction; 1271 in food and entertainment; 1230 in confections; 1050 in horticulture and 1828 in the timber industry.

112 On the Social Democratic cultural expression of other values such as order, discipline and justice see Eric D. Weitz, 50-51.
113 Compare Raßloff, 65-78.
By contrast, the middle classes made up forty percent of Erfurt’s income earners. White collar workers made up the second largest socio-economic group next to blue collar workers with 6970 people (17.4 percent), one third working in the industries and trades and two thirds in the service sector. Since Erfurt had become a hub of some regional importance for national transportation, administration and military planning, 2738 people worked as white collar workers for the railroad, post office and schools and 2055 served the military. Property owners, educated professionals and the old middle classes of craftsmen, small shopkeepers and hotel owners made up the smallest socio-economic class of self-employed with 4553 people or 11.3 percent of the population.

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114 Die Reihe Archivbilder Erfurt, 47.
In political terms, however, the translation of this socialist majority played out with less effect at the local level because of the three-class election system and the right to vote granted to the people of Erfurt as part of their honors as citizens. The Social Democratic Party was already the largest political party in the Thuringian states by 1890 and sent the most regional representatives to Berlin out of any political party by 1903. Yet as of 1902, only 13.6 percent of those citizens of Erfurt with the right to vote were registered with the Social Democratic Party, the main representative of the working classes. Despite the ability to achieve over 47 percent of the votes cast in Thuringia for the national elections of 1912 and capture ten of the sixteen Reichstag seats for Thuringian representatives, Erfurt’s workers were represented by only two out of the 57 delegates on the city council. In 1914, when Erfurt’s population numbered 130,110, still only 18,914 people could vote in the communal elections. The city council and most of the Citizens’ social associations were therefore still dominated by the overwhelmingly anti-socialist middle classes and their leaders, the patrician Honoratioren, and as a result, local working class activists had to seek out alternative forms of politics.115

The editors of both regional and local Social Democratic newspapers like the Tribüne played a key role in questioning the way other local activists portrayed Social Democracy as a threat to townspeople and their way of life and articulated a fearless working class emotional culture that countered local political practices meant to instill fear in working class activism, as well as the activities of others such as a Liberal Protestant pastor in the region.

For example, the socialist newspaper of Halle, The Volksblatt, reported an incident from 18 April 1907, in Leislau, by Kamburg, under the title, “Who terrorizes?”

115 Raßloff, 78-80.
According to the author’s report, the local preacher, Dr. C. Vogl, had been suddenly removed from his office and a third of his income withheld by his superiors. On February 6th, immediately after the elections, Dr. Vogl had held a family night with the theme, “The political parties of the Reichstag.” The speaker both began and concluded by emphasizing that he only wanted to present information on each national political party and not step on anyone’s toes in the process. He also hoped that his talk would help the political parties learn to understand each other and choose to campaign with only the “honorable weapons” of truth and justice.

In response to the pastor’s family night and its political goals, a local manorial lord named Herr Schlüter, who was present that evening, stood up and told Dr. Vogl that above all else he should have focused on fighting Social Democracy instead of tolerating it. According to the Volksblatt’s report, Herr Schlüter also reminded the pastor that he should have said more about how Social Democracy wanted to eliminate Christianity and destroy marriage and the family. The preacher decisively rejected such a view, as the article’s author noted, with the remark that there was no word in the Social Democratic program about the destruction of marriage or the family, adding that religion was a private issue and not a public issue as some would have it. In reply, Herr Schlüter told Dr. Vogl, “Pfui. You should be ashamed”, and left the family night with his wife.

The editors described a sense of community embittered by the suppression of their beloved pastor. They invoked the memory of the darkest times during the Middle Ages, when those who thought differently were burned on the pyre (Scheiterhaufen), warning their readers that people who tell the truth would be despised and banned. Those like Dr. Vogl, the reporter was certain, would learn to recognize that their society was the greatest
enemy of truth and justice, and concluded by wondering what “the band of liars” had to say about these events?

On one level, the author of this article in Halle’s socialist paper was attempting to counter claims from political opponents that Social Democracy terrorized people by illustrating how others threatened people interested in the Social Democratic platform and democratic reform. The case of a progressive pastor in the region offered an ideal way for local Social Democratic authors to turn the tables on conservative opponents, link them to invocations of medieval memories of persecution, legitimate Social Democratic activity, generate public awareness about a community with a progressive religious leader, and hopefully compel their opponents to publicly respond in the process. From this reading, the socialist editors in Halle was trying to transcend class lines, emphasizing rationalism in the face of irrational anti-Socialist fears, even as the same editors invoked medieval memories of fear in describing antisocialist activities.

On another level, it reveals Pastor Vogl’s reading of his own locality and the practices of slander and coercion that different groups employed in their political activities. Despite the possibility of repercussions, Dr. Vogl must have believed that there was a degree of openness in his community to democratic reform or at least the need to fairly present each political party and its program in an unbiased manner. Despite the possibility of repercussions from notable members of his congregation and his church superiors, Dr. Vogl decided to host his family night in the hope of a more honest and less hostile form of politics. Even in Herr Schlüter’s attempt to publicly shame him in front of those gathered at the church family evening, Pastor Vogl drew from the wording of the Social Democratic platform to contest Herr Schlüter’s portrayal of the threat of Social
Democracy and uphold a modicum of democratic politic culture. Yet the message for all those who crossed local political lines was also clear.

Pastor Vogl’s removal from office and the loss of income were meant to frighten other people, especially pastors, from conducting similar family nights. For Herr Schlüter, Social Democracy was a threat which had penetrated the church congregation too far in the form of the pastor’s family night. Shaming the pastor was intended both to affect the pastor’s activities and the other people gathered to hear the pastor speak. He further attempted to portray Social Democracy as a threat by invoking the fears that Socialism posed to his listeners’ Christian religious beliefs and their institutions of marriage and family and he or someone else must have denounced the pastor to his church superiors.

Despite the heated conflict in opposing media with competing claims of terror and different systems of oppression, working class groups also carved out their own spaces and created their own cultures in Erfurt, including their own sports and musical associations, publications, festivals and meeting places such as the Tivoli restaurant, which proclaimed their place as workers in the town and underlined the need for the nation state and local employers to make concessions for their workers’ welfare and safety as well as their control (Figure 9).\footnote{Compare Weitz, 18-61.} Strolling on the First day of May, for example, became a key public way to confront the risks they faced in taking time off from work, experience the courage it took to walk off the job for a day of leisure, define a working class community and impress Erfurt’s onlookers with working class families’ numbers and activities.\footnote{Compare Weitz, 49 and 56.}
In this effort, the Social Democratic newspaper, the Tribüne, also played a key role in mediating that experience for working class readers. On Thursday, May 1st 1913, the editors of the Tribüne declared that they could not remember such strong participation from past May Day celebrations, even on those festivities that had fallen on a Sunday, the workers’ only legal day of rest. People gathered at various points, especially in the working class neighborhoods, and proceeded out of the city, as the editors emphasized, in a comfortable and regulated fashion without causing any jams in the town’s traffic. Five to six thousand men, women and children walked like two mighty columns into the free air toward the Steiger Forest on a two hour hike to the “Forest Castle” for a picnic, and on their way home, participants returned in a calm and orderly fashion without displaying any red flags and purposely avoiding any potential traffic jams. In the afternoon, many

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gathered at the Tivoli restaurant or at other beer gardens where the male working class choirs provided entertainment and singing.

That evening Comrade Petzold convened a final meeting. Erfurt’s working class choir sang “Ich warte dein” (“I am waiting for your”) and the “Internationale”, and Petzold explained in the keynote address that that year’s First of May was meant as an act of protest against all the injustice and inequality, the ministerial terrorism, unfair indirect taxes and tolls, the agitating of the peoples of the world toward war and stirring the nation’s madness over military armament.

Yet despite the local working class organization’s ability to affect a more secure Social Democratic sense of identity and community and help project a working class presence in the town’s everyday life and politics, the Tribüne continued to report on local nationalist politics that they took as a sign of provocation and warn their readers about the consequences of how some local citizens were preparing their young men for the nationalist events. The editors explained that the deafening sounds reported near Erfurt’s working class neighborhoods at the beginning of September 1913 were groups of young men drilling in preparation for the upcoming commemoration of Sedantag with their drums and flutes. The editors criticized the “loud-mouthed speeches of unscrupulous war hawks and agitators” that had spawned this militaristic activity and reminded its readers about the misery that would result from future war for uncounted families, their widows, orphans, the war crippled and ailing veterans.119

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119 “Sedanrummel,” Tribüne, September 2, 1913, 3rd supplement.
Chapter Summary.

Defining the modern German nation state made major social groupings and milieus important sources of emotional economy in the new nation. There were both widespread feelings of hope, optimism and faith in progress for the new nation, as well as anxieties and fears about its future, which were shared not only by religious and ethnic minority groups and working class activists trying to carve out their own sense of belonging and security in the national community, but also by those groups who could consider themselves members of the dominant German Protestant middle classes. As Germany rapidly industrialized and became increasingly more urban during the Wilhelmine years of Imperial Germany, and the founding generations of Germans began to age, many began to anticipate the future of the nation with increasing feelings of anxiety and fear about the nation’s progress and enemies, both old and new, who had penetrated the nation.

Antisemitic activism potentially posed perhaps the most serious threat to modern Germany’s development because antisemitic activists invoked the most threatening images of the nation’s enemies and articulated the most aggressive emotional economies of fear, which advocated the transgression of widely held values that undergirded a more pluralistic vision of the nation and therefore threatened to subvert not only the dominant middle class values of respectability but also the civic bonds that many others had sought to establish. The threat of antisemitism, however, remained contained by the infighting among its own activists, the absorption of antisemitic activism into the folds of increasingly nationalistic political parties, civic sources of surveillance and opposition and the counterthreat of German law and the power of the state.
The articulation of a working class emotional economy that translated the fears of workplace regimes into more fearless working class activism posed another potential threat to those groups who hoped to contain it, above all, local employers and police authorities. The debates within working class activism and the emergence of the more moderate, evolutionary approach to socialism reflected working class activists’ concerns about respectability and the desire to allay middle class fears about the threat of working class activism. But on the eve of the First World War, local working class activists appeared ready to more publicly assert their politics and make a stronger impression on middle class society, thereby setting up a potential source for future concern. What local working class activists also noted however, was the rise of another threat among some nationalist activists: the anticipation of the next major European war and the need to prepare young men to manage their feelings in order to fight.
Chapter 3

Fear in the First World War.

* “A request, which I then so direct towards the parents, is that one should not be too soft in teaching sons. One should already harden them when they are small against physical pain as well as other displeasures of life; one should praise and reward the small boy, who seeks his pride in suppressing physical pain, and does not howl or squeal when a stronger opponent hits him in the nose. One should make him able to endure difficulties and obstacles against one’s own little person without reservation, not only in the accepted exercise of duty, but also in the pursuit of self-imposed goals.”
   - Walter Corsep, *The Education of Our Future Soldiers* (1915)

** “This year has brought the end of the war. There is no peace yet. The peace will probably be very bad. But there is no more war. It might be said that instead we have civil war. But, no, there have been troubles, but it has not come to that. The year 1918 ended the war and brought the revolution. The frightful pressure of war that grew steadily more tolerable is lifted now; one can breathe more easily. No one imagines that good times will follow right away. But we have finally crawled through the narrow shaft in which we were imprisoned, in which we could not stir. We see light and breathe air.”
   - Käthe Kollwitz, diary entry from New Year (1919).

The scholarship on the First World War poses a set of debatable questions about how much the outbreak of war and the prospects of defeat and revolution instilled a particularly German sense of fear and how that fear or fears continued to influence Germans in their endurance of the war and the prospects of peace. As the last chapter demonstrated, there was no pre-existing cohesive national emotional economy in Imperial Germany, but rather a plurality of ways to perceive fear and deal with it that drew from a range of sources. Yet the outbreak of the First World War also spurred millions of citizens and soldiers to mobilize for the nation in and gave credence to public calls for a national approach, even a national emotional community to confront the threat of war. This chapter traces the short rise and fall of what I call the Imperial German
emotional economy which some Germans articulated in response to the First World War. It explores what happened to those prewar anxieties and emotional economies designed to guide Germans through the expression of their fear and demonstrates how those prewar anxieties became wartime realities of fear and radicalized the debates over how Germans, particularly young men, should feel and act in defeat and revolution.

Joachim Radtkau suggests that the possibility of war fell directly in the middle of an international age of nervousness wherein politicians and pundits merged medical discourse on nerves with politics, in the process, denigrating earlier values of sentimentality and calmness and advocating the necessity of the “steel bath” of war in order to overcome the nerves and strengthen the male resolve to act decisively. 120

But the iron nerves that German leaders sought to project in the years before the First World War also reveal the anxious undertones of men under the pressure of their male peers and national public spheres to appear calm in the face of diplomatic brinkmanship and unwilling to back down from the prospects of a European war waged with modern technology. German leaders therefore vacillated between the hardened feelings they were supposed to convey and those anxieties they sought to suppress. Yet as Radtkau concludes, most Germans did not appear to come anywhere near the new masculine heroic ideal espoused by the proponents of prewar völkisch German nationalism. Many were prepared to fight a defensive war, if it came to that, but few were willing to risk the perils of modern warfare in support of openly aggressive imperial aims. 121

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120 Radtkau, 389-406.
121 Radtkau, 419.
Based on his research into German responsibility for starting the First World War, stemming from the Fischer controversy in the 1960s, John C. G. Röhl has suggested that Imperial German decision makers such as the younger General Moltke helped turn the national anxieties of a two front war into a complex social reality of fear in the days leading up to the official declarations of war.¹²² What started as a series of conversations at the German council of war in response to the Balkan Crisis of 1912 became an assertion that a two-front war with France and Russia was unavoidable and, therefore, any postponement of that conflict for even a few years only worsened the German military’s chances of decisive victory against their opponents.

The concern of some military and political leaders that the majority of German citizens would not support such an aggressive strategy led some government officials to more actively cultivate a public consensus for war through their contacts in national media outlets. At the same time, however, a German public consensus was already beginning to form across the spectrum of the All-German, Conservative, National Liberal and even Catholic newspapers that pitched the pending conflict to their subscribers as a racial struggle between Germans and Slavs.¹²³

The announcement of war, as several scholars have shown, unleashed an explosion of enthusiasm and fearless support for the German war effort among nationalistic citizens, particularly youth group members and university students, but the majority of Germans reacted with fear, anxiety and uncertainty despite government invocations of the Heimatfront that attempted to mobilize people for the war effort

through their fears that anticipated external threats to the home front.¹²⁴ Moreover, the demands of war turned Germans’ worlds upside down, as Richard Bessel and Martin Geyer have suggested, as friends and family were mobilized, the prospects of swift victory vanished, prices of basic goods and services rose, food, heating fuels and other items became scarce, more rationed and subject to the forces of a harsh winter, malnutrition, disease, government controls, black marketing and profiteers.¹²⁵

Drawing from the theoretical model of Lefebvre’s study of the way fear spread during the French Revolution in their study of German military atrocities in 1914, John Horne and Alan Kramer suggest that collective states of fear assumed specific dynamics shaped by previous experiences of fear, subsequent cultural memories, mentalities and paranoid structures of fear - in the case of German soldiers, the fear of French partisan attacks.¹²⁶ This fear of the franc-tireurs tended to crystallize for soldiers in collective states that led to asymmetric outbursts of peculiar brutality against innocent noncombatants perceived as threats. Horne and Kramer point out that the collective dynamics of fear are not unstoppable, but they have their own delusional reality and internal logic - in the case of German military culture, driven by the German conception of international laws of warfare that viewed partisans as illegal combatants and therefore justified ruthless reprisals, even against innocent civilians. But the German fear of war did not necessarily always play out in a way reminiscent of a Grand Fear a la the reign of

terror in the French Revolution. In fact, it appears based on the evidence discussed below, that widespread feelings of fear could operate in more mundane, ordinary ways for both soldiers and civilians, variously shaped by life in the military and the homefront.

The chaotic experience of war also confirmed suspicions about some of Germany’s internal enemies. Jewish German citizens in particular were quickly doubted by a growing number of their non-Jewish peers in this world turned upside down and the uncertainties of war helped spread the suspicion of Jewish cowardice and treachery.\textsuperscript{127} War offered many German men the opportunity, be they Social Democrats, Catholics or Jews, to demonstrate their loyalties to the fatherland through their sacrifices. For some Jewish men, it offered the chance to prove their courage and dispel the rumor of their cowardice through the display of their bravery, but even in the opening days of the war in 1914, antisemitic groups like the \textit{Reichshammerbund} were already beginning to call upon their members to gather data on Jewish participation in the war, spreading further rumors that doubted Jewish trustworthiness and bravery. The official acknowledgement of the “Jewish Count” in November 1916 still came as a shock to Jewish citizens, leaving many Jewish men in the military with everyday feelings of alienation from their country, and providing early signs of everyday racial redefinition in the German military and its spillover into civilian life.

As for soldiers’ nerves, Radtkau again suggests that the opening weeks of the war actually led to the decline in reported cases of nervousness as the realities of war replaced everyday concerns about careers and marriages, but the resort to trench warfare also

created new psychic burdens and novel spiritual and physical pressures for soldiers that medical professionals had not seen before.  

Enzo Traverso notes that even as some scientists and doctors sought to rein in these fears and control them, fears also became more chaotic, less controllable and increasingly violent for others.

Based on his comparative study of how British and German soldiers endured the war, Alexander Watson points out that the shifting uncertainties of the war’s outcome, even the opportunities of relief that leave from duty at the front offered, condensed soldiers’ perception of time horizons and consequently shaped and reshaped how soldiers judged the risk to their own lives, moving from underestimation or even overestimation of danger to greater awareness and fatalism among even some of the most experienced veterans who reverted back to intense states of fear. In order to endure, Watson concludes that both British and German men developed a wide range of long-term coping strategies, some sustaining the illusion of invincibility, others (even Germans!) turning to ironic humor and satire, idiosyncratic rituals and good luck charms that they bestowed upon material objects, inspired by religious belief.

As it became clear to civilians that the fighting would persist indefinitely, Radtkau also notes that collective uncertainty began to pierce the assurances of national unity very early in the war and cast doubt on how best to proceed. Some Germans became more fanatical in their tenacity to hold out until the bitter end, while others increasingly sought a peaceful resolution. Even the most hardened, Radtkau notes

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128 Radtkau, 428-430.
130 Watson, 85-107.
131 See also Ziemann, 124-137.
132 Radtkau, 428-431.
however, were shaken by the hardships of war and the most pacifistic were fascinated with the nationalist ideals of camaraderie and heroics.

Moreover, some Germans began to radicalize their ethics and moral values in response to the fears that people instilled in war. Germans had advocated extreme values and actions before the war, Anthony Kauders points out, but never in large enough numbers to challenge dominant societal norms and cultural values. Radtkau argues that the wartime debates over nerves and the national will to fight carried over into the emergence of the fascist-style of action among wider circles of Germans, particularly men, who were prepared to resort to violence and more willing to eliminate those of lesser value if necessary, thus prefiguring Nazi crimes. However, the radicalization of values also drew upon other sources of fear such as antisemitism, which motivated some people to more openly challenge what Anthony Kauders calls the taboo against certain forms of antisemitism maintained by expected notions of “civilized” behavior, the rule of law and liberal institutions. And by the end of the war, as Dirk Walter points out, some of the most virulent antisemites such as Heinrich Pudor were already calling for the violent exclusion of Jews with a “storm and fire” against international Jewry reminiscent of earlier pogroms.

Traverso reaches remarkably similar conclusions about how Germans dealt with new fears of defeat and revolution. Some working class leaders invoked prewar working class attitudes toward capitalist society in the name of revolution and sought to turn military force against fellow citizens in the hopes of change. However, more reactionary officers and young men also stigmatized the feelings of fear they felt in response to the

133 Kauders, 29-30.
134 Radtkau, 431.
rise of more radical working class politics at the end of the war. They drew from prewar
notions of how to deal with the threat of working class violence, but they also
transformed their fear into anger, welded into it objects of immediate danger and aimed it
to invoke terror against their leftwing opponents.¹³⁶

Even then with the prospects of defeat and the onset of the revolution, all was not
panic, uncertainty, suspicion and aggression in the last days of the war. Benjamin
Ziemann has shown that even as Bavarian peasants seemed to confirm their suspicions
about Jewish treachery, many also felt joy in the end of the war and looked forward to the
prospects of peace with loved ones returning from the fighting. Still others, as I shall
demonstrate, rejected the turn toward civil war and violence, and embraced forms of
politics that they deemed more calm, peaceful, rational, moderate, cooperative and
hopeful in the face of violent threats from the extremes of German politics.¹³⁷

Preparing Young Men for Future War.

In the case of Erfurt, the prospects of a looming war invoked concern among
some local medical and military authorities that young German men were not adequately
prepared for modern warfare, motivating them to criticize the German education system
and promote the more hardened emotional discourse identified by Radtkau.¹³⁸ As a

¹³⁶ Traverso, 191-221.
¹³⁸ Compare Radtkau, 263-353.
result, the anxieties of looming war renewed local debates on the most effective ways for parents and teachers to educate and train young men, which continued to fuel debates on the proper education and values for German children into the Weimar Republic.

In the pamphlet, *School Hygiene and Suitability for Service*, one local military physician, Dr. Börner, raised the hope in 1913 of drawing as much military strength from the young men of Germany in order to guarantee German success in the “unavoidable struggle” over Bismarck’s legacy. Yet after examining many of the young men that the military had mobilized for the infantry and artillery garrisons of Erfurt, Dr. Börner explained that most of those young men were ineligible for combat due to what he termed their general weakness, their weak bones and poor muscle development. Consequently, he decided to reissue the pamphlet in 1915 and continued to criticize the way that German parents and teachers raised their young men. For twenty cents, Dr. Börner’s potential consumers could read his suggestion that the humanist-inspired education in most German high schools placed too much value on the classical education of the intellect and neglected to recall that the Greeks had historically concerned themselves as much with the harmonious development of the healthy body as with the ideal of beauty.

However, proponents of a more militarized education did not have to look completely to antiquity for the militant emotional economy that they advocated. In another pamphlet entitled, *The Education of Our Army Offspring* with the subtitle, *Exercise Plan for 25 Days*, Dr. Börner’s local colleague and co-author, Major Corsep, expressed his pleasure that more and more youth counselors were accepting the idea that

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139 Dr. Börner, *Schulhygiene und Diensttauglichkeit* (Erfurt: Ohlenroth 1915), 6, in StVAE.5.110-C-1-3, “Corsep Collection (1915-1933).”

140 Dr. Börner, p. 3.
they must prepare the younger reserves of men, both physically and intellectually, in a planned and school-like manner for service in the military and future wars. In contrast to his medical colleague, however, who suggested that there was too much emphasis on the training of German children’s intellect and not enough exercise of their physical bodies, Major Corsep sought to locate some of the most important military ideals in the traditional values of middle class families. He cited the traditional role of the father figure in the German home, as well as at school, in the workplace and field, and he suggested that the best gift that a father and mother could bestow upon their son on his way to the military base was a strict, religious parental education that emphasized obedience, unpretentiousness, respect for the law and customs, the love of order, the feeling of duty and reliability. 

But Corsep also added a special request for parents that they not raise their sons to be too weak, thereby echoing the concerns of Dr. Börner and reinforcing the military emotional economy that nationalist leaders desired. In Corsep’s estimation, parents had to harden their sons from an early age against physical pain and the other inconveniences of life. Moreover, parents had to praise and reward the young boy, who was proud to suppress physical pain and did not howl or squeal when a stronger opponent hit him in the nose.


Supporting the National Emotional Economy.

At the call to war, as Steffen Raßloff has described it, many young men in Erfurt “enthusiastically” reported for duty in August 1914. They enlisted in the Third Thuringian Infantry Regiment, Number 71, at the Petersburg fortress, the First Thuringian Field Artillery Regiment, Number 19, in the Rudolfstrasse and the Horsed Cavalry Regiment, Number 6, in Daberstedt.

Figure 10. Photo of the King’s School in Erfurt, ca. August 10, 1914, including 32 senior students and one teacher who volunteered shortly thereafter for service.144

The photographic records of Erfurt reveal rather strikingly how people responded to the general call to war and even suggest how some people wished to be remembered in their support of the German nation as the war dragged on and its outcome seemed less certain. On August 10, 1914, 32 young men posed with their teachers as a memory of their official release from Erfurt’s Royal Graduate High School before they voluntarily

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143 See Raßloff, 127-136.
144 Die Reihe Archivbilder Erfurt, 65.
reported along with some of their teachers for duty in the field. Erfurt’s new recruits gathered at the guest facilities in the Magdeburgerstrasse and posed for another picture in their military uniforms before deployment (Figure 10). In June 1915, more new recruits posed in their replacement company formation on their march along the Fischersand. Others posed with the French prisoners of war at the barracks on the Johannesplatz or with the captured horses of Belgium and French units on the Artillery Plaza.

Figure 11. Photo marking the assembly of the Jungsturm battalion for military service in 1915.\textsuperscript{145}

At the beginning of November 1915, the 30\textsuperscript{th} Jungsturm battalion assembled a unit of boyish-looking young men intended for deployment in order to take a photo with their uniforms and drums (Figure 11). At the beginning of December 1915, the townspeople gathered once again to see the military display captured enemy artillery and other items. Children sat on their sleds and watched the field artillery train more recruits at the barracks in the Rudolfstrasse.

\textsuperscript{145} Die Reihe Archivbilder Erfurt, 69.
Further deployments of Erfurt’s older reserves occurred in 1916 with ceremonial farewells and music from the military band. One photo’s caption inserted by the editors reminds its reader that the despite the joyful scenes that the local press depicted, the men who left by train in 1916 “marched into an uncertain future.”

There were also many other public forms of widespread support from citizens, reflected in the success of their war bond drives that amounted to 357 million Marks. In late October 1915, the townspeople gathered at the Friedrich-Wilhelmsplatz to celebrate the dedication of the Iron Landsturmmann to which many people in Erfurt had hammered a nail in order to raise financial support for the war – 37,500 Marks in all, and symbolically demonstrate their own personal efforts in forging the nation (Figure 12).146

Figure 12. Photo of the “Iron Landsturmmann” placed at the entrance to the Anger Museum in 1916.147

146 Fritzsche, Germans into Nazis, 50.
147 Die Reihe Archivbilder Erfurt, 68.
However, patriotic activities showed signs of becoming even larger, increasingly militant, more racial and more mindful of the threats the nation faced. Displays of captured French artillery began to take place at the *Fischmarkt* in 1915. The French prisoner of war camp was set up again at the *Johannesplatz*, as it had been done in 1870, but this time with preparations for up to 15,000 inmates.\footnote{Raßloff, 130.} Erfurt’s magistrate ordered the removal of foreign language from city services and public signs, and the organizers of the *FC Britannia*, the local soccer club, changed their name to *VfB Erfurt*.\footnote{Ibid., 131.}

As the outcome of the war became less certain, divisions began to surface amidst the public displays of patriotic support and the evidence of military success. Some middle class men began to more openly push the up until then unthinkable subject of negotiations for peace in 1915, making sure to cite their connections to different political parties, educated circles, professional colleagues, independent groups and the press, which in turn revealed their own concerns of being branded traitors and injuring their respectable status and careers.\footnote{Ibid., 132.}

Consequently, other middle class groups intensified their support for more aggressive war aims that same year as they perceived threats to the nation’s war effort in the public signs of flagging morale, weakness and fear.\footnote{Ibid., 132-133.} The local branch of the All German-Imperialist Association launched an open petition to the Reichstag in December 1915, which was strikingly similar to the “secret” plans of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and the German military command in September 1914, and parroted jingoistic claims that “England started the war!” In the summer of 1916, a different group, calling
itself a local branch of a nationwide “Independent Committee for a German Peace,” wrote another petition as an “Appeal to the “German People” on August 23, 1916 that demanded German hegemony in Europe, annexation of parts of Russia and France and all of Luxemburg and Belgium. Finally, the German fatherland Party (DVLP) founded a local branch a year later in August 1917 in order to counter declining support for the war that they perceived in the Reichstag Peace Resolution from July 1917 and circulated its demands via fliers that the German people should take an oath in support of final victory and combat the “bad spirit” that they perceived to be circulating among the German people because of those with “weak hearts, war-weary and fear of the present.”

With the outbreak of war, Protestant and Catholic media in Erfurt and the surrounding region were quick to respond to the threat of war for their readers and transform their discussions of how German Christians should organize their feelings into imagined actions aimed to defend the nation and terrify their enemies. The Sonntag-Zeitung, the regional newspaper for Catholics in the provinces of Thuringia and Saxony, proclaimed to its readers through a poem by Carl Regelmann that the fight had opened on three fronts, thus realizing the prewar national anxieties of being surrounded by Germany’s enemies.

In the face of this anxiety now turned into an immediate reality of danger to the nation, the poet called upon his fellow Germans to swiftly take up their arms and draw their swords, likening the situation to a holy war reminiscent of the medieval past. The poet also invoked the images of Heimat, suggesting that Germans had to protect their hearths like their religious forebears by marching into the field of honor, “roaring into

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152 Ibid., 134, see also footnote 239.
battle!” He resurrected the archetypal image of the innocent Michel to assert that Germans were fighting with God on their side to settle old scores, erase old accounts and, interestingly, sweep away all threats from their borders.\textsuperscript{154} And the image of Heimat continued to convey the sense of the nation in cohesive military movement with five million men marching toward three fronts from every German village, yelling, charged with enthusiasm and poised to make the whole world tremble.\textsuperscript{155} These were the heroes, the poet claimed, surrounded by the groping Russian bear and the sneaky Frenchman, appearing as the innocent, young German Michel, and ready to strike like a storm.

Indeed, much of the religious media focused on preparing their readers to make sacrifices for the nation and invoked the words of former religious leaders from the Wars of German Unification in order to make their point. The editors of the Sonntag-Zeitung, for example, reprinted a pastoral letter by Bishop von Ketteler from 1866 under the title, “The Duty of Christians in War.”\textsuperscript{156} “We should not let ourselves be carried away by the pain,” the Bishop reassured readers, “which is only natural, but meet the suffering and the plague with that attitude that Christians have born every time there has been great and difficult tests.” However, unlike the prospect of civil war between Germans and Austrians that troubled Bishop Ketteler in the war between Austria and Prussia five decades earlier, the editors reassured their readers that all Germans now finally stood shoulder to shoulder with the Austro-Hungarians under arms in the present war, fully unified for the German sense of right and honor.

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\textsuperscript{155} Compare Confino, 158-209.
\textsuperscript{156} “Die Pflicht des Christen im Kriege,” \textit{Die Sonntags-Zeitung} (September 6, 1914).
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The readers of the Catholic Diaspora newspaper in Heiligenstadt received a pastoral letter from the archbishops of Bavaria which made no bones about the threat that the “faithful people” faced, but also urged fearlessness and sacrifice and legitimized their militancy. They faced a “Holy War,” yet they were not to complain or feel apprehensive. The bishops reassured their readers that the German Volk and the exalted Kaiser were in the right. They did not want war, nor were they responsible for war, and, in fact, war had been thrust upon them by their enemies. The faithful should trust in the justness of the German cause and a just God. There was also no question that war would soon bring hardship, but the bishops instructed the faithful to fold their hands with great inwardness, heartfelt trust and pray:

For king and fatherland that God protects them from the actions of the enemies; pray for our good soldiers that God strengthens them and comforts them in all grievances, sacrifices and suffering; pray for all, who worry about their dearly beloved; pray also especially for those affected by the hard consequences of war! And combine with your prayer heartfelt rue for all mistakes and sins, mindful that the dear Lord admonishes us to contemplation and atonement through trials and tribulations.

The faithful, the bishops explained, would gladly and wholeheartedly lay their sacrifices upon the altar of the fatherland.

Locating the Subjective Expressions of Fear on the Homefront.

In contrast to public discussions on how to deal with the fears of war, which generally conveyed the image of the fearless and terrifying German man, the subjective records of experience during the First World War prove more ambivalent. Käthe Kollwitz, the mother of two sons including one of military age who had been mobilized and was soon to die, noted in her diary entry from August 27, 1914, how reports of
French and German soldiers’ humanity toward each other affected her like “a touch of heavenly music, like sweet lamenting murmurs of peace” and punctured the heroic stiffness that war seemed to demand.157

For the most part, however, war appeared to screw people’s feelings to an “unnatural pitch.” An article by another woman who spoke of the “joy of sacrifice” struck Kollwitz particularly hard and she wondered how women could summon the heroics required to send their sons to “face the cannon.” She feared that the “soaring of the spirit” would be followed “by the blackest despair and dejection” and imagined that the task of bearing the hardship of war would persist beyond the dark days of November with the return of spring in March, “the month of young men who wanted to live and are dead.”

Reflecting years later on how Germans could support Hitler and the rise of Nazism, the German journalist, Sebastian Haffner, suggested that his generational cohort of German men fed off of the fear of the First World War like a narcotic, enjoying the reports of battle with the boyish sense of adventure and playing games. The four year span appeared like a dream world in Haffner’s recollections, full of a confusing onrush of feelings invoked by the myriad perceptions of his family and surroundings. As the mobilizations of men and horses began, the tenor in his father’s voice and the deep base of the landowner were calm and reassuring. Still, he cried as his family readied to curtail their summer vacation, but admitted that he did not understand his feelings for the nature of the war or the sacrifice that was beginning.

Amongst the passengers on the train home, he heard incessant chattering between strangers as if among old friends and the frequent talk of spies that spread as rumors

157 Kollwitz, 62.
informed by prewar anxieties and fueled by active imaginations of potential threats all
around the nation. However, slowly crossing every bridge became an adventure and the
young Haffner enjoyed the feeling of his flesh “creeping” (*ein angenehmes Gruseln*)
every time he thought there could be a spy at the next crossing waiting to blow up the
bridge with his bombs. The war became a game between nations and Haffner admitted
that he, as the son of a liberal father, had become a fanatical chauvinist and warrior for
the homeland (*Heimkrieger*), his own imagination excited by the nationalist media all
around him that addressed all German citizens, but appeared particularly evocative to
young men. Looking at the map of Europe, Haffner knew that Germany was surrounded
by its enemies. He was confident though that Germany would make short work of
England and France. He was frightened by the size of Russia, but comforted by recalling
what he had heard about their vodka drinking and stupidity.

Death, however, remained far removed. In Berlin there were no air raids or
bombs. The wounded were increasingly visible, but Haffner always saw them from a
distance escorted by military units that he still found picturesque. Death started in the
form of announcements, but Haffner became used to the absence of people and did not
think much about the concrete reality war. Instead, war remained a game. The reported
numbers of dead and captured men remained tin soldiers in the armies of his imagination.
Battles were worth so many points on a board and internal political enemies became
spoilers of the game. As the war dragged on, however, Haffner no longer imagined
peace, just the final victory that public media and patriotic demonstrations intensified. In
the high pitched voice of a child, he told women and old men to hold on until the end.

158 Sebastian Haffner, *Geschichte eines Deutschen*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, c2006, pp. 15-
18.
Yet it was not until the end as the Revolution erupted in Berlin in early November 1918 that the eleven year old boy heard the first shots fired and his perceptions of the reality of Germany finally changed.159

By comparison, in his autobiography, Otto Pallas recalled that fear grew in small ways out of the anxieties of everyday life in the face of war.160 No one in the village in Upper Franconia where his family was vacationing appeared to really think about the dark clouds that lay ahead in war. As the town crier spread the news of war with the ringing of his bell, people gathered at the post office for more information. The local Social Democratic workers were the only ones who seemed to protest the war, but they were surrounded by the majority of farmers, businessmen, craftsmen and civil servants who supported the war. People gathered at the village inn or in the street singing war songs like “The Watch on the Rhein” and “Victoriously We Want to Strike France” (Siegreich woll’n wir Frankreich schlagen). Some people talked of the likelihood of inflation and his mother quickly began to take stock in the kitchen pantry, worried about what her family would have to eat.161

Moreover, the official information that they received motivated many to increase their vigilance, hunt for spies and carry out a lynch mob form of justice. By dusk, as Pallas recalled, it did not seem like there was a reasonable person left in the village. After an order was circulated to remain on guard against any suspicious-looking persons, the fear of spies spread as rumors amongst the villagers, and anything out of ordinary began to look suspicious. Around sunset, Pallas recalled that a strange figure appeared

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159 Haffner, pp. 18-29.
161 Pallas, 5.
near the fountain in the middle of the square, wearing an overcoat, which seemed odd for a warm summer evening. The figure had set a sack with several bundles on the ground by the fountain and he seemed to be adjusting his clothes. As the man neared the entrance to the inn, a villager sprang upon him and rouged him up. More people appeared on the plaza and everyone at the inn assembled outside, shouting “A spy, hang him up!”

The crowd grew threatening, but the innkeeper also helped reign in their fear and aggression. He stood on top of a barrel, quieted down the crowd and began to act as if he were a judge presiding over an interrogation, the scene reminding Pallas of the crucifixion of Christ. In the dim light streaming from the houses and hand-held lanterns, the strange man struck the most unusual figure that Pallas had ever seen. Upon closer inspection, he appeared older, answering the innkeeper’s questions in a soft, almost inaudible voice that sounded anxious. Some people in the crowd removed his jacket and searched his possessions, finding numerous writings stuffed in the recesses of all of his pockets. People mocked him and demanded that he be beaten. But the innkeeper showed restraint. He placed the man in the local jail under protective custody and turned him over to the gendarmerie the next day. Afterwards, Pallas could not recall that anyone publicly spoke of the event, or praised their heroic deed, surmising that they would have felt ashamed of the way they had acted.

His own feelings about the war, as he recalled much later in life, were contradictory, shaped by the powerful attractions of nationalistic propaganda, material culture, and military figures, the war stories of his relatives and the language of nerves. He felt proud about the German soldiers he saw. They looked so new, Pallas wrote, as if
Saint Nicholas had emptied them from a toy box out of his sack, and he loved the smell of the fresh leather their equipment exuded. In the train station, Pallas recalled admiring wounded soldiers up close and he decided that he wanted to become an officer and accept the most dangerous missions in the new submarine warfare that captured his attention. But in talking with his uncle and his uncle’s companions after they had returned from military action, Pallas developed more critical views toward the war. His uncle told him stories about the horrors of the war and the backstabbing actions of Jews in the German military that contributed to the spread of antisemitic rumors. Instead of excitement or anger, however, all the stories of war and the sight of the wounded on the streets began to make Pallas feel as if the war and all the children’s games were becoming too overbearing. He encountered men for the first time, who suffered from war-related trauma and he did not like how they made him feel. They made regular, uninterrupted shaking motions with their arms or legs, sometimes all four appendages at once, he recalled, feeling as if the shaking motions were “getting to his own nerves.”

The Breakdown of the National Emotional Economy.

As most elsewhere, local Social Democratic leaders openly confessed their loyalty to the nation in the August days of 1914. Yet the increasing burdens on the general population precipitated by a prolonged war led some working class activists to challenge the national emotional economy and reassert a working class emotional economy. As a result, the reemergence of independent socialist working class dissent in
turn facilitated greater interventions on the part of the military-police state to control regional production with a series of policies designed to threaten workers if necessary.\footnote{Raßloff, 128.}

Despite all the frightening signs of war, the “drumming,” “braying trumpets,” “droning canons” and a “demon’s tune of death and murder,” the editors of the Tribüne urged their readers to remain steadfast to the lofty goals of socialism.\footnote{“Er ist nicht tot,” Tribüne, May 1, 1915.} They also towed the government line of inner peace in their coverage of working class politics, but local working class leaders increasingly encouraged expectations of a utopian socialist future in return for working class support for the war. In a poem published in lieu of the banned May Day Festival in 1915, the Tribüne’s anonymous poet recalled the frightening figures of war in his allusion to war’s “flaming torch” that now visited every town and city. However, the idea of the May Festival was not dead, the poet declared, if everyone stood fast together. “The old spring song of the people would someday gently return to the land along with the socialist belief in a better future, happiness and peace among nations,” which, the poet proclaimed, was the central idea of May Day that the proletariat would never lose.

Yet as the war progressed, casualties mounted, the demands of work intensified and prices rose, working class dissent grew, especially among the workers in the state-managed armaments industry. National authorities and local employers viewed this reemerging working class dissent as a threat to nation’s war effort and workplace regimes and therefore responded to any signs of independent working class activism by
practically defining the workers’ resort to strikes as grounds for treason with up to ten years imprisonment and threatening to deploy dissenting workers to the war fronts.\textsuperscript{165}

Despite the combined pressures of local patriotic Social Democratic leadership, employers, municipal and military authorities, however, some working class activists continued to pursue an independent path in the region that drew upon the regional tradition of radical working class activism. In nearby Gotha, the Social Democratic leader Bock and the Social Democratic newspaper, the \textit{Volksblatt}, openly rejected support for the war credits in 1914 and managed to lure the inaugural meeting of the Independent Socialist Party to the city in 1916, drawing delegations from other cities in the region including Jena, Arnstadt, the Reussian Principalities, and the Prussian cities of Nordhausen and Erfurt.\textsuperscript{166}

The district attorney records for Erfurt reveal growing concern among regional military commanders about spies and saboteurs who threatened the region’s industrial and agricultural output, but also persistent threats of unrest among the general population due to food shortages and work stoppages. Most disconcerting, from the military’s view, was the increasing presence of women and children at public assemblies and demonstrations. The military commanders understood the involvement of women and children as a cynical tactic on the part of their male counterparts in working class politics, but the presence of women and children also reconfirms Belinda Davis’ findings in her research on the role of working class women in the food protests of Berlin.\textsuperscript{167} As women increasingly took leading roles in the protests over food, they also proved effective in


\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 128.

\textsuperscript{167} Davis,
persuading local authorities who confronted them and swaying their sympathies in favor of the protesters. Consequently, regional military authorities determined that they could no longer fully count on local policing and they decided to order an assessment of local police officials’ political orientation on what they only described as “key issues.”

In the summer of 1917, as general unrest and workers’ strikes continued to proliferate, the regional military commanders in Cassel announced the establishment of three military police stations in Cassel, Meiningen and Erfurt in order to intensify their communication with municipal authorities in their area of command, maintain surveillance and exercise greater control in matters of wartime economic production. Military commanders ordered more security checks and surveillance of the key armaments industries and called for greater exchange of reports between the regional military and local police authorities. As a result, the attempts to organize strikes at the arms factory in Erfurt in support of the planned “Great” munitions strike in January 1918 never materialized. Local authorities remained confident that they could suppress working class dissent and maintain workplace regimes and support for the war, but military leaders had expanded their overall presence and authority in the region in the process.

Minority groups and prisoners of war also became new sources of concern for regional military commanders. On November 11, 1917, for instance, the General Commander of the 11th Army Corps wrote the local municipal council about the increasing problems with groups of Roma and Sinti who lived throughout the region. According to their report, local groups of Roma and Sinti were providing refuge for

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wanted criminals and military deserters, and military authorities therefore ordered immediate military assistance in such instances in order to hinder further support for wanted criminals and military deserters.\textsuperscript{169}

On February 1, 1918, General Commander of the 11\textsuperscript{th} Army Corps in Cassel wrote the district attorneys in the region to reinforce the ban on handling correspondence from prisoners of war with financial penalties, court procedures, and strict punishment for any offenders based on the grounds of treason.\textsuperscript{170} Yet despite all of these new measures, military authorities found that they had to issue further instructions in hopes of maintaining or increasing their control over what was happening at the local level.

On April 15, 1918 the General Commander in Cassel reported to the regional district attorneys that there was increasingly unabated insecurity in the larger cities, so much so that regional military commanders sought to issue a new set of instructions from the Ministry of War and Security Offices. Local police authorities were ordered to mitigate the damage of work shy people and criminal activity, forbid the carrying of weapons, improve lighting and reassign military personnel who were trained in support of local police forces.\textsuperscript{171} Consequently, not even the expansion of military authority in the region could completely suppress working class activism as the conditions of war continued to deteriorate and hint at the general breakdown of national authority that was beginning to occur in the last year of the war.

Everything about the end of the war seemed so confused in the memory of a sixteen year old German military cadet, full of optimism and hope for some, yet hopeless,

\textsuperscript{169} Gotha Landratsamt Erfurt 40, “Sigeuner, Slowaken (1887-1931).”
\textsuperscript{170} Gotha Staatsanwaltschaft beim Landgericht in Erfurt, Geheimakten 1917-1936, 12.
\textsuperscript{171} It is unclear from the correspondence if the new measures were meant to improve lighting in the factories in question or in public streets more generally. See Gotha Staatsanwaltschaft beim Landgericht in Erfurt, Geheimakten 1917-1936, vol. 1, 16.
angry, and frightening for others.\textsuperscript{172} The world as Ernst von Salomon knew it had sunk unopposed into the dust, never to rise again, but this emotional rupture was much larger than what Jürgen Kocka and Steffen Raßloff have characterized as the end of the middle class emotional economy of order and security – this was yet the end of middle class values, but the end of the Imperial German emotional regime.\textsuperscript{173} Nothing that he had gathered on his bedroom table could give him strength, not the picture of his father in uniform taken at the beginning of the war, not the pictures of friends and relatives, who had fallen in battle, the field uniform sashes, the crooked Hussar’s sable, the epaulets, the French steel helmet, the bullet riddled letter bag of his brother – the blood already very dark and flecked, the epaulets of his grandfather with the heavy blackened silver tassels or a bundle of letters from the field.\textsuperscript{174} The young cadet, steeped in the training of the Imperial military, was on his own, about to be swallowed in the maelstrom of the revolution, and uncertain of how events would unfold, but determined to do something to confront the assertion of the Revolution in Berlin.

Despite the advice of an officer at the Prussian Military Academy to stay at home and his mother’s attempt to remove the epaulets from his military overcoat, von Salomon decided to go around her back, take the epaulets, sew them back on to his overcoat and sneak out of the house to find out more about the outbreak of the Revolution for himself. When he heard the commotion coming from one of the main streets in the center of Berlin, he felt pale but clenched his teeth and told himself over and over again to “Hold it together.”

\textsuperscript{172} Ernst von Salomon, \textit{Die Geächteten}, (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1930), 10-12.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 8.
In the city center, von Salomon stopped and watched the Revolution reveal itself to him to be both threatening and pathetic. Following a giant red flag were tired, writhing masses tramping over each other. Women marched at the point followed by the men, mostly young and old, soldiers and workers and many *petit bourgeoisie*. They shoved themselves forward in their broad skirts, with the gray skin of their faces hanging in folds over their pointy noses, looking demoralized with a barely a dull shimmer of determination. From out of their dark, sickened shawls they sang a song with jarring voices whose rhythm did not fit the hesitant trudging of their gait. They fell again and again into the same step and then made the corrective effort to set their feet closer or wider apart as they became aware of their missteps. Many carried their tin thermoses with them and all their umbrellas bulged behind the dark, rain-drenched red flag.

These were the champions of the revolution, von Salomon told himself. They were supposed to represent the burning flame of change and the dream of blood and barricades, but they did not scare him, he asserted. Instead, they were a pulpy mass writhing forward, prepared to suck up everything into its sinuous maelstrom and unable even to oppose itself. He sneered at their demands and mocked their threats, telling himself that they marched out of feelings of hunger, exhaustion and jealousy, and not for some higher ideal, any sense of pride or the certainty of their own cause. Instead, he labeled them “Scoundrels,” “Pack,” “Mob” and “Riff raff.” Their dull, haggard forms looked like rats that carried the dust of the gutter on their backs, gray and stumbling with small, red rimmed eyes.

By contrast, the sudden arrival of the sailors frightened von Salomon with their appearance, reminding him of the breakdown in the Imperial order to which he had
pledged his loyalty and the feeling that things were out of his control. These men were the ones, von Salomon told himself, who had led the revolution. They wore giant red sashes, banded caps, and broad, elegant, navy pants around easy going legs; they had guns in their hands and their countenances exuded laughter. The former saying about the sailors that expressed a sense of national pride shot through his mind, “Our blue boys,” but instead of revulsion or disgust at the thought of their betrayal, he expressed feeling Angst at their sight and what their presence signified about the changes that had occurred. These young men with their resolute eyes, he wrote, had made the revolution, the rude youngsters who had linked arms with the young women there, who sang and laughed and yelled and streamed there, broad and self confident with exposed throats and fluttering ties. A brown car roared up, sailors stood on the running boards perched on the radiator, and the red towel waved, billowing like a signal. A few looked brashly about and they yelled hoarsely.

Yet even this direct confrontation with the leaders of the revolution did not deter von Salomon. Instead, he reached for his side arm, kept his hand on its grip, drew his shoulders together and tucked his chin. But before he could act, a soldier passed in front of him with brown gaiters, pince nez glasses and brief case. Von Salomon focused on the particulars of his clothing and how the sailors responded. The soldier was young. He did not have his buckle, but he still had his epaulets on the shoulders of his long coat. The sailors closed around him. A stocky artillerist with high clodhopping boots and a red cockade on his field cap screamed, “There is another one!” He punched the loyalist soldier in the face with his fist and tore the epaulets from his shoulders, so that the soldier staggered, turned himself around pale-faced, and stammered, “But why then, why?”
Von Salomon suddenly found himself surrounded by many men and women, laughing at him, jabbing him with their umbrellas and threatening to hit him with their hands raised. Yet, interestingly, all von Salomon could think about was defending his sense of honor, which meant protecting his own epaulets from assault. He reached for his side arm, but he was quickly struck in the face by a fist. Everything went dull. He could feel warm blood trickling and sensed his own impotence. He hit back, but his attackers laughed at him as he kicked with his foot and blindly swung his arms around him. Some spit in his face. One woman screamed, “You monkey, you rascal (Zierbengel), you Hosentrompeter,” and another person struck him with a cane in the neck. Many more trampled and struck him and then almost as quickly as it started everything was suddenly still.

Through swollen eyes, von Salomon also saw how the approach of a uniformed officer could still strike fear in the crowd gathered. The officer was slim and tall and he had a narrow, brown, pointy face. He wore a blue Hussars uniform and his cap was askew. He had polished boots with silver studs. He wore a monocle and he clapped against his boots with the riding crop as he approached the crowd. He came closer, clapping with the whip, and went straight away toward the mass of the crowd. The women were quiet. The mass opened itself. The man with the stiff hat disappeared. The artillerist was gone. The long, elegant blue-uniformed man bowed, grasped von Salomon by the arm and led him off to his hotel room at the nearby Carlton to clean himself up. For von Salomon, the appearance of the officer was the first sign that rightwing activism could still strike fear among radical working class activists and it was just the beginning
of his own path toward radical rightwing activism and political assassinations in the
Weimar Republic.

In Braunschweig, by comparison, nineteen year old Johannes Schindler promised
his mother that he would continue to observe his family’s strong faith in the Lutheran
religious tradition. They were thankful, he explained, to have survived the “fury” of the
Spanish influenza and seek the “Truth” in their religious faith, but when he noticed an
advertisement for a special talk to be held at the cathedral, Schindler was “greatly
surprised” to learn that it was a “political talk.” The speaker at the cathedral talked for
over an hour, saying things that bothered Schindler like “Germany lost the war.
Reparations have to be paid by young and old into the second generation,” and “The
peace treaty was a sham, an insult to Germany.” Recalling his sense of disenchantment,
Schindler wrote to his parents afterwards, “If that is all that God is doing then I’d be
better off not going to the church.”

Instead, Schindler turned toward the Bible discussion groups that he had seen
meeting in in the city parks and other public spaces to discuss the prophecies of the Book
of Daniel, namely the millenarian visions of the end times. Expressing particular
enthusiasm for a two hour film and slide presentation advertised as “The Photodrama of
Creation” in Braunschweig’s Rathaus, Schindler began a process of religious conversion
like increasing numbers of other Christians in the region, including his parents, which
became the nucleus for a surging interest in the “Bible Students,” i.e., the Jehovah’s
Witnesses. Attracting further converts through their prophecy that the world would end
in 1925 and translating that fear into the hope of salvation in the “Kingdom, the Hope for

175 Johannes Schindler, “Biography” (unpublished 1982), in United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Archives, RG-02.058.01, 1.
Mankind,” the Jehovah’s Witnesses established their German headquarters in Magdeburg and consequently became a new source of threat in the wake of defeat, especially to Protestant religious authorities in the region.176

Fearless Translations of New Men and Women.

For some German writers and artists, the end of the war offered an opportunity to revisit the experience of war and capture the intense feelings, emotional control and decisive action for new postwar generations of men. In a chapter entitled “Fire” in his book, Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis from 1922, the well known veteran Ernst Jünger captured the ideal of a “powerful masculinity” and a fearless “new man” that modern warfare had created:

“They are men forged of steel, whose eagle eyes peer straight over the propeller’s whir, studying the clouds ahead, who captive within the motorized din of the tanks, dare the hellish journey through the roar of shell-pitted fields, who, for days on end, approaching a certain death, crouch in encircled nests heaped with corpses, only half alive beneath glowing machine guns. They are the best of the modern battlefield, suffused with the reckless spirit of the warrior, whose iron will discharges in clenched, well-aimed bursts of energy.”177

Beneath this image of fearlessness, however, Jünger also recalled a more complex set of feelings. Fear, it seems, was everywhere and nowhere in the poetic descriptions of his feelings; he described the sensation of an “unyielding chill from the inside out” that surfaced like “vague, tattered traces of clouds” or like a mysterious “fog” spreading across the “troubled waters of the soul” that not even a “long, slow drink of cognac” could banish and eventually dissolved into a “dull sadness”. This sensation was an

176 Schindler, 3 and 13.
“unknown realm” in which the capacity to feel melted away, but, as Jünger wanted to make very clear, this feeling was not Angst. For Angst, Jünger asserted, was something that “we can stare sharply, disdainfully, in the eye and frighten into its cave.” Fear, then, assumed a threatening form for the new man that he could control and vanquish through his own projections of terror.

Surprisingly, however, all the pre-conditioning and preparation for confronting the fear of war was of no help to this new man, the soldier on the modern battlefield. Three weeks of steeling oneself for that moment, saying to oneself over and over, “Death! Ha, what’s that?” amounted to nothing in that moment when it came, Jünger wrote. Man as a “thinking being” became a “feeling one, a plaything of phantoms against which even the sharpest reason is a powerless weapon.” In the moment of the experience, the new man could not deny his feelings and every unknown thing became “possessed of a higher and more convincing reality than all the familiar phenomena of a midday sun.”

In death, the new man followed an older military ideal: “Head high, let the thoughts scatter to the winds. Die with dignity – that we can do; we can stride into ominous dark with a warrior’s cunning and bold vitality. Do not be shaken, smile to the last, even if the smile is only a mask to hide from yourself: that is itself something.”

Yet this war not an end, in Jünger’s estimation, but a “prelude to violence” that a new emotional community composed of hardened, fighting men could unleash in the world around them. “It is the forge,” Jünger continued, “in which the new world will be hammered into new borders, and new communities. New forms want to be filled with

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178 Ibid., 18.
179 Ibid., 19.
blood, and power will be wielded with a hard fist. The war is a great school, and the new man will bear our stamp.”

Käthe Kollwitz felt that the end of the war meant the end of a frightening period in her own life and the lives of millions of other people across Europe, united if by nothing else than the unprecedented personal sacrifice and loss. She wrote on the eve of the New Year in 1919, “The frightful pressure of war that grew steadily more intolerable is lifted now; one can breathe more easily.”\(^{180}\) But months later on the fifth year anniversary of the war’s beginning, Kollwitz wrote that all the horrors of war struck her as “almost more incomprehensible, more nakedly frightful than they did then.”\(^{181}\) Moreover, the future of Germany seemed uncertain in her entries. Conditions were de facto civil war. The terms of the peace treaty were bound to prove unfavorable and no one, she as certain, imagined that good times lay ahead.

Unlike the mothers, daughters, sisters and wives who could rejoice at the return of their loved ones, the war had robbed Kollwitz of her joy and left her bearing the burden of the loss of her son and pondering her mixed feelings about her sacrifices as a woman.\(^{182}\) She admitted that she had willingly let her son go off to war because she had been convinced that Germany had been justified and had the “duty to defend itself.” Yet at war’s end, Kollwitz felt betrayed, as if she had let her son go to the slaughterhouse along with all the sons of German parents and she wondered what life would have been like if her son and “millions, many millions of other boys” had lived. Kollwitz noted that

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\(^{180}\) Entry of New Year, 1918, 90.
\(^{181}\) Entry of August, 1, 1919, 93.
\(^{182}\) Entry of March 19, 1918, 87-88.
she felt turbulent inside; everything was upheaval and turmoil. She found no relief in her work and she only felt tranquility when she worked on the memorial for her son.\textsuperscript{183}

In her artwork, Kollwitz struggled with the changes in her feelings that the end of the war and the beginning of the revolution had wrought. The art historian, Elizabeth Prelinger, writes that Kollwitz recognized the need for new pictorial strategies and innovative uses of media to depict novel subjects, but Kollwitz distanced herself from the abstractions of emerging Expressionist artists in favor of realistic studies of nature and she wrestled with discipline in her work, even the control of her own nerves.\textsuperscript{184} At the same time, Kollwitz was not completely comfortable after the war about identifying with any single political party. She suspected that her own cowardice as an older woman played a role in her caution, “horrified and shaken by all the hatred in the world,” but she also felt pressured as an artist, who had long been associated with the plight of the proletariat, to more clearly side with radical working class politics, and she worried about the chances of a Communist state built on a world that had already seen “enough of murder, lies, misery, distortion.”\textsuperscript{185}

Even with these misgivings about art and politics, Kollwitz realized that her art had to draw upon the emotions she sensed in the people she observed and her art had to have an effect. During the war, she wrote that she preferred to seek out forms of expression that were genuine and unembellished, avoiding the “artistic oversubtleties and ingenuities” in order to connect with the average spectator and achieve what she called an

\textsuperscript{183} Entry on February 26, 1920, 97.
\textsuperscript{185} See Prelinger, 81, fn. 114.
“understanding” between the artist and the people.186 After the war, she still felt it was her “duty to voice the sufferings of men, the never-ending sufferings heaped mountain-high.”187 In October 1920 Kollwitz wrote that she had the right to “extract the emotional content out of everything, to let things work upon me and then give them outward form.”188 And on December 4, 1922, she wrote “I want to have an effect on this era, in which human beings are so much at a loss and so in need of help.”189

It was the fear of death in war that betrayed peoples and took their children which Kollwitz most immediately sought to render and convey in her postwar art, especially in her lithographic series on war that she produced in the early 1920s and later revisited during the Nazi regime. Here, Kollwitz brought the consequences of war to the foreground, which most often remained hidden by the public displays of enthusiasm and declarations of courage and sacrifice. The figures are of people in familiar roles as volunteers, parents, widows and mothers with their children. They are often clothed in darkness and closely grouped, which draws the gaze to the physical features of their bodies, their arms and hands starkly rendered in white. At once the pose of the body or a group of bodies and their gestures convey feeling, but it is the countenance, especially the figures’ eyes, and mouths that express the fears of war.

186 Entry on February 21, 1916, 68.
187 Entry on January 4, 1920, 96.
188 Entry on October 1920, 98.
189 Prelinger, 79, fn. 108.
What affects these figures usually lies outside of the frame, except in *The Volunteers* (1922) where the grim figure of death leads the line of young male volunteers with his drum to war (Figure 13). The men hold hands closely linked and are swept in the direction of death’s drumming. One young face close to death looks upward. The other faces of young men have their eyes closed, either with their heads thrown back in a sign of resignation or mouths open in anguish. In *The Widow I* (1922), the woman reaches out with hands drawn disproportionately larger to embrace an empty space filled only in the shadow of her loss, her head tucked in her shoulder, her eyes closed (Figure 14).

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190 Prelinger, 63.
Figure 14. Lithograph by Kollwitz, *The Widow I*, 1922.¹⁹¹

Figure 15. Lithograph by Kollwitz, *The People*, 1922.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Prelinger, 59.
¹⁹² Ibid., 59.
In *The People* (1922), a woman stands with her eyes closed, her hand covering a young child who stares out from the folds of her black clothes with bright, wide eyes into the viewer’s gaze (Figure 15). The woman’s face seems worn but calm to the feelings all around her. Behind her appear the faces of a huddled mass of men and women, their faces in different poses of anguish, weariness and despair. The figure above her right shoulder is depicted with clenched fists, his knuckles drawn close to his mouth in a sign of fear, but the dark wrinkles on his forehead also seem to convey anger or rage.

Figure 16. Lithograph by Kollwitz, *The Mothers*, 1921.\textsuperscript{193}

In *The Mothers* (1921), a group of people stands closely huddled, shielding their children with their backs, arms and hands. The faces of women, children and a man stare

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 58.
out with eyes expressing different feelings and actions in response to war. It is a circle of
bright, vigilant eyes, none dulled, some afraid, others poised, even praying (Figure 16).  

Figure 17. Bronze statue by Kollwitz, *Tower of Mothers*, 1937-1938.

Kollwitz later reworked this theme in a bronze sculpture during the Nazi regime in a piece entitled *Tower of Mothers* (1937-38). It is cast on a smaller scale than some of her other sculpture works and lacks the expressive qualities of many of her lithographs, but in this piece Kollwitz brings her study of war full circle again to a group of women determined to defend their children against the dangers they face (Figure 17). One woman in particular shields the rest of the figures with her body fully exposed to the danger that the others turn their heads to see. Rather than the fearless new men of Jünger poised to hammer the world in unison with their fists, Kollwitz’s series on war captures

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194 Compare Kollwitz’s diary entry on February 26, 1920, 97.
195 Prelinger, 64.
the feelings of the people whom these men expose to the threat of war and offers an
image of women without anyone or anything else available for their protection, except
their own bodies collectively formed to shield their children from war.

The Episodic Fear of Revolution.

For Sebastian Haffner, the war had left everyday life unaltered, often to the point
of boredom, yet war also supplied an inexhaustible fund of raw material for his peers’
imaginations. By comparison, the revolution was a novel experience, vivid and exciting,
but unable to engage their imaginations or invoke feelings of enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{196} The
Revolution assumed the form of another game whose violence punctuated everyday life
with sudden outbursts that sent aftershocks of terror rippling through his neighborhood as
people had a chance to read and talk about what had actually occurred just hours before.
At the first sign of threat, all those in authority seemed to disappear and power resided in
the streets. There were real revolutionaries who attempted a number of coups, Haffner
remembered, but they appeared to have no concept or strategy and lacked talent and
organization. Meanwhile, saboteurs proved quite capable of organizing the counter-
revolution and prepared to mop up the revolution as the masses celebrated the Christmas
holidays.\textsuperscript{197}

The Revolution jolted Haffner and his middle class peers out of the patriotic
intoxication of war. They were “naturally” against the “red” revolutionaries, but they did
not find any of the other groups emerging with the republican government appealing
either. They vaguely knew that the Reds would “rob us of everything,” probably

\textsuperscript{196} Haffner, 29.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 30.
“liquidate” their parents “who were well off”, and “make life frightening” and “Russian.” Yet they also had no enthusiasm for the leaders of the provisional government. Haffner found Social Democratic leaders like Ebert and Noske too repellent and the stench of treachery about them too pervasive. And there was also something loathsome about the way the paramilitary Free Corps units fought so emphatically and so brutally for the government. Consequently, they became known for advancing the “science of torture,” according to Haffner, and associated with origins of the phrase, “Shot while attempting to escape” to legitimize the brutal suppression of the Revolution.

For about the next six months then, life assumed an “eerie unreality.” Some days there was no electricity and on other days the trams did not run. They did not know whom to blame and they resorted to using oil lamps at night for light or walking on foot to get around the city. There were daily demonstrations. People thrust leaflets into their hands or they saw posters which claimed that “The hour of reckoning is near.”

Then the Revolution became their “baptism by fire” and the Haffner’s narrative of the violence assumed the episodic form of a newspaper report reaching into his own memories of the experience. After Noske disbanded the “People’s Naval Division,” radical working class activists stood by the sailors in northeastern Berlin and fought a hopeless and frightfully bitter battle for eight days, unable to comprehend that their own government had led their enemies against them again. Haffner’s neighborhood became one of the main areas of fighting. His school became the headquarters of the government troops. The adjacent elementary school became the headquarters of the Reds. The school’s headmaster tried to remain in the school during the fighting but was shot and

198 Ibid., 31.
199 Ibid., 32.
killed. Afterwards, the building was pockmarked with bullet holes and a bloodstain remained under his desk for weeks.

Consequently, Haffner believes that he became hardened to the sound of ordinary machine guns and light artillery fire. Only mortars or heavy artillery excited him anymore. He and his friends stole away whenever they could and headed toward the sounds of the fighting in order “to see something” happen. Like the reports he had read about modern warfare on the battlefield, there was not much to be seen in the street fighting. There was much more to be heard. It became a sport to enter blockaded streets. They stole through houses, yards and basements, undeterred by blockading troops or signs threatening them with summary execution.

Normal civilian life then mingled grotesquely with military-style operations. On one particularly beautiful Sunday afternoon which Haffner recalled, crowds were strolling down a broad, tree-lined and utterly peaceful street. Suddenly people dove left and right into the doorways of houses. Armored cars rattled by. There were ear splitting detonations frighteningly close. Machine guns sprang to life. All hell let loose for five minutes. Then the armored cars rattled off and disappeared. The machine guns subsided. Boys were the first to reemerge to a strange sight of the long, deserted avenue, heaps of broken glass, all the windows blown out and other pedestrians timidly reappearing. They did not find any explanation in the newspapers about what had happened, but they read the reports about the massacre of hundreds perhaps thousands of workers, whom were rounded up and executed by firing squads in Berlin-Lichterfeld, just a few kilometers away on that very same beautiful Sunday afternoon. The reports of those massacres frightened people. The violence was much closer and more real than anything that had
happened in distant France, Haffner wrote, but that feeling of fear (*der Schrecken*) soon passed in the cycle of the daily news and rhythms of life, since they did not know any of the dead. The newspapers began reporting on other events the very next day. The school year resumed and the patriotic youth club to which Haffner belonged restarted its regular activities.

The Counterrevolutionary Emotional Economy in the Provinces.

As millions of men returned from the war and began to transition back into their communities, local authorities mobilized veterans and citizens’ groups in anxious anticipation of the movement of so many men through their communities and the spread of revolutionary activities. These ad hoc mobilizations of local men proved effective in smoothing out the last stages of military transport. Yet as word of revolutionary activities spread throughout the region, especially from violent events in places like Berlin and Munich, local security forces responded to the threat of Communist activity with their own devices that were intended to instill fear and suppress any potential Communist activity. Consequently, even though the concrete fear of revolutionary violence lay elsewhere, the mere threats of disorder and revolution legitimated the local suspension of established ethical and moral codes of conduct where necessary. The unusual sense of revolutionary times and events appeared to underscore the exceptional nature of the decisions that some people made, but also introduced more radical and even innovative ways for political activists and authorities to respond to the growing threats that they believed they faced in each other.

In response to the threats of demobilization and Communist activity in Nuremberg, Lieutenant Dr. Ewinger, the local representative of the General Military
Command in Nuremberg, ordered 27 year old Wilhelm Dörwald to meet with local leaders of the Bavarian state, labor unions and railroad, including the state commissioner Schneppenhorst, the union leader Gruschke and the president of the railroad Zwosta – a sign in itself of local attempts to coordinate and cooperate among often opposing local institutions and groups. According to Dörwald’s unpublished recollections, local leaders were most concerned with maintaining security in key public spaces and turned to local veterans like Dörwald to restore order where necessary and use the powers at his disposal to quickly bring an end to any chaos resulting from military personnel in transit and revolutionary activity. According to Dörwald he had had enough of war by that point, but the situation in his hometown had become physically threatening. Plundering had been reported around the train station and inside the station there had been acts of theft, sabotage and physical altercations over politics.

Nuremberg’s leaders chose Dörwald because he was an experienced war veteran and placed him in charge of 360 men, selected for their demonstrable love of the homeland. They were armed and wore their uniforms with epaulettes, which, Dörwald felt necessary to note, they normally never wore outside of the military installation in civilian affairs. As Dörwald looked at the men mustered before him, he recognized many familiar faces from his old infantry regiment who had survived the fighting on the west front. But things had clearly changed since November 9, 1918. The revolutionary soldiers’ councils presented new and unfamiliar institutions for Dörwald and the men under his command that challenged local authorities, but did not necessarily result in

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201 Dörwald, 1-8.
202 Ibid., 1-4.
increased fear or physical violence. Revolutionary activists often traveled to various meetings which Dörwald read in their official papers. They were very aware of their new privileges and asserted them, demanding only the best room and board in the local Grand Hotel.\(^{203}\) Local workers also formed their own guard, comprised of skilled workers from the larger factories in Nuremberg. They displayed a narrow red band on their left upper arms, which made them untouchable under the new regime. Dörwald noted, however, that his men generally had good relations with many of the sailors who lived in the Hotel Rosenausaal.\(^{204}\)

Despite a level of relatively peaceful interaction, however, Dörwald’s men reacted aggressively against taunts and physical altercations, especially when people called them reactionaries, and proved difficult to control.\(^{205}\) He recalled having to deal with the more ordinary problems of men who chose to return from the war with French women and children, but also having to mediate a conflict between Bavarian officers and Saxon infantry, who had detained their officers in their own train cars in an act of revolution. But on one occasion in particular, Dörwald wrote about an instrument of coercion that his men created to help them assert their control where necessary. What he found was a structure on which his men had fixed a horse saddle. One of the men proudly explained to him that this mount was used to whip any “delinquent” with an artilleryman’s riding crop. Dörwald wrote that he was extremely surprised by his men’s ingenuity and forbade them to use the instrument any further. After discussing the affair with his superior officer, Dr. Ewinger, they decided to stop the use of this instrument, but Dr. Ewinger also

\(^{203}\) Ibid., 8.
\(^{204}\) Ibid., 6-7.
\(^{205}\) Ibid., 5.
told him that it was excusable “given the circumstances.” Thus local authorities felt compelled to cross a new line in civilian affairs as they perceived increasingly radical threats from the working class activism that emerged from the process of demobilization in their communities. As revolutionary activity reached a crescendo in Munich in the spring of 1919, someone warned Dörwald not to go there on business. According to Dörwald, people there were just waiting to get their hands on him and it appeared as if the given circumstances were still radical enough to warrant radical responses.

The radicalization of politics and values in response to the twin threats of radical working class activism and counter-revolutionary activities did not spread evenly and simultaneously across the communities of central Germany. In Erfurt, events started off more calmly in response to revolutionary activity and focused more on the everyday issues and worries of dealing with the effects of war. The local chapter of the Reichsbund Association of War Wounded and Veterans announced at the beginning of January 1919 that the appearance of all comrades at the next day’s meeting to discuss their concerns over the injured and their dependents’ livelihood was absolutely mandatory. Members were strictly instructed to report and show their membership card at the door.

Meanwhile, the local Social Democratic newspaper, The Tribüne reported that a rumor had spread throughout the town that the Spartacists were planning an “Action” in the days ahead. The editors warned their readers about the wild rumors circulating in regards to local Spartacist demonstrations, but they also sought to dispel those rumors

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206 Ibid., 8.
207 No title, Die Tribüne (January 2, 1919), 3.
and maintain a more moderate, albeit independent socialist emotional economy for the
guidance of local working class activism. The editors claimed they understood how the
wildest rumors could bear fruit in the public because so many people were under “certain
influences” in “this agitated time.” The Tribüne’s editors believed that many of their
fellow male and female citizens already wanted to see blood flow in the streets, but that
was not surprising in their estimation since the middle class citizens’ press had worked
hard to exacerbate the “narrow-minded” hate against the Spartacists. Moreover, the
editors explained that “politically crude” and “reactionary story tellers” were busy
artificially heightening the excitement by recounting the stories at the beer pubs.
Spartacist activities therefore posed a threat to local working class activities. They
fanned the spread of frightening rumors among the townspeople, which threatened to
undermine the limited degree of political legitimacy that working class leaders had
established and made real the possibility of more violent counter-revolutionary actions.
So in order to distance their politics from the nascent Communist Party activity in the
region, the Tribüne’s editors proclaimed that the Independent Socialists rejected the
activity and tactical methods of the Spartacists. They declared Spartacist activities
“obscure” in a vague and unsubstantial attempt to denigrate them and even went so far as
to say that they would fight against Spartacist activity in Erfurt if necessary.

One of the key discursive strategies that the Tribüne’s editors employed to
denigrate Communist activity involved labeling radical working class activity as
childlike, and in this case even likening the plans of the Spartacists to the childlike
fantasies of their rightwing opponents. This approach drew upon prewar working class
rhetorical strategies that sought to suppress radical working class activities and promote a
degree of respectability akin to middle class political culture and couchèd the emergence of Spartacist activities in the language of transgressing the basic laws for the preservation of order.” Consequently, the *Tribüne* editors pointed out Spartacist activities on the periphery of annual events like the peaceful New Year’s gathering at the old Socialist hub in Erfurt, the Tivoli Restaurant, in order to communicate proper forms of behavior to working class readers.

By contrast, the *Tribüne*’s editors claimed that “Scientific Socialism” offered a superior emotional economy to respond to popular anxieties about working class politics by emphasizing the calm and orderly approach of local workers in their peaceful cooperation with local working class leaders as an effective approach, instead of violently subverting established authorities. They pointed to a recent procession of male and female workers from the local arms factory through the town over their concern about re-employment and the availability of raw materials and coal for production as an example of the proper and more effective way for workers to conduct themselves. Unlike the Spartacists, these workers marched into the courtyard of the government building and authorized a confidante to negotiate with the presiding full commission of the workers and soldiers’ councils.

In the face of growing revolutionary activity elsewhere, the *Tribüne*’s message for local workers was therefore clear: if the workers “energetically put certain elements and squealers (*Schreihälse*) in their places for the sake of maintaining order as the most important imperative of the hour,” the editors insisted, then the workers’ and soldiers’ councils, as well as the leadership of the arms factory and city management, could be
more effective in acquiring more coal and raw materials for production and re-employing more workers.

But when the red Communist flag continued to fly in the city, German Nationalist activists began more actively engaging in public forms of politics. A group representing the new German Nationalist People’s Party wrote on behalf of “wide circles” of Erfurt’s citizens as well as from the people in the surrounding countryside to President Pückler in order force the president to remove Communist symbols from Erfurt’s government building. They even added the weight of precedent to the force of their argument, in very bureaucratic fashion, that it had never before been the case to decorate public buildings with flags on a constant basis.209

In mid February 1919, the rumors of revolution led to an agitated state of excitement according to the editors of the Tribüne and held out the very real possibility of a counter-revolutionary test for Erfurt’s workers and their politics.210 Consequently, the potential of revolutionary violence motivated local labor leaders to heighten the expectations of how workers should properly manage their emotions and express them. A report circulated that active lower ranking officers had occupied the military base at the Jägerkaserne, and then, armed with guns and wearing their steel helmets, had taken command in front of the main post office at the Anger, the old town center, which had previously been overseen by regular units of Erfurt’s garrison loyal to the provisional government. According to the Tribüne’s editors, people grew afraid of a pending counter-revolutionary attack against the revolutionary workers and soldiers. Everyone

209 Letter from the State Association for Thüringen (July 2, 1919), StVAE 5/851-2 Arbeiter und Soldatenräte.
was aware of the earnestness of the situation, according to the editors, and most people appeared to have taken the warnings of the workers and soldiers councils seriously to remain calm and act prudently in order to avoid an unnecessary blood bath.

Perhaps then not by coincidence, the “Free Willing” Corps of Thuringia also issued orders a few days later in explicit support of state and local security forces with the intention of also maintaining more general calm and order among their members. They explained that they wanted the Freikorps of Thuringia to serve as a model for the development of the People’s Army. Order and morals were to be strictly maintained on the military base of the regular Army’s 38th Artillery Division and any men of the 1899-birth cohort or younger who assumed duty in the Freikorps were no longer allowed to actively serve in their regular military units.

In fact, it appears that military commanders went out of their way, at least initially, to ensure the peaceful deployment of Freikorps units, closely oversee their recruitment and allay local working class fears of counter revolution in surrounding towns such as Gotha, which became especially known for the violent uprising of the workers in the arms industry there. At the beginning of March, the commander of the 38th Artillery Division, General von Sauberzweig, wrote to the leaders of the “People’s Authorized Deputies” in Gotha that the stationing of a Freikorps unit in Gotha was in no way intended as a political move against the workers of Gotha and the Freikorps Division of Thuringia would welcome it, if the leaders of Gotha’s People Deputies supported the stationing of the unit there. And in a further effort to control recruitment for their Freikorps units a few days later, military commanders ordered that recruiters were only

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211 Aufstellung des Freiwilligen-Korps Thüringen (February 19, 1919), StVAE, 5/759-1.
212 StVAE, 5/759-1, 125.
to send new recruits to Erfurt, who were personally known to the recruiters themselves, or recommended by a reliable source in order to gain entrance into the unit.213

Declaring the End of Fear in Local Working Class Political Culture.

Despite the persistent local class tensions and concerns over revolutionary and counter revolutionary violence, the editors of the Tribüne took the opportunity of Erfurt’s May Day celebration in 1919 to proclaim that the “gigantic power” had been broken which had held culture within its bloody sway and urge workers to complete the promised socialist reform of Germany. The false gods of capitalism and its shield bearer, the military, were not completely destroyed, they explained, but the power and strength of the revolutionary working people had inflicted terminal wounds, and the First of May in 1919 was another stage on the arduous path of the proletariat to render its “grimmest enemies” harmless once and for all.

In order to assert the new found strength of the working classes, local leaders organized a working class celebration, which symbolically asserted working class power in Erfurt’s key public spaces with a procession through the streets of the old inner city and a demonstration at the Wilhelmsplatz, the customary site of local market days, religious festivals and nationalist culture.214 It was also the first time (and interestingly, the last time until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933) that national government authorities recognized May Day as a national holiday. So rather than return to the prewar tradition of a leisurely working class stroll to the forest outside the town or keep a modest profile to local working class politics given the increasing tensions, organizers imbued the whole procession with a more assertive set of symbolic acts and public rhetoric. The Tribüne’s

213 Ibid., 183.
editors reported that Erfurt’s workers had been forced to remain silent for four long years on the First of May. Instead of being able to peacefully demonstrate for peace and the social progress of workers, the editors explained, Erfurt’s workers had had to manufacture the instruments of murder and other tools of war day and night, Sundays and holidays, until they had exhausted their intellectual and physical strength. Their work had only served the mass destruction of peoples, not the sake of work itself, or the cultural progress of mankind and now they aimed to express a sense of entitlement in return for their loyal service in the “grim efforts” of total war.

The editors of the Tribüne still expressed their anxieties about continued working class political divisions and the potential weakness this created, but they tried to gloss over the differences between the old Majority Socialists, Independent Socialists and Communists, and at the same time laud those actions which conveyed the sense of workers’ unity and strength in opposition to their still persistent enemies. According to the editors, the workers of Erfurt had expressed the unbending will of this goal by not saying anything about political differences at the May Day festival in order to stand for true peace among people and the emancipation of work from the yoke of capitalism. The opinions on how best to achieve this goal may have varied, the editors admitted, but as for the goal itself there was no difference between the directions of the working class parties. And if nothing else, the editors concluded, this fact had been powerfully demonstrated by the way that year’s May Day festival unfolded.

Work was stopped at all places on Wednesday morning. More and more people filed into the streets at 9AM in their Sunday-best clothes to make their way to the planned gathering points from which the march to the Wilhelmsplatz was to take place. By
9:30AM, small groups had formed a long procession, a seemingly unending parade of May Day demonstrators made up of young and old male and female workers “from the most varied side streets,” and well before 10AM, they had amassed a highly visible crowd on the broad plaza.

Working class unity and strength were the key messages for working class activists and townspeople alike. A colorful throng presented itself for the display, enlivened by flags, standards and signs in large numbers with the insignias of the factories or other signs of the day’s political messages. In a symbolic display of the continuing strength of working class unity, even employees of the former King’s and Queen’s companies were present, as well as from the post office, the railroad, the arms factory and many other workers’ groups from state or municipal operations.

On the cathedral steps the unified singers of Erfurt’s Working Class Choir Club took their places. From here the powerful voices of the men’s Uthmann Choir sounded, “Aloft to the Light” over the whole plaza to the ten thousand people gathered there. A trumpet fanfare gave the signal for the main speeches, which were held on an improvised tribune by speakers from both the Majority and Independent Social Democratic Parties. They urged their listeners to secure the revolution and move it forward against all reactionary assaults and they called upon the people not to rest or stop until socialism had freed the people in all lands and overthrown capitalism. The unified choirs appeared once more to lead everyone in singing and the song “We are the storm” roared in full harmony over the whole plaza.

Despite the highly symbolic acts of participation and performance in the official ceremony, Communist activists appeared at the exact moment when the festival
participants were supposed to process out and realized the fears of working class planners about unruly radical working class behavior. At the last minute, according to the *Tribüne*’s report, the Communists had decided to separate themselves from the unified procession. They began bawling loudly as they passed by the edge of the *Wilhelmsplatz*, but they did not force any confrontation and turned right away down a side street called the *Kettenstrasse*. Everyone let the splintered group pass as if nothing serious had occurred and then the “mighty procession” out began.

By comparison, the editors of the local *Kommunist* newspaper chose to articulate a more radical emotional economy than the one offered by the unified working class front. Instead, the editors of the *Kommunist* focused on those revolutionaries who had died in the last year in their first edition, published just in time for the May Day festival, and explained how the dead should continue to instruct the living. The editors immediately drew the attention of their readers to the fact that the killing of workers had increased across the land since the Revolution of November 1918. And they likened the use of machine guns and flamethrowers by the leaders of the National Assembly against the poor and suffering to the Romans throwing the Christians to the wild animals in order to heighten the sense of the threats that workers faced from both counter revolutionary forces and their own Social Democratic leaders in the provisional government.

The *Kommunist* also described an alternative version of what had happened on the first May Day celebrations in the city since the start of the war and portrayed their own activities as examples of their own calm and orderly political practice meant to counter the accusations of the *Tribüne*’s editors and any others. According to the *Kommunist*

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215 “The Dead and the First of May,” *Der Kommunist* (May 1, 1919), 2.
editors, thousands of supporters gathered at the Kaiserplatz and the Wilhelmsplatz with the youth leading the way to hear comrades speak about the tasks of revolution. The imposing numbers of demonstrators, the editors mused, must have made many Philistines (Spiesser) wonder from behind their curtains. Yet the descriptions of their own activities made no mention of their own disturbance of the main events and did not try to justify them. Instead, Communist supporters had simply gathered at the Blumenthal restaurant afterwards to hear music appropriate for the “earnestness of the times.”

The Specter of Communism in Regional Counterrevolutionary Activity.

Despite the attempts by more moderate local socialist leaders to project an orderly and responsible political movement to local citizens and municipal authorities, Erfurt’s Employers’ Association decided to write to General von Sauberzweig a few weeks later to encourage their support “for the greatest effect possible” in defense of the government and personal property against Bolshevism. The petition showed noticeable signs that middle class citizens and municipal authorities were afraid of radical working class activism and therefore sought to limit its influence in their own defense plans. They made it clear, in an attempt to assert their influence that they would not tolerate the membership of Spartacists or Independent Socialists in the town’s local self defense unit that the military was establishing.217

Other local professional groups also became more actively concerned about the radical working class threat they perceived and more assertive in their political actions (Figure 18). In June, a group representing Erfurt’s civil servants wrote to the local

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217 Letter from the Union of Erfurt’s Employers Association (May 13, 1919), StVAE 5/759-2 Schriftenverkehr, Kriegsgliederung, Einzelmeldungen (1919-1920).
government’s president, Graf Pückler, about the continued appearance of the red flags on government buildings. The group wanted to remind the president that the red flag of the “Revolutionary Security” units stationed there had been flying since the beginning of the year and that, by their estimates, about 100 unemployed, workers, young women and children had hoisted a red cloth on the flagpole again. For the sake of local peace, the group “hoped” to remove the flag, but the point of the letter was unmistakable: civil servants were prepared to pressure the old Prussian bureaucrat if necessary in order to suppress radical working class activism.218

Figure 18. Photo of the May Day parade through Erfurt in 1919.219

218 Letter from a group representing Erfurt’s civil servants (June 10, 1919), StVAE 5/851-2 Arbeiter und Soldatenräte.
219 StVAE, XVI B 4, 38.
Meanwhile, in June 1919 the military commanders in Cassel expressed their support for an accelerated buildup of regional defense forces, but also expressed their own concern over the lack of adequate civilian volunteers to carry out the tasks of self defense.\textsuperscript{220} Interestingly, as the situation began to worsen in other areas, the efforts of Erfurt’s anti-Communist citizens and military authorities also became a model to emulate. A “friendly” source told a group calling itself the “Greater Citizens’ Union of Cassel” that Erfurt’s self-defense organization was especially well developed and had probably already found a better solution to the problems than those citizens participating in Cassel.\textsuperscript{221} According to the letter’s authors, the gravity of the inner political situation and the fact that their local businesses had already been affected by heavy plundering convinced the Citizens’ Union of Cassel that the development of the City Defense Unit was absolutely necessary.

In anticipation of possible violence, the Citizens Union also began to carry out its own assessment of the possible risks involved in the looming clashes with radical working class activism. The letter noted that some members, particularly those “who find themselves in well ordered and modest but not excessive circumstances,” or those who had to rebuild their existence, demanded compensation for their families in cases of wounds, injury, sickness or in the worst cases death while serving in defense of the city. After discussing these additional concerns, the Citizens’ Union of Cassel decided to inquire about how Erfurt’s Self Defense force handled the issues of injury, death, medical

\textsuperscript{220} Letter from the General Command XI. A.-K., Cassel (June 7, 1919), StVAE 5/759-2, Schriftenverkehr, Kriegsgliederung, Einzelmeldungen (1919-1920).

\textsuperscript{221} Letter from the Greater Citizens’ Union of Cassel (July 30, 1919), StVAE 5/759-2, Schriftenverkehr, Kriegsgliederung, Einzelmeldungen (1919-1920).
insurance and support for dependents as well as more generally about advice on the organization of citizens concerned about the threat of Bolshevism.

Chapter Summary.

The anxiety of pending war reinvigorated local debates over the governance of individual feelings, ethics, moral codes and citizenship in preparation for war, which pitted the classical German humanist pedagogy and 19th century middle class sensibilities against the emerging ideal of the emotionally trained child hardened against the intensity of fear and pain. The declarations of war in August 1914 increased local activities to instill a national emotional economy that conveyed how others should govern their emotions in a national effort to hold together, remain vigilant, work hard, sacrifice their lives and achieve final victory.

However, as the war bogged down and uncertainty about the potential outcome grew, different emotional economies began to resurface in the debates over how Germany should best proceed in war and peace, precipitating increasing distrust of radical working class politics, ethnic minority groups, municipal authorities and expanding regional military authority in local affairs, and ultimately facilitating the breakdown of the national emotional economy of Imperial Germany. National defeat and revolutionary activities led to the further proliferation of emotional economies available to German citizens, intensifying the debates about responsibility among German citizens and soldiers as well as feelings of entitlement and expectations of reform. Yet the growth of revolutionary working class politics led in turn to more concerted counterrevolutionary activities that spurred the radicalization of emotional economies, legitimized the resort to
violence and terror against political opponents, and threatened to undermine persistent
calls from local authorities for moderate, cooperative and peaceful forms of politics.
Chapter 4

Citizens’ Courage (1920-22).

* “That was our day! It was a day of military display in revolutionary socialism, a military display of those warriors who fight for socialism, a military display of the proletariat in the struggle for freedom! And the proletariat’s massive contingent will drive fright into the limbs of many narrow-minded middle classes (Spiesser) and Reactionaries from the battles of the Kapps and Lüttewitze in Erfurt. The proletariat does not sleep. Its strength remains unbroken!”

** “Dear German citizens, do things really have to get worse for you first, does water first have to rise around your throats before you have the courage to commit yourselves to resistance?”
   - “Citizens’ Courage,” Mitteldeutsche Zeitung, September 13, 1920.223

The end of the First World War brought together a unique set of circumstances in the case of Germany that made widespread anxieties highly visible political subjects for discussion and debate.224 Richard Bessel, in particular, has pointed out that there is nothing necessarily peculiar about any nation’s search for stability; in fact, seeking a sense of normality after a catastrophic event, he suggests, is a universal response. But what set Germany’s case apart after the First World War, in Bessel’s view, was the rather unique coalescence of different concerns about war, defeat, revolution and economic instability that in turn framed widespread political debates in the Weimar Republic, made

223 “Bürgermut,” Mitteldeutsche Zeitung (MZ), September 13, 1920, translations of text provided by author, 2.
moral questions highly visible, reflected a popular longing for an imagined normality and based that longing upon the dangerous ground of illusion that Germans could return to the past, when in fact they were creating something altogether new.\textsuperscript{225}

The ability of radical rightwing political movements to sustain these uncertainties about Germany’s future and embody them for more and more ordinary Germans, as Detlev Peukert argues, undermined the potential in the compromises of 1918 and instilled a sense of crisis in the nation’s path to modernity that eroded the chances for the republic’s legitimacy and enabled the rise of the Nazi movement.\textsuperscript{226} Yet radical rightwing politics did not occur in a vacuum detached from interrelationships with opposing activists and their emotional economies - nor was the sense of crisis necessarily inevitable as some scholars such as Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf have pointed out, suggesting instead that the sense of crisis in the Weimar Republic still requires closer investigation about how activists and ordinary people alike were involved: how they perceived the world, how they received medial presentations of what was happening around them, how they experienced these events, how much they thought they could change things as events unfolded, how much they actually changed them and how both old and new emotional economies were involved in making the sense of crisis in everyday life and politics seem more plausible.\textsuperscript{227}

Other scholars have pointed out that there are continuities between prewar and postwar rightwing nationalist manipulations of fear, particularly of radical working class


\textsuperscript{226} Peukert, 266-267.

politics, in order to explain the strength of anti-democratic politics in the Weimar
Republic. Some have focused on the fear of the German middle classes, who acted as
if pressed by the forces of industrialization between big business and labor to articulate
an alternative vision to the “patrician hierarchy and emotional emptiness (sic!) of
Wilhelmine Germany” that fueled more radical populist and völkisch movements.
Some have even suggested that the aftereffects of the First World War, the harsh
conditions of the Versailles Treaty and the rampant inflation, “crystallized a pre-existing
sense of moral malaise, the perception of a collapse of the moral compact of the nation
and a dangerous thinning of the bonds that held society together.”
Reminiscent of the
Great Fear of the French Revolution, the explosion of popular German activity, the
“rumor-mongering, suspicion, miracle-healing, boasting, lying, general restlessness and
unhappiness – and the extraordinary energy that went into expressing, elaborating,
imagining, preaching, and diagnosing its causes and effects,” all hindered ordinary
Germans in their ability to make peace with each other and the world around them and
reoriented their sense of time toward the anticipation of peril in the future.

As a point of debate, some scholars have cast doubt on the extent to which
collective feelings like anxiety, fear, malaise or resentment influenced interwar politics.
Peter Fritzsche emphasizes the sense of hope and the promise of a far-reaching program
of renovation that the Nazis instilled, setting them apart from all the special interest

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228 Stern, Five Germanys I Have Known, 53-54. See also Winkler, Der lange Weg nach Westen, Vol. 2,
213-265, especially 236.
229 Fritzsche, Rehearsals for Fascism, 6-7. See also Benjamin Lapp, Revolution from the Right. Politics,
International, 1997).
231 Ibid., 44-45.
groups and decaying patrician parties and enabling them to attract a plurality of voters.\textsuperscript{232} Yet even Fritzsche points out that the renovation projects of the Nazis relied upon the “transfiguration of conditions of despair” that stemmed from the general sense of crisis in the early Weimar Republic.\textsuperscript{233} And others such as Alexander de Grand build off of this line of thought, arguing that "fascism offered a compelling myth of unity more than it did of national rebirth," suggesting that other feelings like disunity and its counterpart of unity were just as important, if not more crucial preconditions for the ways in which Nazis mobilized emotions in their politics and attracted support.\textsuperscript{234} All of this suggests that the Nazis’ invocation of feelings of unity, hope, and/or rejuvenation and the reception of these collective expressions of feeling among Germans depended on the experiences of everyday life and politics in the early Weimar Republic and how activists and ordinary people alike framed those experiences in the emotional economies that they already knew, rearticulated and sustained.

Fear, especially the fear of a communist revolution, figures very prominently in various explanations of why many Germans withdrew their support from more moderate middle class politics that purposely pursued compromise with moderate Social Democracy, redirected their votes to the more staunchly anticommmunist and antidemocratic politics of the patrician-dominated German People’s Party and German Nationalist People’s Party, and increasingly began to entertain more radical, populist and extra-parliamentary solutions on the extreme right side of the political spectrum.\textsuperscript{235}

\textsuperscript{232} Fritzsche, \textit{Germans into Nazis}, 232-235.
\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{235} Compare Raßloff, \textit{Flucht in die nationale Volksgemeinschaft}, 196-231.
Electoral trends alone yield an image in the scholarship of increasingly solidified and unstoppable rightwing middle class politics, collapsing forms of moderate cooperation and dividing working class organization, but local archival research in central German communities indicates that the rightwing orientation of the middle classes was not always so solid or unstoppable and radical rightwing politics required an almost constant conversion of more immediate threats into states of worry, what Johanna Bourke would call the “commercial work” of fear, in order to sustain itself. Moreover, workers were not always so divided between different camps or unable to transcend more polarized class lines in times of perceived crisis. As the archival research in this chapter will also demonstrate, radical rightwing emotional economies did not always achieve the results they expected in their transfigurations of hope and despair. Moderate middle class and working class activists proved capable of limiting the escalation of fear at the heights of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence and working together despite increasing polarization along the lines of socio-economic class and race. Even more, populist forms of violence emanating from the radical left side of the political spectrum and the effective orchestration of a republican emotional economy at the local level actually instilled fear in radical rightwing activities and drove their activists into semi-public seclusion.

Invoking fear was therefore not monopolized by radical rightwing political practitioners. Pointing out threats and suggesting how people should manage their emotions, express them and instill specific feelings in others were important practices across the political spectrum of the Weimar Republic. These emotional economies continued to draw upon sources of fear and emotional economies that groups had invoked
in Imperial Germany, recalled during the First World War and radicalized in the wake of national defeat, revolution and counterrevolution. Different fears also played important roles in how radical working class activists sought to mobilize workers for a communist revolution, how more independent working class leaders aimed to carve an alternative course between revolution and Social Democratic collusion with rightwing politics, and how moderate middle class and working class leaders aimed to hold ordinary Germans together in defense of the Republic.

Moreover, electoral trends only reveal the surface affects of fear in everyday life and politics. Affecting fear increasingly involved the activation of ordinary citizens, local space and place, everyday material objects and social practices in myriad competing ways that included producing and reading newspapers, handbills, fliers and graffiti, but also included participation in public commemorative events, mass demonstrations, marching and singing in local festivals and physical, sometimes even violent confrontations between opposing sides in the streets, at the train stations, meeting halls, neighborhoods or individual activists’ homes.236

Crowds, festive occasions and other mass public events have long interested scholars, both specialists and generalists, for their effects on ordinary people and continue to influence contemporary popular assumptions about crowds, feelings and politics. Barbara Ehrenreich, for example, draws from the older assumptions of Gustave Le Bon and the more recent findings of Peter Fritzsche to suggest that fascist spectacles were intended to invoke a sense of solidarity or belonging in such a manner that their

performance “reduced whole nations to the status of an audience.” Yet local archival research in the early Weimar Republic indicates that activists across the political spectrum also invoked prewar threatening images of their opponents, summoned familiar fearless figures and projected imposing displays of their own in order to instruct others about how they should more actively organize what they were feeling and express those feelings as agents of particular ideologies, identities and politics. The reduction of citizens to audience members may have been a goal or consequence of fascists achieving power and wanting to maintain control later on through their staged spectacles, but this misses the emotional context of their origins in Germany’s defeat and competitive forms of politics in the wake of the First World War, and does not pay heed to the role that invoking emotional experiences, particularly fear, played in persuading more people to become more active and affect others around them.

Generating social realities of fear, however, went beyond staging public gatherings and involved more people than ever before in their everyday lives and politics through ordinary concerns about food, housing, heating fuels, rising prices, money, personal injuries and the competing expectations about how to feel and act as young men, women, workers, professionals, citizens, parents, husbands and wives. These activities themselves reveal collective and individual sites to read across the grain of the sources for anxieties and fears in the people who mediated emotions through their writings, other publications or staged events, but heightening expectations among their audiences,

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readers, consumers, participants and bystanders leads back to the key hypothesis that fears become social realities through the subjective experience of everyday life and politics and the expectations of ordinary people about how they should feel.

Playing on ordinary people’s sense of courage became a key way of raising expectations in people’s subjective experience of invoked fears about how they should feel and express their feelings in their actions. Conversely, invoking ideas of courage reveals how their authors perceived fear, meditate their fear and convey ethical and moral codes that were meant to frame, manage and express emotions through their actions. The historical visibility of fear that such discursive analysis yields is therefore often oblique, leading to the subjective experience from the authors of frightening constructions, on the one hand, and the subjective experience of those attuned to the direct experience of fear and/or its medial montage on the other. That said, these fears were not constant or completely deconstructive; nor were they also accidental or inevitable. Various groups and individuals reacted differently to the fear they perceived and invoking fear often produced mixed results and effects. People proved open to alternative responses, even capable of resisting more violent reactions and articulating more peaceful, colorful and joyous emotional communities.

Projecting Hope and Peril for the Nation.

Despite the experiences of revolution and counter-revolution that had transpired in the previous year, the editors of the Erfurt’s leading middle class newspaper, the *Thüringer Allgemeine Zeitung* (TAZ), conveyed feelings of hope and optimism at the beginning of 1920 to their readers for Germany’s future. Some contributors to the TAZ’s
New Year wishes like Dr. Meinke from Kiel asserted that only the feeling of love could lead Germans through their peril (Not) and help them overcome the sense of insult they all felt on the “difficult path forward” that he invoked.239

Public displays of emotion were therefore not necessarily dominated by collective expressions of despair. There were still other sources of feeling like hope and love. However, these middle class expressions of hope and optimism conveyed still other feelings like the sense of national insult and anxieties about the nation’s future that served to reinvigorate debates about how individual Germans should feel about themselves and the values they should espouse in the expression of their feelings for the nation. Germans therefore invoked different feelings in their postwar debates about the nation’s future, but the transfiguration of those feelings, as Peter Fritzsche characterizes these practices, did not necessarily rule out hope in utter despair, thus directly preconditioning the Nazis’ invocations of hope for rejuvenation and unity in their politics. In fact, German projections of peril posed different, even competing visions of national renewal or transformation and suggested that individual Germans could be the authors of their nation’s fate as well as their own.

In a feature article by the Court Chaplain D. G. Dryander, the pastor invoked Friedrich Schleiermacher’s assertion in 1806 that sooner or later, Germans stood before a general struggle involving their ethics, religion and education no less than the fight for their external freedom and material possessions.240 In so doing, the pastor drew a direct line of comparison for readers from the memory of Prussia’s capitulation before Napoleon to the more recent defeat in the World War. More to the point, the pastor

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240 Ibid.
explained, Germans’ hopes for economic recovery, national reconstitution and external freedom in 1920 depended on the battle for the highest and innermost values of the German people. If they believed in the living God again, the pastor continued, the resulting religious-moral rebirth would also instill those characteristics for which Germans were well known, their honesty (*Redlichkeit*), industry, trustworthiness and sense of duty, without which the love of the fatherland could not grow and weld the divided tribes of Germans back together to one *Volk*.

National defeat in the First World War had resurrected historical fears of capitulation, division and foreign control recalled through the cultural memories of the Napoleonic Wars a century earlier, but living in defeat had also brought to life new anxieties about economic recovery and material standards of living that few could recall from their personal experiences and memories, and the pastor linked these worries to the general notion of struggle for the German people, the debates of Germans’ values and future consequences for the nation. The pastor placed both the hopes of national unity and rejuvenation squarely on the shoulders of German individuals and heightened the expectations that Germans would know best how to respond in the contemporary debates about their responsibilities and values by returning to the sources of Germany’s success. The pastor made the choices clear. Religious belief was the fount of those German values of honesty, trustworthiness and duty. If individual Germans failed to espouse those values, then the consequences were clear: national disunity, enslavement and decline.

Invoking peril served as rhetorical shorthand for framing various problems that Germans faced, mobilizing specific groups and suggesting how people should respond in
hopes of different desired outcomes. Within days of the guarded New Year’s declarations of hope and optimism, groups like the local Civil Servants Association began taking their concerns more out into the open in public demonstrations on the Wilhelmsplatz where they expressed their worries over sinking standards of living and the fear of being reduced to beggars that they claimed they could feel through the physical deprivations of their bodies. As one speaker claimed, “Every civil servant feels it daily on their own body, how his cost of living has sunk and how he is more and more disparaged as a beggar.”\textsuperscript{241} In this case, the sense of peril was personal and imminent and it explicitly served the special interests of civil servants rather than the nation.

But another group of specialty trade shops, craft workers and homeowners framed their personal sense of peril in more explicitly national terms of politics. Gathered at the local Catholic high school in early March, they heard Senator Beythien speak about Germany’s economic peril, the plight of the middle classes against big business and the ways in which the current national government was robbing the virtuous and industrious individual of every initiative, thereby threatening Germany’s ability to become great and strong again.\textsuperscript{242} This sense of peril also converted the anxiety over national decline and weakness into the immediate fear that capitalism, the provisional government of the Republic and its policies posed to skilled individuals and property owners. In this case, the senator did not suggest that a return to characteristically German set of values was required. Instead, it was the current government and capitalism which threatened the values that they espoused through their work and material possessions and became the object of their politics.

\textsuperscript{242} “Kundgebung des Mittelstandes,” \textit{TAZ}, March 12, 1920, 3.
At the beginning of March, a group of teachers wrote to the TAZ about the “Children in Peril,” in order to draw readers’ attention to another concern about the continued use of corporal punishment in children’s education and the effects of war on future generations of German citizens. The teachers first criticized the effects of the prewar pedagogy of hardening German children, espoused by some local officers, doctors, other teachers and parents and resurrected in postwar Prussian parliamentary debates on the patriarchal rights of teachers. The emerging generation of young people, they explained, were increasingly disconnected, brutally raised (Verrohung) and blamed for the failures of their elders, who, the authors explained, were themselves a tortured and broken people.

This projection of the nation’s peril questioned those canonical values and related outcomes asserted by authors such as Pastor Dryander and suggested a new set of values for the nation’s future. Germany’s economic and social development, this group of teachers claimed, had instilled strong feelings of freedom among Germany’s war children generation which made the old way of raising children and required a pedagogy that allowed for the self indulgence of youth. They cited the use of new games of movement (Bewegungsspiele im Freien) that demonstrated the importance of freedom and they referred to US pedagogical practices for interesting models in self governance, minus certain typical American “exaggerations.” Practices of admonishment, threat and punishment no longer served any purpose for Germany’s children and the nation’s future; in fact, the way German parents and teachers instilled values in their children threatened to harm those children and the nation’s future. Instead, they argued that only values of cooperation and co-responsibility inspired by a true sense of honor would awaken interest

in self-discipline and morals and enable Germany’s youth to integrate themselves in the public order.

Expressing the Fear of Revolution in Local Space and Place.

As these debates emerged in the guarded optimism of early 1920, the events surrounding the Kapp Putsch in March 1920 refocused the discourse on fear and the ways in which fear influenced everyday life and local politics. It is difficult to completely piece together the emotions invoked in the revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence surrounding the Kapp Putsch in Erfurt due to the absence of some of the confidential police reports on this period and the periodic censorship of Erfurt’s Independent Socialist Tribüne and the more sporadically published communist newspapers, but by early March 1920, radical left and rightwing activists were more openly pushing for a confrontation that aimed, on the one hand, to overthrow the nascent Republic and eliminate the fear of communism, and on the other hand, to set a communist revolution in motion and eliminate the fear of capitalism.

The editors of the Independent Socialist Tribüne, by comparison, drew attention to the new fear of enemies emerging within their own ranks, but also continued to invoke the old enemies from Imperial Germany in their attempts to mobilize local workers and lead them in their political actions. In response to the reported killing of 42 people in front of the Reichstag in January 1920, the Tribüne’s editors suggested that it was the old Socialist Democratic Party’s Angst, schlotternde Angst, the feeling that both the right and the left threatened their very existence, and the awareness that they were impotent
without rightwing support, which forced them to turn the machine guns and flame throwers of reactionary mercenaries on the socialist revolution and innocent people.244

In response to this recombination of fear, the editors of the Tribüne devoted much of their efforts to explaining how workers should feel and act. At first, they resurrected the prewar working class emotional economy that urged their readers to remain calm, hold to the parliamentary system, take to the streets when necessary in protest and then, if all else failed, call everyone out for the general strike. But as more comrades died in the spring of 1920 across Germany and their blood flowed in the streets at the hands of the “bourgeoisie” and “reactionary military,” some rejected these established respectable working class expressions of feelings and values and more aggressively looked forward that May Day to the time when the proletariat would destroy its old enemy.245

The fear of counterrevolution therefore led to more radical expressions of working class values among some Independent Socialist activists, which approached the radical rhetoric of local communist counterparts.246 In the months leading up to the Kapp Putsch, for example, local communist newspaper editors told their readers that the idea of parliament was no longer an option and the Soviet Russia was their best ally, and they began framing communist political campaigns as a “final struggle” (Endkampf) in hopes of staging revolutionary activities.

Consequently, communist activists organized groups of unemployed workers and their families to raise the red flag on key municipal buildings in Erfurt, established self defense forces known as Hundertschaften in neighboring towns like Gotha, and attacked

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244 “Schlotternde Angst,” Die Tribüne, January 24, 1920, first supplement.
245 “Revolutions-Maifeier,” Die Tribüne, April 30, 1920, first supplement.
local government and military sites in the chaos of the Kapp Putsch and the workers’
general strike intended to stop the radical rightwing overthrow of government. They
shut down public services, confiscated private property and food, injured local residents
and killed others that they categorically targeted as different forms of class enemies,
either as citizens, farmers, capitalists, military personnel, civil servants, doctors,
nationalists or Christians. From some accounts, communists had also forced some fellow
factory workers to take up arms in order to accelerate the radicalizing of the workers’
general strikes and overthrow the Reich’s interim government before the Republic’s first
election that spring.

The subsequent radicalization of radical working class activities in turn invoked a
fear of communism in both their targeted opponents and wider circles of ordinary citizens
and fellow workers, which in turn influenced how local citizens fortified public spaces
and organized more radical responses against the threat of communist revolutionary
activities in the region. As one anonymous author of a history about the Nazi movement
in Weissensee, a rural community near Erfurt, described the situation in looking back on
these early years of the republic, after the arrival of unfamiliar Communist agitators from
outside their community and their subsequent organization of local political mobs and
forced requisitions of grain during the harvest season in the fall of 1919, “The time had
come, in which the men of Weissensee cleary had to decide on which side they
belonged.”

So in response to the perceived threat of working class revolutionary activity in
the region, different groups of citizens, farmers, military officers and municipal leaders

247 See Raßloff, 155-261.
248 Anonymous author, *Geschichte der nationalsozialistischer Bewegung in Weissensee/Thüringen*, no
place or date of publication, in StVAE.5.350.W27, 1-3.
sounded the alarm about the communist threat and organized the town’s defenses via the middle class press, political gatherings, word of mouth and the use of fliers.\textsuperscript{249} The activist networks that resulted from these efforts oversaw the fortification of the town. They stationed patrols of mostly young men, including many veterans, respected citizens and university students at armed checkpoints, and they maintained watch over Erfurt’s key public spaces and streets protected by sandbags, barbed wire and machine guns (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Photo of everyday life at the barricades during the Kapp Putsch.\textsuperscript{250}

Local German Nationalist activists who felt that the middle classes needed a more radical voice in Erfurt’s politics established the \textit{Mitteldeutsche Zeitung} (MZ) in late 1919 as a more radical alternative to the TAZ. The MZ aimed to sustain middle class

\textsuperscript{249} Compare Fritzsche, \textit{Germans into Nazis}, 128-133.

\textsuperscript{250} StVAE, XVI B 1 b, 18.
involvement in the ongoing struggle with Communism and increase the public support for the German Nationalist People’s Party (DNVP) and other rightwing groups. Some rightwing activists went even further, surveilling public spaces and gatherings, keeping watch at the homes of working class political leaders and in some of the worst cases reported in the early spring of 1920, summarily executing groups of men from Erfurt and surrounding towns like Gotha and Sömmerda for their presupposed links to Communist political activity and violence.251

Locating Fear in a Communist Attack.

The archival record mostly reveals collective constructions of fear intended to tell people what to fear and how to express that fear with the aim of organizing groups and their politics, but little evidence for actual individual expressions of fear and emotional experience in general. One townsperson, for instance, wrote a letter to Erfurt’s Lord Mayor around the time of the Kapp Putsch in March 1920 about the general lack of security:

_Herr Oberbürgermeister!_ (March 18, 1920)

Yesterday evening at 6:35 it was still daylight. I wanted to make my way from the _Schloss_ Bridge to _Schloss_ Street past the main checkpoint accompanied by a colleague.

[…] I afterwards confirmed: the three men from the security police fired without even the slightest grounds to do it. No one stood. Everything went further. No one wanted in anyway to harm the three men; the whole public was well clothed and did not look like Spartacus and many women were there as well. All persons were far removed from the security police; every man immediately followed their command. It was completely

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unmistakable that this involved harmless people who did not know that the Anger was cordoned off. Why then this shooting?

I implore you, Herr Oberbürgermeister, to do everything in your power to protect your fellow citizens from such infringements. […] Besides this danger for the body and life of innocents there is, however, something else to consider: the green [-clothed state] police have made themselves more and more unloved so that they are making a name for themselves not only among the politically most radical circles but as well among the whole citizenry as a raw, bloodthirsty soldateska.

Robert Jacki
Teacher at the Building Trade School. Prussian Government Building Master. Lieutenant in the Reserves of the 7th Baden Infantry Regiment. Member of the Technical Emergency Support. 252

The author of the letter was an engineer at the local building trade school, a Prussian government building master and lieutenant in the German State of Baden’s Reserves, who wanted to draw the Lord Mayor’s attention to the level of arbitrary violence occurring at the hands of the government’s own security forces stationed around the city and demand more protection for innocent citizens caught in the sporadic bursts of conflict. Yet in his descriptions of the events he witnessed and his attempt to persuade the Lord Mayor, the engineer also captured the fear of several young security officers who anticipated a communist attack and the fear of ordinarily clothed citizens lying down in the street to protect themselves from the security officers’ firing.

In both cases, there are almost universal signs of fear. Among the young security officers it was the indiscriminate shooting into a crowd of people and among the people it was the physical gestures of lying prostrate on the ground and demonstrably following the orders of the officers amidst the firing. The fear of communist attacks on security positions in Erfurt was very possible and the presence of women walking with the men

252 StVAE, 1-2/120-14, 31.
was not a clear cut sign of innocuous everyday behavior for women had often been present at working class political activities and communist activists, as I shall show, were known to stage actions through otherwise peaceful working class crowds. Other units had already faced communist attempts to overrun their positions and that fear of a communist attack probably factored in the security officers’ overreactions to approaching figures with armed force first. The pedestrians acted to protect themselves from the use of force. The prone physical postures they assumed conveyed acquiescence to the authority of the security forces and most likely limited the violence that erupted in that moment, even as it continued to punctuate everyday life elsewhere in the days ahead.

The experience itself also had other effects beyond simple knee-jerk responses or cause and effect relationships – what Alf Lüdtke calls the productive powers of emotion, which prompted the engineer to take up correspondence with Erfurt’s Lord Mayor in an attempt to reign in the violence and protect innocent people. Moreover, according to the letter’s author, people were spreading frightful stories about how the security forces behaved like a soldateska. This was meant on the part of the engineer to move Erfurt’s leaders to act, but his assertion also reflected how some people were actively propagating fearful rumors about the security forces that ironically invoked the frightening images of the communist-style violence and terror that Erfurt’s leaders sought to counter.

With no further evidence available, one has to wonder, how those security forces and civilians handled the situation as it ended. Were there any injuries? How did people experience that fear beyond the visual gestures of acquiescence and protection? What, if anything, did local authorities say in response to what had happened? How did those

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experiences and their memories affect everyday life, social relationships and politics in the short term and beyond?

The actual experience of fear in this case was relatively episodic, but the evidence suggests that such events continued to affect how townspeople would invoke fear in the future through their petitions, anecdotal memories, gossip and other available means. As the Kapp Putsch and the ensuing communist uprising died down in the last weeks of March 1920, opposing media, party activists and social networks continued to invoke the memories of that violence into the summer and fall of 1920, convert those fears of ideological struggle and civil war into popular anxieties and articulate emotional economies through publicly staged events to govern individual feelings and affect how others should feel and act in response.

Instilling Fear in Working Class Festival Time.

That May Day did not witness a return to violence as some working class activists had hoped, but it did assume a hybrid form of working class holiday and militant celebration that reflected conflicted feelings of working class confidence and anxiety. There were continued concerns over more violent politics from the extremes, plus the sobering fact that workers were increasingly divided in their politics at a time when working class solidarity was vital in the face of sporadic counterrevolutionary violence and circulating rumors of terror.254

The Independent Socialist Tribüne’s editors openly celebrated the military display of revolutionary socialism and explicitly expressed their conviction that the impressive assembly of working class activists and their families would terrify their militant

opponents. At the same time, the editors still sought to convey to their readers that a holiday feeling blanketed the whole city and was reflected in the magnificent weather for the event. As proof of unified working class influence, the editors pointed out that even the few factories that were open did not try to disturb the festive feeling. And as for those workers who were still active in those factories, the editors warned them that they should consider how their actions affected others workers. Those workers who did not join ranks with the main body of working class politics in the town, they explained, were consciously or unconsciously becoming the assistants of the “capitalist reaction.”

The procession still followed the more assertive route of the previous year that took working class participants to the central plaza. Around six o’clock in the morning, organizers staged a “great awakening” to call people out into the streets and not more than an hour later, groups slowly began to march to the various gathering points in the city. From there the processions moved toward the Wilhelmsplatz accompanied by the Volk choir and the Erfordia singers’ club in the singing of the Marseillaise. The leaders of the different working class parties spoke in a symbolic display of solidarity between rightwing Social Democrats, Independent Social Democrats, Communists, union leaders and syndicalists. According to the Tribüne’s report, all the leaders talked in similar terms about the meaning of that year’s International Workers’ Holiday, projecting the threats that lay ahead and explaining how workers should organize their feelings and prepare for action. They made it clear to those in attendance that their struggle for socialism would probably continue for many years, but the speakers implored the festival’s participants that they still had to carry out the struggle because they could only rebuild Germany through socialism. The international proletariat was gathering everywhere on that First
of May, they reassured everyone, and they were creating new courage for the intense battles pending. Invoking the words of Karl Marx that proletarians of the world had to unite, the leaders proclaimed that there could be only one revolutionary working class and it had to achieve victory. The speakers concluded their remarks with an enthusiastic cheer for international socialism, May Day and the world revolution.

The militant public display of workers’ solidarity then gave way to a more festive form reminiscent of the prewar leisurely hike to the forest outside the city. Around 10 in the morning, the demonstration began to move from the plaza through the streets, accompanied by the sounds of the drum and flute choir of the workers’ gymnastic club. The workers’ cycling club rode on the point, followed by the festival vehicles, independent professionals and the masses of workers organized behind them by workplace and trade. The procession passed through the Pergamentergasse, Augustinerstrasse, Johannesstrasse and Anger to the Kaiserplatz where it disbanded into smaller groups that processed toward meeting locations in the forest for an afternoon picnic and entertainment. The Tribüne’s editors expressed their confidence that this mass demonstration of working class political culture had created a deep impression on both participants and onlookers in the city about the strength of working class solidarity and the convinced them of the possible repercussions for further counterrevolutionary attacks.

Some of the remaining Majority Social Democrats in Erfurt, however, began to worry in the Freie Presse’s editorials and speeches about the rise of extreme politics on both ends of the political spectrum, the threat to their own cooperative forms of politics and subsequently, the likelihood of the Republic’s collapse. They publicly hoped that German citizens would display their dissatisfaction with both radical right and leftwing
violence in the first national parliamentary elections of June, but the de facto collapse of
the German Democratic Party and the lack of Social Democratic Party gains at those
polls came as heavy blows and further cause for moderate citizens’ efforts.\footnote{255}{“Der
totgeborene Reichstag,” \textit{Freie Presse}, June 10, 1920.}

The Independent Social Democratic Party maintained its dominance in local
working class politics with over 36 percent of Erfurt’s electoral district results in the June
\textit{Reichstag} elections, but the Communist Party managed to capture just over 2.5 percent of
working class support, which reinforced the divisions within working class politics.\footnote{256}{Raßloff, 209.}

Even more disconcerting was the ability of the rightwing German People’s Party (DVP)
and the German Nationalist People’s Party (DNVP) to capture middle class support,
especially new voters, and erode the German Democratic Party’s (DDP) strong electoral
results from the year before, effectively ending the DDP’s more moderate politics of
compromise with working class leaders because of the fear of rising Communist activity
in the wake of the Kapp Putsch. The DVP gained 18.9 percent and the DNVP achieved
20.5 percent of the vote, primarily at the expense of the German Democratic Party
(DDP), which saw its electoral basis shrink by half to less than ten percent.

Meanwhile, the \textit{Tribüne}’s editors continued to convert lingering anxieties and
actual reports of terror into a state of working class fear of radical rightwing activity.
According to the editors, the summer months of 1920 were “good times” for the people
who murdered workers and spread misinformation and false rumors of working class
terror.\footnote{257}{“Gute Zeiten für Arbeitermörder,” \textit{Tribüne}, July 5, 1920.} They sarcastically liked to point out that Germany was now the “freest
democracy” in the world according to leading Social Democrats like Philipp
Scheidemann, but they warned their readers about the weakness of pro-republican forces
and the gathering strength of their enemies. They likened the military responses in places like Marburg to a “medieval military justice” and suggested that the Republic had become a “frightening weapon” in the hands of the bourgeoisie, implying that moderate working class leaders had lost control of their own creation and the reaction had become the “triumphant strong man” in national politics.258

The editors of the Tribüne also portrayed a more detailed image of the imminent threat that radical rightwing activists posed to workers. They reinforced the emotional assertions of nationalist commentators that radical rightwing activists took courage that all was not lost and hoped to seize power again soon. They continued to organize citizens’ self defense forces down to the smallest detail and they employed chicanery, coercion, corruption and espionage as weapons against the working masses. To make matters worse, the editors explained to their readers that a rightwing espionage network had been discovered in central Germany with its headquarters in Magdeburg. According to their sources, a man by the name of Altmann was working under official military identification to disseminate misinformation in the region for the rightwing paramilitary group Escherisch and an employee of the MZ was feeding false reports almost daily of the potential for leftwing uprisings to their German Nationalist readers in Erfurt.259

Instilling Fear in Nationalist Festival Time.

The local German Nationalist press also continued to convert disparate reports and anxieties into a sustained state of fear of pending Communist attack in the summer of 1920. The success of the Russian Red Army on the borders of Poland and East Prussia,

258 “Der starke Mann,” Tribüne, August 6, 1920.
the persistent reports of communist activities in the region, including the hoarding of firearms and the violent disturbance of German Nationalist rallies, fueled the looming threat of communism in Erfurt’s middle class press.\(^{260}\) Moreover, reports of black French troops operating in the region presented a new racial insult and threat to the nation and Polish nationalist activities in Silesia signaled the renewal of an older nationalist concern.\(^{261}\)

Both German Nationalist and Independent Socialist editors invoked the sense of mounting preparations for an imminent attack from their opponents, continuing to convert actual reports and persistent anxieties into states of fear via their newspaper reports. Both exposed each other’s clandestine activities and exaggerated the realities of the threats they faced, but it also appears that local German Nationalists resorted more often to skewing local opponents’ rhetoric and misleading or misinforming their own readers and supporters in order to achieve their political goals. Both also included the republican government in the threat that they each side faced. On the one hand, German Nationalist authors intensified the threat that leftwing forces posed through their influence in state and national government. On the other hand, however, Independent Socialist editors decried the elimination of working class influence in government in general, the deterioration of fairness and impartiality and increasing support for radical rightwing activities in the national justice system.

Despite the polarization of everyday life and politics in the wake of continued violence and sustained states of anxieties and fear, some of Erfurt’s leaders decided to


use that year’s Sedantag to bolster a sense of national unity across the fractured political lines of the town. At first glance, it may have seemed like an odd event to choose to resurrect a national sense of unity at a time of intense polarization. The event commemorating the decisive German victory over France in 1871 had seen both its ups and downs in the city’s public memory. It had been billed as the most important national holiday in Imperial Germany and even given up for dead by the editors of the Social Democratic Tribüne as early as 1893, but Erfurt’s local leaders had occasionally revived the event in the years before the First World War in order to unify the German people around the myth of national solidarity.

As the editors of the Tribüne tried to explain to their readers after the events of the 1920 Sedantag had already unfolded in a less than auspicious manner, a “People’s Committee” including several well-known workers had intended Erfurt’s commemoration for everyone, regardless of their confession or politics. The committee hoped rather optimistically that, after all the divisive events of the past twenty one months, the opposing groups could convene, see each other eye to eye and continue rebuilding the fatherland together.

However, the timing and location of the celebration on Sunday, September 12, 1920 at 11:30 in the morning instead of the customary September 2nd also reflected the defiance of the Republic’s ban on nationalist celebrations by some local German Nationalist leaders. Dr. W. A. Krannhals told his readers in the German Nationalist MZ

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263 “‘Vaterländische’ Gedenkfeier – Grüne gegen Kriegsbeschädigte,” Die Tribüne, September 13, 1920, second supplement.
on September 2, 1920 that that year’s Sedan Day was intended to restore the shaken confidence of the German people in the time of their greatest and most difficult challenge. Thus some German Nationalist leaders continued to project a sense of national peril and the hope of national rejuvenation, but they also heightened the imminent sense of the danger that Germans faced. If there was any further confusion about the peril Dr. Krannhals’ readers faced, the headlines on the front page of that same day’s MZ intended to make the looming nature of the threat clear: the northern flank of the Russian army was threatening encirclement in Poland, the secret maps of the Independent Socialists had been discovered and the local Independent Socialist Newspaper, the Tribüne, was calling for an “International of Deeds”.264

In the face of advancing Communist threat and local activists poised to lead another revolutionary action, Krannhals also reminded his readers of Germany’s “holy powers,” i.e., Luther, Bismarck and Hindenburg, whom they should emulate in the governance of their emotions and their expression. Krannhals quoted Luther’s words in the face of the devil, “We do not want to be afraid,” as a way to demonstrate how German leaders had fearlessly guided Germans citizens in the past and provide a rather limited model for how German men and women should respond to the present danger.265

Even the more moderate and well established middle class paper, the TAZ, carried an editorial from the local Citizens’ Association, entitled “Citizens Defend Yourselves!” on 4 September 1920, reminding their readers that the radical elements of the working classes were arming themselves and preparing an “eternal peace” for

citizens, if they did not wake up and create an army of order to counter the well organized Red Army growing in their midst.266

As for the actual program of events and the nationalist emotional experience they hoped to orchestrate, Erfurt’s organizers planned to start with the “Festival March” of Richard Wagner, performed by the orchestra of the locally stationed 21st Infantry Regiment of the Reichswehr under the direction of Obermusikmeister Winkler. In an honorary gesture to the men of the founding generation, Pastor Mueller would officially greet the veterans from 1870/71 and then the all male choirs, including the Thüringer Singers' Association and the Choral Club Arion, were scheduled to perform the “German Song” by Kaliwoda. A local writer, Gustav Schröer, was asked to hold a speech followed by a collective rendition of a Gelübde (a “vow”), including the first verse "Ich hab mich ergeben" (“I have resigned myself”) and the second verse, "Lass Kraft mich erwerben" (“Let me gain strength”), which served as an oath-taking ritual in the name of the national community for those who participated in the singing. Afterwards there was supposed to be a memorial for the fallen led by Colonel von Manten and the military orchestra would sing "Ich hatt' einen Kameraden" (“I had a fallen comrade”) to invoke the memories of those men who had sacrificed their lives for the fatherland. And finally, following the Christian religious forms, the organizers planned to end the nationalist event with the ringing of the cathedral's bells.

As for what actually happened, the middle class TAZ reiterated that the patriotic celebration was intended for every German Volksgenossen without injury to any feelings or political views. However, from their reporter’s view, a group of about one hundred young men, mainly Burschen, had assembled at the national commemoration with red

266 “Bürger wehrt Euch!” TAZ, September 4, 1920, 3.
flags and the usual placards, looking as if they intended on carrying out their previously announced intentions to disturb the event. Their cheers for the *Internationale* were met with handclapping and patriotic songs, which was intended to drown out the disturbing cheers and demonstrated nationalist resolve. Then what the editors termed a “dangerous pell-mell” ensued on the steps of the cathedral. Demonstrators stormed a black-red-and white flag, but those present managed to continue the program despite the disturbance. The choral groups performed as planned. The minister greeted the veterans and the local writer, Gustav Schröer, spoke of the spirit of love in which the whole folk should come together, while those who still thought otherwise continued to howl.\(^{267}\)

In the Majority Social Democratic newspaper, the *Freie Presse*, the editors saw a victory for the enemies of democracy. They expressed the feeling of being caught in the middle and they urged their readers to remain vigilant but act moderately in comparison with the old problem of unruly working class behavior. From their point of view, the ultra-rightwing politicians would use the actions of the Communists to discredit the Republic and restore the old days of monarchical and military order. But the Communists had also succeeded because their actions subsequently injured the Republic. “Cool-thinking” working class politics would put an end to “irresponsible Communist heroics” This *Radauheldentum*, in the editors’ opinion, was the greatest enemy of progress for German workers, and they implored their readers to report any revolutionary activity from both the right and left.\(^{268}\)

According to the editors of the German Nationalist *MZ*, the Independent Socialist *Tribüne* defended the actions of their Communist comrades and called for blows in

\(^{267}\) “Die vaterländische Gedenkfeier,” TAZ, September 13, 1920, 3.

\(^{268}\) “Die gestörte Gedenkfeier in Erfurt,” Freie Presse, September 13, 1920, 2.
memory of those workers who had fallen in the war. Yet from the actual perspective of the Tribüne’s editors, most Independent Socialists had really gathered at the theater hall of the Auenkeller during the Sedantag commemoration and stayed there to plan their first party convention and discuss their position at the upcoming Third Socialist International meeting, which was set to define Socialism in the wake of the Russian Revolution. They claimed they knew beforehand that the Sedantag festivities would degenerate into a threatening nationalist scene, noting the lack of Communist or Republican flags at the event and the predominance of the black, white and red decorations that greeted everyone as evidence. However, they also expressed their surprise at the sight of how much security the organizers had prepared in case of trouble, as if some of the organizers knew there was something more afoot than they would fully disclose.

Figure 20. Photo from Demonstration of Injured War Veterans in Erfurt, October 5, 1919. One placard reads, “That is the appreciation of the Fatherland.”

269 “Zwei Sozialistische Stimmen,” MZ, September 14, 1920, 3.
270 StVAE, XVI B 1a, 27.
In the meantime, according to the Tribüne, the Organizations of Injured War Veterans and War Victims marched to the cathedral plaza after their group’s meeting at the working class Tivoli Restaurant (Figure 20). They had intended on participating in the Sedantag commemoration and wanted one of their representatives to say a few words about the uncertainty of their situation. Yet when they arrived, they discovered that the security forces would deny them entry. When the members of the War Wounded and War Victims persisted, some of the green-clothed security police officers began beating the organization’s crippled members with the staffs of their own red flags. Then a few people began wildly running around the steps of the cathedral, urging nationalist participants to prevent the red flags from being seen or injured veterans and their supporters from ascending the steps, while German Nationalist youth waved their black, white and red flags to and fro. As the crowds began to sing German patriotic songs, the War Wounded and War Victims marched to the nearby Hirschgarten to hear their speaker formally present their demands, but even then, someone interrupted the gathering to point out that the speaker was not even an injured war veteran. By coincidence, the Tribüne editors noted, the speaker had not in fact lost an arm, a leg or his head.

Finally, according to the report which Erfurt’s police published in the MZ on the security measures that the police had taken that day at the cathedral plaza, the Organization of Revolutionary Railroad Workers (Verband revolutionärer Eisenbahner) and the International Union of War Wounded (der Internationale Bund der Kriegsbeschädigten) had joined the tail end of the parade of veterans’ and other citizens’

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organizations with their red flags and related placards. The police attempted to talk with the counterdemonstrators and determine their actual intentions, but in that moment, the counter demonstrators pushed over the police lines and stormed the steps of the cathedral plaza. In their final estimation, however, the police emphasized for the readers of the MZ that they had not directly observed or received reports of any serious injuries.

From all available reports, however, it does not even appear that what happened that day at Erfurt’s cathedral plaza in September 1920 amounted to much of a coordinated Communist attack. It was more likely that a crowd of union activists, injured war veterans and victims attempted to include themselves in the procession of local clubs and organizations and express themselves with their red flags, banners, songs, cheers, possibly a speech in front of the crowd and by physical assertion if necessary when barred from participation. Some pushed their way past the police cordon and tried to ascend the cathedral stairs. Some of the other people gathered there felt disturbed by this “red” presence and some German Nationalists, especially the German Nationalist youth group’s standard bearers, rallied support with their black white and red flags as if to defend the plaza steps like the nation writ large against the perceived fear of communism, and may have led to a clash with some union activists that sent some people running and others preparing for a fight. The commemorative event was certainly set apart from ordinary time and everyday experience by the very nature of the festival itself. It was clearly staged and performed along the lines of established nationalist political culture, but the participants created an experience that instilled fear in the actions of middle class youth who saw themselves as defending the nation and in the actions of those participants who fled to protect themselves from the clashes that ensued.

Erfurt’s readers also received a fragmented view of what happened, what they should feel and how they should act. For some, it looked like a continuation of civil war, the trial of a nation facing invasion or betrayal by workers and veterans misled by Jews; for others, it seemed like the encirclement of the republic and the work of reactionary forces. Thus the immediate sense of danger echoed among partisan groups of readers, listeners and passersby in different ways. However, no single group was as of yet able to resolve political conflict in the town or fully assert their politics within their own social milieu or against their political opponents across socio-economic lines. Converting popular anxieties into fear had not materialized into an immediate sense of threat beyond a few sporadic episodes or enabled one side to impose its will on the other. In this case, the active presence of police, the willingness of the injured veterans’ group to withdraw and the unwillingness of other participants to join ranks with radical activists on both sides all appeared to play key roles in limiting further conflict and a wider spiral of fear. Yet local media continued to invoke those fears in order to sustain their own political agendas in the wake of Sedantag.

In response to what happened, the MZ published a letter from a woman in Erfurt on the second page of the Monday edition entitled “Citizens’ courage,” which criticized the temerity of local middle class politics and argued for a more radical response to working class activism.273 What moved her to write, she explained, was not the childish behavior of the demonstrators who had sought to disturb the commemoration of the fatherland on Sunday, September 12, but the once again proven courage and pride of townspeople. She asked readers how many men she had seen run away in their top hats to save themselves, leaving the showplace to the youth who fought bravely and defended

their beautiful new black, white and red flag. She added that women had also shown
their courage, their temperament undaunted by coercion, and witnessed their “fists
dancing on the backs of demonstrators.” In her opinion, bad examples spoiled good
morals. It was always better to show one’s feelings for the fatherland than cautiously
stand by the side as many of her fellow citizens unfortunately had done. Instead, they
had screamed at the officials with complaining looks, saying things like, “This did not
function either. The whole event is poorly organized.” So the author of the editorial
implored her fellow citizens once more:

Think about it, dear citizens, the best organization does nothing when it is
not supported with powerful deeds, if not one for all and all for one, if not
driven by the determined will that we want to do something, we want to
have our commemoration undisturbed. That could happen without
division! […] If only you knew how strong you are, dear citizen. Carry
through with the task at hand. Don’t always stand there by the side with a
wait and see elegance and misunderstood decency. It is the only way to
impress upon the riff raff and rabble, which, naturally incited by a Jew,
sang, whistled and screamed on the Wilhelmsplatz, let the International
live and otherwise revealed themselves as uneducated children in need of
punishment. One can only call it riff raff and rabble, since one could not
imagine that a reasonable, thoughtful and decent worker would have
something against it when our great past, our heroes’ deeds and our dead
whom we have to lament, are to be commemorated.

The author of the MZ editorial drew upon prewar images of the socialist threat in
order to convey the present danger of communism and they interlinked that feeling of
threat to Germany’s recent military defeat, the loss of divine sanction, the sense of
national subjugation, the looming threat of Soviet Russia, the conspiratorial plans of
regional Independent Socialists, local middle class concerns over material items and even
the nightmarish image of drowning.274 In response to this composite threat of
Communism, the MZ’s editors again reminded their readers of the “Holy Powers” of

274 Theweleit, Male Fantasies. vol. 1, 229-249.
Luther, Bismarck and Hindenburg, which local leaders had often invoked before the First World War for similar purposes meant to instill courage in the face of fear. They did not elaborate in more detail about how the words and actions of those men could now serve under different circumstances, but they presented a generally fearless heroic figure which citizens should imitate in their own actions.

They criticized those workers and veterans who chose to express themselves at an event that was originally intended to be open to all, depicting those leftwing activists in familiar prewar forms as uneducated and irresponsible. But they also broke with past precedents and more openly denigrated the feelings and actions of “respectable” middle class people who chose to flee the scene, stand by the side or just complain to the authorities rather than face the workers’ and veterans’ groups who had appeared.

Instead, the MZ suggested more radical ethical and moral codes for how German citizens should respond to other groups of Germans. They valorized the sentiments and actions of those young men and women who stood together to face the onset of their Communist enemies and fight back as the old veterans and fallen heroes had done for the fatherland in times past. This more aggressive middle class behavior, the editors argued, also more clearly communicated the German Nationalist emotional economy for how working class people should think and act. They suggested that respectable workers would act more rationally and decently than those unruly mobs and a few more brazenly pointed to Jews as the key enemy, who were “naturally” misleading the German working classes.

The middle class TAZ also turned its readers’ attention to the activities of the radical working classes and the armed threat that they posed to citizens as the key source
of fear. The *TAZ* still espoused a vision of community which was open to a broad spectrum of Germans with different political views and religious faiths, but its editors also criticized the sleepy attitude of citizens in general toward politics and the unruly behavior of working class men. The Moderate Socialist *FP* by comparison perceived equal threats in the activities of both extremes. It editors praised the cool-thinking that most workers evinced and expressed disdain for the irresponsible “heroics” of Communist activists.

The editors of the *MZ* also claimed that the *Tribüne* was quick to defend their Communist comrades and suggest militant “blows for the war’s victims” to their readers. Yet in fact, the editors of *Tribüne* held more to their earlier line of peaceful action. They refrained from some of the more aggressive, retaliatory rhetoric of the recent months and depicted the events surrounding Erfurt’s 1920 Sedantag celebration in ways that revealed German Nationalist attempts to use the appearance of the local railroad workers’ union and the organization of wounded war veterans at Erfurt’s plaza to portray the event as a communist attack, and symbolically frame middle class responses as defensive actions for the German nation and the more aggressive retaliation against the nation’s enemies. In rejecting the *MZ* claims that they were in fact communists, the editors of the *Tribüne* drew upon older images of the reactionary capitalist threat in order to criticize German Nationalist attempts to incite people to war through the threat of Bolshevism and reinforce a working class emotional economy. They reminded their readers that it was their duty to remain vigilant against the presence of such concealed rightwing plans and report them to the working class media and other local authorities.

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From their view, the war’s victims also had every right to appear at the commemoration and show people the misery that resulted from the oaths they had sworn to fight for their nation. If anything, they suggested that the unnamed woman who had written the editorial to the MZ was the actual irrational and crazy voice in this whole affair.277

The Gendered Aspects of Fear.

The prominent position provided for a female editorial voice in the local German Nationalist discourse on fear and the denigrating response from Independent Socialist editors offers an opportunity to examine the gendered aspects of fear.278 Much of the public discourse surrounding Erfurt’s Sedantag in 1920 centered on the ideal man, his feelings and their expression, yet women were also encouraged by some German Nationalists to take more active and aggressive roles in politics while simultaneously mocked by their opponents for asserting a more radical view. There was a wide consensus across classes about respectable behavior that served both the purposes of moderating local politics in general and suppressing more radical forms of activism, but opposing sides of the political spectrum also intensified their attacks against moderation and respectability in male and female behavior, thereby instilling fear in the heightened expectations of how to feel and act as men and women.

277 “‘Vaterländische Gedenkfeier’ – Grüne gegen Kriegsbeschädigte”, Tribüne, September 13, 1920, second supplement.
Women had increasingly become agents as well as objects of state planning during the First World War as defenders of the nation via their roles as housewives and consumers.\textsuperscript{279} Claudia Koonz argues that the electoral reforms of the new republican constitution heightened both the expectations to assume greater civic responsibilities after the war and exacerbated the sense of frustration that many women’s-rights activists experienced as a result of limited access to areas of public policy such as education, health, welfare, culture and religion, which essentially extended the accepted role for women as guardians of the private sphere, German homes and the nation writ large.\textsuperscript{280}

The plight of German minorities that resulted from the postwar ethnic upheavals and redrawing of national borders in Eastern Europe offered a chance for some women to become the agents of Germanization in the east as well.\textsuperscript{281} However, the fear of communist activity, especially during the violent clashes of the Kapp Putsch, marked a new albeit brief role for women as agents of radicalization in the public sphere that criticized the respectable forms of middle class politics and raised the expectations for both men and women in a new nationalist emotional economy.

The production, circulation and reading of fliers offered one key way for radical rightwing activists to express the fear of communism and instill that fear in others in the hopes of mobilizing support for the nation. Found among the confidential reports of Erfurt’s magistrate, one flier with such purpose in mind reads:

\begin{quote}
Mothers, Women, Girls! Foreign elements without a fatherland have succeeded through [unreadable text] agitation and foreign phrases to shroud the reason of a part of the German people and distract them from
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{279} Compare Reagin, 73-77.
\textsuperscript{280} Claudia Koonz, \textit{Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family and Nazi Politics} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 21-49.
the path of duty. True men of German blood have barely escaped the hell of war and must now take up the war against terror, murder, rape and erroneous teachings. These are the Citizens’ Defense Units. Without paying heed to the shameless insults and lies of foreign agitators, voluntary bands are doing their duty, which is doubly difficult because they must defend the German homeland, mothers and children against members of the German people fanaticized by paid agents and spies. Your home, German women, and also your happiness, German girls, are in danger. Therefore, do your part too in the great task of liberation: talk to your man whose name you carry, to the father of your children, your fiancé, whose home you eventually want to guard. Talk to your friends, who would support you in times of danger and need, so that they too do their part and report to the Citizens Defense Units! 282

The authors of the flier conveyed a vivid image of the threat that communism posed to the German ideal of Heimat. Colored with overtones of racism, sexual predation and even hints of antisemitism, the flier laid out the full reach of foreign invaders, who deployed paid agents and spies, used foreign phrases, shrouded German faculties of reason, turned Germans against Germans, threatened the German home, family, women and children through their acts of terror, murder and sexual violence and robbed German women of their joy.

In response to this expression of fear, radical rightwing activists imagined a more active role for women that still drew from women’s traditional roles as mothers, daughters, wives and future housewives. The flier, however, re-envisioned women’s roles as guardians of the home in a new guise for women as liberators of the German people from foreign danger, and articulated a clear set of expectations for how both men and women should manage their fears of communism and express those feelings in a more active defense of the nation. German women were supposed to talk to their male relatives, friends and acquaintances, even imagine their future husbands and families, and

282 StVAE, 5/759, 82. For similar fliers, see also StVAE, 1-2/120-14, 2.
raise the expectation through their conversations that their men, as “true men of German blood,” would defend them in times of danger. Heightening these expectations in response to the fear of communism made ideal notions of men and women important almost herculean goals in the conversations of ordinary people and very likely led to widespread individual conflicts of goals and interests which scholars such as Reddy would view as individual situations of fear. Sounding the alarm of the communist threat expressed the fears of the flier’s authors, but the invocation of those fears for radical rightwing political goals also created the potential for states of fear based both on collective perceptions of communism and heightened expectations of how individuals should act as ideal types, i.e., as men, women, workers, future husbands and wives.

Figure 21. Photo of a woman standing in the streets of Erfurt around the time of the Kapp Putsch.283

283 StVAE, XVI B 1a.
The *MZ*’s publication of a female editorial voice in response to the events of that year’s Sedantag commemoration also marked a new stage in the role of women in articulating more radical politics. Not only did the female author of that editorial in the *MZ* argue for a more aggressive response to the threat of communism, thus marking a radicalization of local middle class notions of respectability, ethics and moral values, but she also used the criticism of middle class respectability and passivity, which had often been associated with middle class men and women in general, to articulate more aggressive ideals of male and female citizenship that were willing to resort to physical violence against fellow citizens, and she publicly drew a racial distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish men in politics, which the middle class media had generally avoided. Thus the radicalization of a female editorial voice also heightened expectations of how middle class German men and women should respond to the fear of communism and handle themselves in relationship to their Jewish friends and acquaintances.

The editors of the *MZ* even drew a distinction in generational terms, suggesting that the younger generations of German men, when compared to the last remaining old veterans of 1870/71, were worthless and shameless for letting a “few stupid young men” ruin the Sedantag held in honor of the veterans. Thus young men, who had not yet experienced war, were expected to protect the nation which the founding generation had helped create, and not to mimic the responses of middle-age middle class men who had passively stood by and watched the nation come under assault or simply fled in fear. Some moderate middle class voices remained open to including different classes of German men and women regardless of their confession, ethnicity or politics, but they also increasingly valorized a narrower vision of the vigilant citizen who would more

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aggressively defend the nation from the threatening working masses and also heighten the expectations about how the masses should think about revolution and how best to feel and act as workers.

Most Independent and Majority Socialist writers praised the working-class man who was calm, rational thinking and well ordered in his or her own work and politics, but also ever vigilant in the defense of socialism and the Republic. They demonized the middle class, capitalist and war-mongering man, but they criticized the childlike, irrational behavior of radical working class activists and the threat they posed to working class politics too. The general antithesis was the cowardly, irrational, irresponsible, gullible and passive man or woman. The ideal man across the local political spectrum was supposed to be fearless, cool-headed, rational, hardened and if necessary, physically aggressive, violent and capable of instilling fear in political opponents. Women were to emulate these male ideals in so far as such, but they were still mostly limited, either to their more traditional roles as mothers, wives and daughters with occasional room for editorial voice on the middle class right, or their sports associations, public performance groups and forms of collective public protests on the working class left.

Converting the Fears of Revolution.

Mobilizing emotions, managing them and bringing them to bear in politics did not necessarily have the results that activists always intended. Although several Communist uprisings had been crushed, many of their leaders killed, placed under surveillance or imprisoned in the years since the beginning of the revolution, Communist activists continued to display a fearlessness and tenacity in their politics and mobilize the feelings
of despair among unemployed and working class veterans, which led to significant electoral gains at the expense of the Independent Socialists. In the local results for the state elections of February 1921, for example, the KPD actually surpassed the USPD (13.4 percent) with 17.5 percent of the vote and appeared ready to threaten working class solidarity.²⁸⁵

At the same time, achieving greater electoral support did not necessarily translate into overt states of fear for political opponents and even facilitated just the opposite in projections of strength, courage and hope. Despite the fact that the rightwing middle class parties achieved a near absolute majority in the same state elections of February 1921 - the DVP and DNVP combined for 48.3 percent of the vote and appeared poised to assert a unified front against the perceived radicalization of working class activism in the region, local moderate and independent working class activists chose to project the strength of working class solidarity and return that year’s May Day festivities to more leisurely prewar forms. Instilling situations and states of fear proved to be relatively episodic and unpredictable in nature and therefore required conversions to other emotional states in order to sustain politics at the local level.

In the wake of the Kapp Putsch the year before, local working class organizers had chosen to continue the more assertive celebration of May Day from the time of the revolution with a show of workers’ strength and courage on the Wilhelmsplatz, but despite the electoral gains of Communists and rightwing middle class parties in that year’s state elections, organizers chose to redirect working class families to the Steigerwald forest south of the city for the customary stroll and picnics with musical

²⁸⁵ Raßloff, 229.
entertainment at the Hubertus and Waldschlösschen in order to convey a more composed, peaceful and respectable sense of moderate working class politics.286

Underneath this emotional façade, however, local moderate and independent working class leaders were deeply concerned about Communist activities and the threat they posed to working class unity in the face of growing middle class strength. On what turned out to be a nice spring day of peaceful entertainment, the Tribüne editors therefore chose to turn their readers’ attentions to their “greatest concern” about working class solidarity and the threats of workers’ division and weakness that resulted from the behavior of Communist activists. In the weeks leading up to the festival, according to the Tribüne editors, local Communist activists had openly gone back and forth, at first supporting the planned festivities out of the necessity of solidarity and then, opposing them on the old grounds that the Social Democratic leaders had betrayed workers and their families during the revolution. The Tribüne’s editors also felt compelled to point out that Communist-led youth were creating a less than positive impression in front of the town’s Communist headquarters, spitting into the “traitorous” faces of Social Democrats.

Despite noticeable Communist disturbances of the whole event, however, the Tribüne’s editors also sought to invoke the experiences of that May Day celebration to reaffirm the possibility and hope for unified working class action. Hearing the sound of the masses marching back in step to the town along the Arnstädter Strasse, according to the editors, reflected the lifting of many workers’ hearts and served as a signal that the masses of workers would one day stand together in a unified front, enabling them to fully demonstrate workers’ power and emancipate themselves from their oppressors.

286 “Die Maifeier,” Tribüne (May 2, 1921). There appears to have been nothing to report on that year’s local May Day festivities from the perspective of Erfurt’s middle class papers. See “Der erste Mai,” TAZ, May 2, 1920 and MZ, May 2, 1920.
Projecting both the hope of working class unity and the peril of working class divisions also served to denigrate Communist activity, manage emotions and reaffirm working class values. Favoring the Independent Socialist event at the Kaisersaal, the Tribüne’s editors described a full program of classical German music that reflected both their and sense of belonging to the German nation and their respectability, which drew upon prewar working class cultural traditions and found continuities in Kurt Eisner’s use of German classical music as Prime Minister of Bavaria in 1918 to encourage working class feelings of solidarity and democracy. The event’s opening included Richard Wagner’s “Entrance of the Guests” (Einzug der Gäste) and songs of the male choir Erfordia. After the keynote speech there was a longer program, including Mozart’s overture to the Magic Flute, Wagner’s Phantasie from Lohengrin, Mendelssohn’s Singspiel, “The Return from Afar” (Heimkehr aus dem Fremde), a quartet then full choir presentation from the Erfordia, a piece remembering the idea of the “May Struggle (Kampfmai) from Comrade Übe, a rendition of the Internationale from Pottier, and poems from Sturm and others intended to “harden the consciousness” and encourage workers and their families that despite everything, socialist emancipation would come.

Hope was the message that local working class leaders wanted to express, but the editors of the Tribüne editors also continued to invoke other feelings that the working classes may have felt in order to mobilize a counter set of emotions for further working class action. According to Comrade Saupe, the speaker at the favored Independent Socialist event, those in attendance had to struggle so that the German proletariat did not collapse due to the “insane deeds” of the property-owning classes. Workers were also

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not alone, the speaker assured his audience because working class brothers in all countries fought for the same goal. They were not responsible for what had happened to them during the war, since all peoples, the speaker explained, had to bear the burdens of the war together. Moreover, the propertied classes were responsible and they had to be made to pay for their actions. Countering a sense of isolate with an international sense of community and a sense of responsibility with the war guilt of their opponents enabled the speaker to call upon his audience for a “decisive fight for socialism.” Reconciliation between working class groups was therefore the key in local working class leaders’ strategy and the editors of the *Tribüne* ended their coverage of that year’s May Day with a sense of hope expressed in the May Day song of the prewar poet, Richard Dehmel, that “One day the first of May will come and then all people will stand together in one row.”

Despite the hope of working class solidarity, the threat of counterrevolutionary activity in the summer of 1921 continued to worry local working class editors and motivated them to maintain surveillance over radical rightwing activities in the region and sustain a collective sense of working class anxiety in order to keep their readers poised for concerted action. Instead of highlighting the newly minted celebration of the republic on August 11, 1921, for example, which was relatively small in comparison to local working class or nationalist festivities, the *Tribüne*’s editors chose to focus on the disparity in power that the nationally organized *Reichstreuhandgesellschaft* had in effect created in its oversight of the handover and destruction of light and heavy arms from German paramilitary organizations. According to their report, the disarmament program primarily focused on leftwing radicalism and did not equally search counterrevolutionary activists and paramilitary organizations like the *Einwohnerwehr, Orgelsch*,

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288 “Und die Orgelsch-Waffen?” *Tribüne*, (August 11, 1921), 2.
or Freikorps, which in turn left the reader to imagine the possibilities of renewed
counterrevolutionary activity.

In contrast to working class concerns about working class divisions and
counterrevolutionary activity and despite a clear electoral shift to the right in middle class
politics, the editors of the local German Nationalist *MZ* continued to emphasize that
Germans were still a “People in Peril,” caught in a hailstorm of external and internal
sanctions, working class and Jewish enemies. Interestingly, the editors made it a point
to explicitly state that the new constitution was the basis of the German state, in a show
of respect for the authority of law, and perhaps even a limited display of respect for local
pro-republican popular support. From their view, however, the town’s celebration of the
republic was literally a colorless affair with almost no republican flags flying on any
building that offered little for the imaginations of German nationalist supporters. The day
for the republic may not have invoked happy feelings among many Germans, the editors
admitted, but it was not as injurious to the German people as the working class events
commemorating May 1st or November 9th, or those emulating the government of the
“Sobelsohns, Apfelbaums, Bronsteins” Even so, the editors reiterated that the new
constitution was the basis of the state and every party should obey it, thus stopping short
of more radical rightwing calls for counterrevolutionary actions or putsch attempts, but
continuing to identify the class-based and racial enemies of the nation that Germans
should be worried about in order to sustain their support for radical rightwing politics and
the defense of nation.

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289 “Volk in Not!” *MZ*, (August 11, 1921).
Political Assassinations.

Some scholars have quickly dismissed the effects of political assassinations as an essentially elitist form of politics that did not endanger the republic as long as radical political activists operated in the “shadow lands” of legality in the Weimar Republic. At most, some have characterized the after effects of the political violence aimed primarily at pro-republican, leftwing and Jewish leaders as a “temporary halt” to the radical rightwing mobilization of ordinary Germans in provincial towns like Erfurt. Yet the assassinations of the Center Party leader, Matthias Erzberger at the end of August 1921 and the Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau in June 1922, led to an emotional backlash in the provinces that in the case of Erfurt encouraged working class hopes for a more aggressive republican emotional economy in response to the fear of rightwing violence, heightened the middle class media sense of despair in the face of a concerted effort to suppress, if not eliminate their nationalist activities and signaled the first more open signs of a reemerging set of fears based in antisemitism.

In Erfurt, the middle class TAZ reported with some alarm on the wide support among national leftwing media outlets for the Reich President’s “emergency defense” in response to the assassination of Erzberger. The Berliner Tageblatt emphasized the general downfall of public morality and pointed to the lack of conscience among the “rebels” on the right side of the political spectrum. The Communist Rote Fahne used the opportunity to call for the destruction of the reaction, which threatened the majority of

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290 Fritzsche, Germans into Nazis, 123.
291 Raßloff, 236.
292 Kauders, German Politics and the Jews, 89-124.
293 “Das Nationalisten-Gesetz,” TAZ, August 31, 1921, 2.
the people, and the Social Democratic newspapers, *Freiheit* and *Vorwärts*, proclaimed that the republic was in danger.

In response to the fear of resurgent rightwing violence, *The Tribüne* called for a powerful counterdemonstration of the proletariat on August 29, 1921 against the “joyous” expressions of “reactionary murder regiments.” The *Tribüne*’s editors used its pages to reiterate the fear that “nationalist antisemitic cliques” were agitating in the region, glorifying the murder of workers and justifying the suppression of all independent-thinking citizens as a necessity of national security. At the same time, ironically, they also reassured their readers that the rightwing reaction was really comprised of cowards, who only became “courageous” when they had control over the state’s apparatus of power.

The *Tribüne*’s editors emphasized the military-like procession of Erfurt’s working classes and the powerful impression that this return to more militant, unified public demonstrations would make on their rightwing opponents. It was a day unlike any that Erfurt had ever seen before, the editors claimed, and the massive assemblies of workers in organized battalions left onlookers with the impression that workers would finally put a stop to the worker-murdering riff raff of *Hakenkreuzler, Stahlhelm*, monarchists and citizens’ rabble. Local working class representatives went even further in their joint display of working class solidarity, demanding a “ruthless approach” against the counterrevolutionary bands of murderers, the release of political prisoners, the “cleansing” of the civil service from all reactionary elements, the reorganization of the

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296 “Im Kampf einig!” *Tribüne*, September 2, 1921, second supplement.
nation’s military into a republican force and the removal of class-based justice through the popular elections of judges.

The editors of the *TAZ* therefore sought to counter what they characterized as the leftwing lies and deceit about rightwing nationalist activism, but their reports of working class activities in the region further instilled an embattled sense of middle class isolation and despair in Thuringia. They asserted that it was the national government which was not fair in its treatment of the right and they downplayed the threat that middle class groups posed to the nation, even emphasizing the “perilous situation” of the town’s civil servants who could not meet their costs of living despite the latest salary reforms.297

Instead, the editors of the *TAZ* described a Communist “tumult” that had taken place in nearby Halberstadt, in order to provide a corrective to the bias they perceived in the leftwing media and simultaneously reinvoke the fear of radical working class activists among their readers and the threat that they posed to the nation. At the military chapel there, the bust of Bismarck had been broken in a thousand pieces and the pictures of the regimental chief and the Herzog of Coburg-Gotha had been destroyed. The “disturbers,” according to reports coming in, included the town councilwoman Mrs. Philipp, who wore a Soviet star, and several municipal workers who were known to the authorities as communist sympathizers.

The *TAZ* also continued to keep its readers alert to radical working class activism in other regional cities like nearby Weimar, which appeared to incite forms of violence aimed at the symbolic elimination of the fear of nationalist activism, in turn reinforcing the fear of mob-like working class actions among middle class readers. According to the

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report, the majority of the demonstrators were workers. There were even a few civil servants and white collar workers, but barely any middle class citizens. A municipal council representative named Friedrich spoke about the danger that the reaction posed to the republic. He demanded the removal of all nationalist symbols from state and public buildings, especially from public schools, including black-white-red flags, princely pictures and busts. He also requested the release of political prisoners and urged people to “deed,” i.e., some vaguely defined sense of action. Another speaker made an even more violent suggestion that in future cases, for every supporter of the republic who were to fall into the hands of rightwing murderers, twenty supporters from rightwing circles had to be killed in retribution. In an apparent implementation of what the speakers sanctioned in Weimar, some people searched public buildings, including the Chemnitz Hotel, the Grossherzog von Sachsen Hotel and the Sperling Coffeehouse, and destroyed any available pictures or busts that they could find of the Kaiser, the Grand Duke, Hindenburg and other personalities who represented the time before the Revolution.

By comparison, the German Nationalist MZ also focused its readers’ attention on the threat of the Social Democrat-dominated national government, but in heightening the sense of peril that their readers felt about the nation’s future, they expressed a much stronger lack of hope and feeling of despair in order to mobilize a more solidified nationalist sense of community and activism. Instead of directly commenting on the assassination of Erzberger, the MZ focused on the Thuringian leftwing coalition government’s decision to remove 27 songs from the state school system, including Christmas songs like “Silent Night” and nationalist songs like the national hymn, “The old Barbarossa” and “I had a comrade.” The MZ thereby invoked the fear of working

298 “Eine Kundgebung mit Gewaltakten,” TAZ, September 2, 1921, second supplement.
class attacks on German culture and imagined a “great battle” developing in Thuringia to keep Christian education in German schools.\footnote{Die verpönten Kinderlieder in Thüringen,}  

In response to the national government’s ban on nationalist celebrations like the upcoming Sedantag that resulted from the Reich President’s emergency decrees, the \textit{MZ}’s editors published a letter from the German Nationalist Party of Thuringia, which warned Germans that they stood before an abyss.\footnote{Zum Sedantag.} They pointed out that in past years both young and old alike had commemorated the “great times” and “manly generation” of Sedantag with happy hearts and proud, grateful feelings. Enthusiasm had blazed in the early days of the World War as news spread through the country that German armies under Hindenburg’s leadership had stopped the widely reported Russian advance on Berlin near Tannenberg. But the time since then, according to the editors, had been the most difficult years of peril for the German fatherland. The shameful chains of the Versailles Peace Treaty that had been forged with the treachery and deceit of the Entente Alliance were more and more tightening their grip around the German people and members of the same people were raging against each other. Almost every one was suffering from the most difficult economic peril and looking to the future only brought an increasing sense of shock. 

The times in which one could celebrate with joy, the \textit{MZ} editors concluded, were over. People still longed for the past, in which Germany assumed the place of a leading power held in high regard among the peoples of the world. Therefore, the editors called on the German people to wake up. Unforeseeable threats loomed. There was still a chance for salvation, but only when the German people did not doubt their future,
eliminated the growth of party and class hatred, pulled themselves out of the labyrinth of economic profiteers and recognized that France was leading a struggle to destroy everything that was German. Germans finally had to join together in the German People’s Community and unite in the thought of a collective battle against the “murderous peace” of Versailles.

Local media also relayed nationalist events from neighboring regions that took place in response to the increasing backlash against radical rightwing activities and sought to sustain a nationalist emotional economy of perceived struggle, fearless defiance and if necessary, more aggressive politics. In Munich, the German Nationalist Party Rally drew about 4000 people, including 1,300 voting members, 1,200 guests and a large number of women visitors to the Löwenbräukeller, which had been decorated with both black-white-red and blue-white colors. The chairman, State Minister Dr. Hergt, opened the meeting by noting how Germans had streamed together from all over Germany at the time of their most difficult struggle. According to the speaker, it now depended on every German man and woman to meet the war cry of the German proletariat wherever it sounded. He countered the attempts to link the German Nationalists with the failed Kapp Putsch and mislabel the party a murder central, which, as the report noted, was met by cries of “Pfui!”

The speaker also used the opportunity to more clearly outline how German Nationalists had to manage their feelings and their expression. The speaker explained that they could not allow themselves to be so easily provoked, and thereby bring dishonor to their cause. He emphasized that the German Nationalists were a party of order that respected law and authority and did not allow themselves to be deceived or frightened.

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301 “Deutschnationaler Parteitag.” TAZ, September 2, 1921, 3.
However, as the speaker declared, if one were to throw the glove of challenge down in front of them, they would take it up and assume the offensive. In the elaboration of their party platform, the speaker demanded the revision of the Versailles Treaty and the transfer of Upper Silesia to Germany, but interestingly, also pleaded for peaceful opposition instead of the use of armed force in the return of the monarchy, and absolutely, unequivocally rejected any offers whatsoever to work with Social Democracy.

In Erfurt, however, the support for rightwing organizations surprisingly appeared to be declining instead of growing, becoming more private and subdued in the wake of Erzberger’s assassination. The local DNVP group held a weakly attended memorial for the Battle of the Tannenberg in the Kaisersaal in lieu of a public Sedantag event. The speakers used the occasion to talk about the meaning of Sedan as the day in which all Germans had stood together as one people under the pressure of foreign nations. One speaker believed that German Nationalists had to condemn Matthias Erzberger’s assassination, but German Nationalists also had to stand there that day and profess their loyalty to the Black-Red-White flag just as Social Democracy stood by its flag.

Despite the national government’s ban on public Sedantag celebrations, the TAZ reported that military and political associations had organized many small events in subdued, semi-public actions of nationalist defiance. Small affairs and political speeches were planned for places of enjoyment and family gatherings, especially in local beer gardens and various halls. There were no reports of violent working-class outbursts such as those in Weimar or Halberstadt from any of the other local newspapers and no signs of any concrete situations for activists of any party to fear beyond the heightened expectations that their supporters would act calmly, but aggressively if necessary.

302 “Tannenberggedenkenfeier,” TAZ, September 2, 1921, first supplement.
Yet in the wake of this latest upsurge of political activity, local newspapers continued to sustain anxieties about class-based warfare. A day after more secluded local German nationalist commemorations and more public working class demonstrations, the MZ carried the headlines of “Terror!” in response to the Prussian Minister of the Interior’s decision to ban the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung for eight days. By comparison, the Tribüne carried the report of the Neue Zeitung that the reaction wanted to strike a great blow in Central Germany and Thuringia. According to the report, the state security police (Sipo) was prepared to march. They were assembling themselves in large bands at the military exercise grounds in Ohrdruf. In Naumburg, the purported seat of the central German Orgelsch, a large number of unfamiliar officers were reported to be gathering and the well known organizer of the Orgelsch, Lieutenant von Örtzen, was the leader of the pending revolt. The Tribüne’s editors expressed some doubt about the report, but did not rule out its improbability. Instead, they rather optimistically surmised that Orgelsch followers in the area must have lost their appetite for rebellion in recent days after the local march of the entire working class in response to Erzberger’s assassination. Nonetheless, the editors warned its readers, that workers would “do well to be on guard.”

The Assassination of Walter Rathenau and a Republican Emotional Economy.

The assassination in June 1922 of Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau instilled a sense of fear that provided local activists with the means to achieve the widest display of public support for the republic and coordinate their greatest isolation of radical rightwing

303 “Terror!” MZ, September 3, 1921, 2.
activities in the region.\textsuperscript{305} Among the government declarations printed in the regional press, the Social Democratic Reichstag representative Otto Wels felt that a wave of indignation and impassioned rage had passed over the land.\textsuperscript{306} Anger and hate, Wels continued, had demanded its victims from the tribune of the Reichstag itself and bands of murderers had felled a man who had stood to serve his people and fatherland. Wels also wanted to make another point immediately clear to all racists (\textit{Rassenhetzer}) in Germany. This Jew that they had killed was as good a German as anyone born in Germany and a true Christian, more so than any of those who helped arm and pay the bands of murderers. Wels reminded his listeners of Rathenau’s response to the Reichstag representative Reinhold Quaatz a year earlier, wherein Rathenau had defined demagoguery as the ability to enrage uninformed masses against other people and institutions, supported by arguments that did not have much to do with the actual issue at hand.

From Wels perspective, this violence lay at the feet of the German National People’s Party, who had not been able to shake itself free of its brand of German ethnocentrism. Wels called for ruthless action against secret military organizations, a ban on black and white colors at regimental ceremonies, the removal of right-wing elements from the military and police, and reform of the judiciary and district attorneys. Wels also wanted to give a very clear warning to all members of the working classes: resist provocation, destroy the hopes of the reactionaries for more violence or a coup attempt and join together to defend the republic.

\textsuperscript{305} Compare Hecht, 138-162, Martin Sabrow, \textit{Der Rathenaumord: Rekonstruktion einer Verschwörung gegen die Republik von Weimar} (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1994), 157-169, Schumann, 163-172 and Walter, 48-49.

Regional observers also covered the outburst of anti-nationalist violence that occurred in the wake of Rathenau’s murder. In Dresden, Victor Klemperer wrote in his diary that he would not be surprised if a civil war were to grow out of the Rathenau affair. 307 The middle class Magdeburgische Zeitung reported an incident on the official day mourning in front of the Stahlhelm’s offices. 308 According to their account, a mob attacked a young man because he wore a military cap with a black and white cockade. He fled into the house where the Stahlhelm had its offices. From there the police freed him and then took the young man and the Stahlhelm’s office workers into protective custody. One “radical” member of the workers’ delegation used the opportunity to enter the Stahlhelm offices, throw a black and white flag out the window for the mob to tear apart and hold an inflammatory speech.

A day later, the Magdeburgische Zeitung ran a headline painting a picture of spreading leftwing radical riots occurring all across central and southwest Germany that more widely targeted the middle classes, members of the German People’s Party, German National People’s Party and even the Democrats. 309 The author urged his readers that it was high time for a return to reason (Besinnung) and reported that authorities now felt it necessary to prosecute excesses from both sides of the political spectrum.

In Erfurt, which incidentally was not far from the Rudelsburg, the place where Rathenau’s assassins had gone into hiding, the middle class TAZ made special note to cover the public comments from the political extremes. 310 The message of local German

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Nationalist leaders reflected the increasing pressure generated by the public displays and towed their party line of support for the republic and criticism of radical rightwing activity. They publicly stated that it was the German Nationalists’ duty to keep its membership rows clean and free from those elements who did not want to recognize that the DNVP could legally pursue its goals on the basis of the current constitution. Underlining the sense of honor in their party and the holiness of their goals, they made it clear that those who chose to preach violence or support it in any organization would be ruthlessly forced out of the party.

On the other end of the spectrum, according to the TAZ, the Communists made it clear that Rathenau was not a man of the proletariat and refused to bow to the pressure to respond to Rathenau’s assassination with a more coordinated defense of the republic.\textsuperscript{311} From their view, Rathenau represented the capitalist reconstruction of Germany, which meant the rising costs of bread and hunger, and a ceasefire (\textit{Burgfrieden}) between capitalists and workers. The masses, from the Communist author’s view, demanded deeds and action, they vaguely asserted, was their duty.

The local Catholic daily paper, the \textit{Thüringer Volkswacht}, saw the particular fear of political violence aimed at minority groups in the murder of Rathenau. They carried the announcements calling for the mass demonstrations in defense of the republic, including the headlines from the main German Nationalist and socialist newspapers, but interestingly focused on the words of the German People’s Party leader, Gustav Stresemann, originally quoted in that Monday’s edition of \textit{Die Zeit}.\textsuperscript{312} Streseman, the leader of the German People’s Party (DVP) called Germany a “murder central”

\textsuperscript{311} “Die Stunde drängt. Wie die Kommunisten Herrn Rathenau beurteilen,” \textit{TAZ}, June 28, 1922.
\textsuperscript{312} “Aufruf! Protestversammlungen, Schutz der Reichsverfassung,” \textit{Thüringer Volkswacht}, June 28, 1922.
(Mordzentrale), in which the extreme right had led a war against Rathenau and the Catholic leader Wirth with feelings of personal hatred. In what must have been one of the most forceful declarations yet amongst nationalist leaders, Stresemann pointed out that Rathenau had been shot because he was a Jew and declared it necessary to destroy those murderous bands, in essence invoking the fears of antisemitic violence that transgressed the ancient taboos of murder in order to turn radical nationalist desires to at least symbolically eliminate their enemies on the radicals in their own midst.

By comparison, in the week in review of the Protestant Sunday newspaper from Arnstadt, the Thüringer Evangelisches Sonntagsblatt, a writer turned his comment on the murder of Rathenau back to Rathenau’s own republican government policies of fulfilling the Entente Powers’ demands.313 The real threat for this Protestant newspaper’s editor was in fact the national government. The writer believed that those governments had always undersigned, always given in and always said that they would meet demands, including accepting that the war started in Germany. They achieved their “success” by giving away one piece of land after another to Germany’s enemies, which, the author added, Germans had cultivated for hundreds of years with hard work. From his point of view, the murder of Rathenau was simply the latest example of moral deterioration (eine Verwüstung der sittlichen Auffassung). He still drew the line between rightwing activism and violence, but he blended out the targeting of Jews from similar ethical or moral points of view. The author questioned how murderous deeds could solve anything, describing murder like a shot that once fired often hit another target than the one intended, and concluded by asking his readers how anyone who resorted to such means could stand before God.

The *Tribüne*, by comparison, focused on the strength of the local public displays of support in defense of the republic and reports of opposing rightwing “provocations.” In an article entitled, “Long Live the Republic!” the *Tribüne*’s editors described an “overpowering” demonstration of support for the republic that represented the “will of the mass,” and a rightwing attempt to provoke a more violent leftwing response at the local state court building.\(^{314}\) According to their report, all three socialist parties, the Union Cartel, the local Afa Cartel, and the independent labor unions (the Syndicalists) were present along with representatives of the civil servants and Democratic Party. After the end of the speeches, a crowd went to the state court building because someone had hoisted a black-white-red flag. The demonstrators viewed the nationalist colors as a provocation, but the *Tribüne*’s editors reported no further acts of violence, nor any extra note about what happened to the offending nationalist flags.

Consequently, the *Tribüne* drew a series of “lessons” from the peaceful course of the demonstration a day later and translated the fears of rightwing violence into feelings of enthusiasm and encouragement.\(^{315}\) For the first time, according to the *Tribüne*’s editors, they had experienced a rally in the republic in which so many citizens took part and expressed their feelings of support for the republic. The struggle of the reaction against everything that represented free thought, as they saw it, had experienced the united front of the German people from the Communists (sic!) to the rows of the Center Party. It was therefore urgent, the editors explained, for pro-republican citizens to act in a collective fashion, which would make it impossible for monarchists to organize in the future, and cleanse the offices of the republic of all reactionary elements. Rightwing

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314 “Es lebe die Republik!” *Tribüne*, June 28, 1922.
veterans and paramilitary groups like the *Stahlhelm* and *Jungdo* would not naturally disappear from the earth, they explained, unless the pro-republican citizens did not diligently maintain surveillance over all monarchical suspects and make it impossible for them to fashion their dark plans in secret meetings. Every one, they urged, had to help out every day to take away the possibility of the enemies of the republic to create their own united front.

Pressing their case further, the *Tribüne* reported an event that both sustained the anxiety about the influence of radical rightwing activity and reinforced their call to Erfurt’s citizens to actively maintain their vigilance against the enemies of the republic.\(^{316}\) Shortly after the announcement of Rathenau’s murder, the *Tribüne*’s editors explained that two “respected” citizens of Erfurt were discussing the murder in a garden on the *Goethestrasse*. During this discussion two “higher” students, as the editors sarcastically called them, walked by on the sidewalk, whereby one expressed his thoughts about the murder through the following words, “It is good that the pig is dead.” In “clear indignation,” as the editors were wont to point out, both respectable men confronted the students. The report of the incident made it to the *Tribüne* and its editors decided to publish the names of the two young offenders in an apparent act of outing anti-republican activity. One of the young men was the son of the telegraph secretary Hencke, *Goethestrasse* 52, and the other was the son of the salesman Kurt Reinecke, *Steigerstrasse* 29.

The *Tribüne*’s editorial staff also used the case as an opportunity to trace the origins of rightwing anti-republican activism back to middle class media and parenting as

\(^{316}\) “Folgen deutschvölkischer Erziehung in der Schule oder Familie?” *Tribüne*, June 29, 1922, First supplement.
the real sources of the threat to the republic, and simultaneously defend working class educational efforts against local middle class criticism. The so-called national middle class, the editors explained, turned its nose at proletarian children and grumbled about the bawdiness and coarseness of proletarian boys and girls when they marched and sang. The middle class press outdid itself, according to the Tribüne’s editors, with headlines in the TAZ and MZ for articles about the brutalization of the working class youth in order to incite their nationalistic readers and more systematically agitate against the working classes, their leaders, the leaders of the republic, and in short, against everything that breathed the “spirit of a new time.” This agitation, the editors explained, had prepared the foundation on which murderous deeds proliferated. The “rottenness” and “amorality” of these so called “higher students” could not be more drastically self evident, the editors suggested, and the question then arose about further responsibility. Besides the influence of nationalistic and antisemitic printed materials and the middle class press in general, the Tribüne’s editors blamed the education in the family and the school. With what kind of respect, the editors asked their readers, did the family of the telegraph secretary discuss the republican state, if the son of that family called a leading statesman of the republic a “pig.”

Chapter Summary.

The fear of life and death situations came relatively late to communities like Erfurt when compared to the revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence that had swept through larger urban centers like Berlin, Munich, Kiel or Bremen in the wake of Germany’s defeat, punctuating daily life and then reverting back to some fragile sense of
normality. But when the fear of political violence did arise in the spring of 1920 in Erfurt and surrounding communities, there were very real life threatening situations, acts meant to instill fear in targeted opponents and seemingly arbitrary acts of violence that ordinary citizens and municipal authorities sought to limit. The most immediate consequence was the local middle class electoral shift toward rightwing nationalist parties and the symbolic rejection of cooperation across class lines, but most of Erfurt’s leaders still managed to cooperate across divided lines in the day to day activities of governance and provide basic services to people in these early years of seemingly rising crisis.

The memories of these experiences of fear and numerous media reports helped sustain people’s anxieties about their supposed enemies and the threats to their own lives, their families and nation. Yet even as real fears of imminent political violence actually receded, competing local political cultures invoked ideals of courage in order to mobilize their adherents and activists in anticipation of future conflict. For radical rightwing activists, the notion of courage served to radicalized middle class values, heighten the expectations of men and women to more actively defend their nation, more aggressively attack their opponents and draw a target on the “Jew” as the source of the nation’s threats.

As political assassinations rose, mainly against prominent republican, socialist, Catholic and Jewish leaders, invoking notions of courage also served in the defense of the republic to reiterate once widely shared civic values that transcended class, confession or ethnicity, maintained ancient taboos against murder, instilled feelings of strength, enthusiasm and hope and moderated what people felt and how they conducted themselves in local politics. Pro-republican notions of courage, however, also served to mobilize
ordinary people to hold nationalist leaders accountable for their stated values, remove nationalist symbols and drive nationalist activists from local public spaces, conduct surveillance of local neighborhoods for anti-republican and antisemitic activities or even, in some cases, transgress stated republican values of moderation in order to attack nationalist opponents. This assertion of a republican emotional economy, however short-lived in hindsight, marked a low point in local nationalist emotional economies with strong feelings of despair over the nation’s future. If anyone were to rejuvenate radical rightwing politics and make it a force to be reckoned with again in national politics, then they would have to begin converting the sense of the nation’s peril into other feelings of enthusiasm and hope.
Chapter 5

Hope and Despair in the Politics of the Extremes (1923-1924).

* “New life stirs itself. Military music from all sides. The festival procession begins. Gothic sables rise and tell of Germany’s great past. Enthusiasm swells. Calls of Heil that do not want to end. [...] Then Adolf Hitler, the leader of the völkisch freedom movement. His words express ardent love for the fatherland. And every one feels that he is deeply convinced about what he says. That is what allows a hundred thousand to follow him today. Glowing desire for freedom flashes from the words of numerous other speakers and poets. [...] The Day of Nuremberg was the most powerful German experience, a milestone in the history of the young German freedom movement. It sowed new belief and new hope about Germany’s future in the hearts of countless thousands. One day, what has been sown will grow and bear a thousand fruits.”

** “The chaos increases nearly by the hour. We ourselves have a little more stuff to eat in the house. If no one plunders us, it is in a way security.”
  - Victor Klemperer, diary entry from Wednesday morning, November 7, 1923.

1923 is well known as the high water mark of political violence and economic crisis in the early years of the Weimar Republic, the threatening crescendo of communist revolution, radical rightwing rebellion, hyperinflation and the inability to fulfill the basic needs of everyday life, procure food, pay rent, acquire health care or other benefits, protect personal savings for retirement, or provide insurance against future death and injury. Scholars are also familiar with the period of relative stability that followed the suppression of radical politics and the restructuring of Germany’s finances.

The crisis and subsequent collapse of Germans’ first experiment with democracy, as some have noted, was therefore not necessarily inevitable because of economic crisis or even a combination of crises. Yet not much is known about how both activists and ordinary people converted different perceptions of crisis into other feelings, not only back
and forth between mutually reinforcing fears and anxieties about radical forms of politics, but also between feelings like hope and despair and collective displays of fearlessness. Some scholars assert that rightwing nationalist political activists simply translated the sense of despair into even deeper emotional states of the nation’s peril, thereby providing the emotional preconditions for more radical alternatives, namely for the ability of the Nazis to successfully mobilize völkisch activists and attract new support through counter displays of hope and optimism for the nation’s future.

The archival research in this chapter suggests that rightwing nationalist activists were also heavily involved in seeking out emotional alternatives to the sense of national despair that they invoked, drawing people’s attention to new sources of hope in rightwing nationalist politics and proliferating völkisch nationalist forms of politics that presented a new, more everyday threat to local communities. Moreover, converting feelings of fear and despair into alternative feelings of hope and enthusiasm were not solely limited to völkisch emotional conversions and could also be seen in the emotional work of local working class activists and the maintenance of both moderate and radical working class emotional economies.

Locating Hope and Despair in Radical Working Class Politics.

It was a “joy,” the editors of the German Nationalist MZ ironically declared, to watch how the former soldiers raised their legs among the other demonstrators in the rhythm of the old spirited military marches as they celebrated May Day in 1923.317 Even the sky appeared to offer a sign of divine sanction for working class political culture, the

editors continued, as the heavens cast a “gracious and forgiving countenance” on the day. Several thousand people, including children, participated. Young women walked in high-heeled shoes. Proletarians wore their top hats, wedding hats and the burial hats of the Borschoa (“Bourgeoisie”), lending the procession a “peaceful,” “festive,” and “respectable” appearance in the eyes of the German Nationalist editors. Only the “powerful Soviet star” of the “class” and “Moscow-supporting” people of the Hagans factory, the editors noted, revealed any particular political character to the May Day festival. There were no clashes and the only aftereffect appeared to be a few intoxicated people.

The editors of the still Independent Socialist Tribüne also sketched a “lively” and “colorful” image of the day’s events, which continued the more militant displays that working class activists had organized since the end of the First World War. The editors also continued to emphasize the solidarity of local workers and their families, like a “thick wall of people” with “imposing figures,” feeling “joy” and “pride” to be “a part of the whole.” About 25,000 people, the police report estimated 15,000, processed in the early morning hours through the Johannesstrasse, the Futterstrasse, Wenigmarkt, Fischmarkt and Marktstrasse to remind the townspeople about the strength of their working classes. For the first time, however, the editors noted that the management of the cathedral dome had closed the gates at the top of the long stairs to the cathedral courtyard and sealed the entrance to the crypt below, a sign that they were not completely welcome at the town’s central gathering place.

The parade was escorted by the men’s and women’s working class cyclists. The female rider wore red ribbons in their hair. Then the workers came from the factories,

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followed by the members of their other clubs and organizations in “colorful” rows. Numerous musical choirs marched in groups between the workers, the youth with their mandolins, the gymnasts with drums and flutes, and many people bearing the old “storm-tested” flags of the different organizations while others waved their banners, standards, pennants, streamers and signs. The more the human wall swelled the plaza, the *Tribüne*’s editors wrote, the more a brilliant hued picture unfolded under the warm May sun.

The working class festival assembled on the *Wilhelmsplatz* served the purposes of the *Tribüne*’s editors to reiterate a unified sense of workers in Erfurt, and heighten, if possible, the sense of peril that workers still faced. They pointed out that their comrades Scholz and Schmeitzer from the Social Democrats, Grobe from the Independent Social Democrats, Ollrich and Kellermann from the Communists, Schilling from the Syndicalists, Bernhardt from the Afa and Hofmeister from the Labor Union Cartel, all spoke in similar ways about the meaning of the May Day festival. In “sharp brushstrokes,” the speakers depicted the “dangers of mightily raging capitalism and imperialism” that threatened workers more than ever. They emphasized the duty of the proletariat to stand fast and true in the rather ambiguously worded “questions of life” and they led the assembly in cheers for Social Democracy, which the masses took up with “joy” and “encouragement.” There was a signal from a horn. Then the choirs led the crowd in the singing of the *Internationale* on the steps to the cathedral gate and the demonstration processed out, winding its way through the streets of the inner city, along the *Brühlstrasse*, the *Burgstrasse*, past the theater, the *Neuwerkstrasse*, *Löberstrasse*, *Daberstedter Strasse*, and *Bahnhofstrasse*, through the *Anger* plaza, the *Johannesstrasse*,...
ending at the *Johannessplatz*, near the working class quarters of North Erfurt. The afternoon, the editors noted, was free for families to enjoy.

Underneath these fearless and joyful displays of working class unity, however, some local unemployed workers did not feel the same way as their working class editors and representatives. Nor did they think that their leaders were paying enough attention to their deteriorating situation exacerbated by rapidly rising unemployment and hyperinflation. So they drew up a new list of specific demands to allay their more everyday concerns. According to the confidential magistrate’s report for May, Erfurt’s unemployed called for the immediate creation of work; unemployment support amounting to 75 percent of the wages of municipal workers; release from municipal service fees for home building and water supply, a one-time credit of 80,000 Marks for married couples with children, 60,000 Marks for those without children, 40,000 Marks for single people, 30,000 Marks for people under 21, the end of the 50 percent deduction for retirement from unemployment support, renewal of free meals for children, distribution of meal cards for the unemployed, official recognition of an unemployed council with an office in the Labor Office, and the immediate withdrawal of certain civil servants in the labor management offices of the factories, specifically, a Mrs. Gaier, in the women’s department of the Schmidt Metal Works.\(^{319}\)

The reports coming in from local police surveillance in May 1923 also indicated signs of other feelings among workers and radical working class activists. From the view of the author’s report, the threat of layoffs created a “certain anxiety” among employees about the security of their jobs as unemployment rose and thereby weakened the “fighting

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\(^{319}\) StVAE 1-2/154-2, Geheime Akten des Magistrats zu Erfurt, Volume 1, 1-5. Compare Schumann, 171-202. See also Weitz, 100-187.
mood” of Communist leaders. As evidence, the report pointed to the lack of work in the factories, the unraveling of the local Communist self defense force and working class indifference toward the Communist movement. Even more surprising, despite the worsening economic conditions, rising prices and increasing numbers of unemployed, the police had not observed any signs of strike activity in the town’s factories.

In contrast to Dirk Schumann’s research among the records of the state authorities in Magdeburg, which suggest a steady buildup of the Hundertschaften self defense forces in Erfurt’s district at the height of the economic and political crises of 1923, the confidential magistrate’s reports for Erfurt suggest a decline in Communist political activity, at least in the first half of 1923, and changes in the collective mood of Communist activists and more ordinary workers as a result of their anxieties about their employment, the monotony of drills, distrust within their ranks and the frustration over the lack of revolutionary progress in Thuringia. The report noted that many members of the self defense force did not follow their leaders anymore; some appeared only grudgingly and their overall numbers in attendance were drastically falling. The monthly general meeting only drew about 80 members; the meeting of the auxiliary women’s association only 38. For those who did attend the general meetings, there were fierce clashes between leaders and functionaries; some suspected others of working as spies, and some cast blame on each other for the declining state of the entire movement in the region.

According to the police report, however, the local Communist activists’ most disconcerting issue was the poor condition of their self defense force and the wild fluctuations in attendance at their drill sessions from a hundred persons at one mustering
to eight at another. Consequently, some Communist leaders invoked the fear of fascism and the collapse of the Communist movement in Thuringia in order to reinvigorate local support and sustain a more militant activism. One Communist comrade from Jena named Kant demanded a “stirring struggle” against the fascists, who stood before the gates of the town. He warned that if the members of the Communist Party lamely withdrew, conditions in Thuringia would soon be the same as in Italy and Bavaria. And he also pointed out that Communist comrades were making greater strides in Saxony toward militarization, while those in Thuringia practically stood still, and went backwards.

The speaker also expressed his concerns about how the fear of layoffs hindered every progressive step the Communist Party attempted to make among larger numbers of workers. According to the speaker, comrades in the factories barely responded to any Communist invitations or simply shrugged their shoulders when recruited. As a final point, the report noted that the Hagans locomotive factory, the “bastion of the self defense force,” only registered 60 members and no one came to the drills.

The editors of the Das Rote Echo warned that a “blood bath” was looming in Bavaria and they asked when the working classes’ day was coming. All their enemies, the police, the military and the fascists, were all arming for an attack against the proletariat and in Nuremberg the May Day festival had even been sabotaged by the Bavarian Social Democratic Party and union leaders. In response to this feeling of encirclement, the Communist editors argued for the radical solution that workers had to engage in a “ruthless struggle” and fascists who disturbed the demonstrators had to be “beaten down.”

320 “Kampf-Mai 1923!” Das Rote Echo, May 1, 1923 and “Das drohende Blutbad in Bayern,” Ibid., p. 2.
Conversely, even though the threat of Communism had actually declined by all local accounts in the spring of 1923, the editors of the German Nationalist *MZ* saw a direct connection between such Communist threats and the deeds of Communist activists in the region and further amplified the fear of Communism for its readers. In an article entitled “A Desecration of a Memorial in Kapellendorf,” the editors first sketched a broad picture of the threat encircling the people of Thuringia from places like the working-class youth of Jena, and Thuringia’s ruling leftwing coalition. Then the report described how members of the Communist youth group from Jena had brutally desecrated a monument in nearby Kapellendorf. The monument had been built in 1908 at a place called Sperling Hill in honor of the Prussian warriors who had fallen there in 1806 in a “heroic battle for the fatherland.” After this “heroic deed” of breaking into the tower, as the editors sarcastically called the Communist action, an anonymous group ascended the tower and fastened a red cloth on the flag pole at the top in a sign of their triumph. In response to this, the editors rhetorically asked their readers, what the Thuringian government had to say about this “brazen challenge to Thuringian farmers” and what they had to say about the unheard of desecration of a national memorial in the full light of day.

Despite the supposed signs of radical working class activism closing like a vice grip around the collective throats of German Nationalists in Thuringia, local police did not see an uncontrollable threat in Communist activism. By the end of September, however, Erfurt’s police believed that radical leftwing activism was again becoming the primary threat in the region as Communist organizers succeeded again in attracting new support from unemployed workers disenchanted with Social Democratic politics and

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encouraging them to overcome their fears of threatening police suppression, which in turn led municipal leaders to take precautionary measures against an anticipated Communist plot and middle class editors to reiterate the fear of Communism in their news coverage. In an article entitled, “Increasing Danger for the Integrity of the Reich!” the MZ reported that the orders of the district military commander had been ignored in Thuringia by the ruling leftwing coalition and warned that this signaled an open conflict between the regional military commander and the state government of Thuringia.

As evidence, the police reports pointed out that about a thousand people attended the last meeting of the local Communist Party. The Communist state Representative Kilian from Halle spoke about the economic peril of the workers, the middle classes and the petit-bourgeoisie. He pointed out the poor economic management of the national government since 1918, called for a dictatorship of the proletariat that included the small farmers and the factory councils, and supported the reorganization of the Hunderstschaften paramilitary defense units in order to rescue themselves from their “misery.”

As a precautionary measure, local police authorities decided then to arrest seventeen Communist leaders, including the editor of the Rote Echo, Paul Petzold, and take them into protective custody, which in turn precipitated a Communist attempt to coerce local authorities into releasing their imprisoned leaders, creating a spectacle of violence and further fueling mutually reinforcing displays of fearlessness and terror.

322 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 33.
323 “Neue Gefahr für die Reichseinheit!” MZ, October 22, 1923, and “Verhaftung der Erfurter Kommunistenführer,” Ibid., 5.
A few days after the event, the *MZ* related the “dangerous situation” that had erupted in the town and exclaimed the fact that the police had had to make use of their firearms against Communist activists. In the minds of the *MZ*’s editors, there was little doubt that the “rout” as they called it (*eine Zusammenrottung*) reflected a Communist plot, just as it was as certain that the police had acted carefully and with reservation in subduing the plot. According to an eyewitness account, that the *MZ* included, the old central plaza known as the *Anger* began filling up inconspicuously around four in the afternoon. Greater numbers of people came from the side streets and a dense mass soon formed on the plaza. The five police officers stationed on the *Anger* ordered the people to disperse but the crowd surrounded them, mocking their commands and attacking them with blows to the ribs.

After a half an hour, the Protective Police’s rapid response wagon appeared with reinforcements and drove through the crowd in order to disperse them. Shortly thereafter, more horsed policemen arrived. An armored car drove up and began blindly shooting into the crowd, sending some people fleeing into the side streets. Despite this, according to the eyewitness, the majority of the demonstrators did not come to their senses and reassembled for another confrontation. Around six o’clock, the crowd completely encircled the police officers near the central post again and tried to drive them toward the plaza. The officers at first calmly tried to persuade the crowd to disperse, but could not move anyone from the *Anger*. In response, people began singing the *Internationale* and their cries grew louder with phrases like “Down with the Bloodhounds!” and “Down with the Monarchy.”

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The crowd then attacked the officers and their reinforcements with stones and the horsed officers began riding point blank into the crowd. From behind came the call, “Remain standing, you wretches!” – proof, according to the MZ’s eyewitness that the Communist organizers were cowards, remaining as per usual in the background of the actions they instigated. Then a shot was supposedly fired from the crowd, which the police answered with their own salvo that sent most people dashing wildly into the side streets, where the shooting continued until around 8 in the evening until “calm finally returned.” Unfortunately, the MZ reported that there was one death. The 20 year-old metal smith Friedrich Köhn, a resident on the Cyriaksburg, was killed by a shot to the head and five more people were injured.

From the perspective of the middle class TAZ editors, the event involved an irrational gathering of the unemployed who sought entertainment more than the satisfaction of any political demands. Most were especially young men who craved some violent excitement (radaulustig), while scores of other people desired a show, “idle gawkers” wanted to experience something and women watched with baby carriages and children. Although no one on the square appeared to display fear until the police discharged their firearms in order to disperse the otherwise fearless onlookers, the TAZ editors urged everyone who did not have business on the streets to remain in the safety of their homes and not make the job of the police more difficult through their gawking.

In their report circulated several weeks later, the police explained that the Communists had planned the event in the afternoon of October 23rd at the Anger and connected side streets. Groups of unemployed were especially sent forward by their

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325 “Die Unruhen am Dienstag,” TAZ, October 25, 1932, second supplement.
326 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 47-48.
leaders in order to seek out conflict with the police by mocking, mishandling and attacking them with stones. The police report expressed regret for the death of one demonstrator and the injuries of several others, but given the circumstances they believed that making an impression on the crowd justified the use of firearms.

Moreover, the police noted that radical leftwing groups continued to organize despite repeated attempts to suppress their activity. At the end of October a Hundertschaften paramilitary group consisting of unemployed men had been observed holding a military exercise around four in the afternoon in the Steigerwald forest. The police arrested 51 men as a precautionary measure and then later released all except the six leaders of the group, hoping that this approach would suppress further Communist activity. The persistence of Communist activity, however, also demonstrates the limits of police techniques of coercion and suppression despite otherwise confident reports of success and suggests that Communist organizers also instilled a sense of courage among their adherents and sustained the potential threat of radical working class activity among local authorities.

From the perspective of the Tribüne’s editors, the unfolding of events at the demonstration invoked their own fear for socialist politics because of the threat of Communist activism and reinforced another fear for working class politics in the state and the republic. In their report on what had transpired at the Anger, the Tribüne’s editors claimed that Independent Socialist comrades had simply organized a peaceful protest against the imprisonment of Erfurt’s Communists. They strove to moderate the excitement among a part of Erfurt’s working classes, but they claimed that “irresponsible

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327 “Der Verfall des Reiches beginnt,” Tribüne, October 22, 1923.
328 “Politische Unruhen in Erfurt,” Tribüne, October 24, 1923, 3.
elements” had forced the working class into “actions.” The decision of municipal leaders to employ protective custody against local Communist leaders, however, was confusing to the editors of the *Tribüne* since they thought authority over local affairs still lay in the hands of the pro-leftwing state government. More disconcerting, Communist activists had subverted the leadership of local Social Democratic authorities and incited many of the unemployed to assault local police units which reinforced municipal authorities in their belief that a concerted Communist takeover was underway.

Over the next week, the situation appeared to worsen further still and the *Tribüne*’s editors began carrying headlines about the national government’s “military terror” against the ruling leftwing coalition government in Saxony and the mobilization of fascists on the borders of Thuringia. In the eyes of the *Tribüne*’s editors, radical rightwing activists appeared to be poised for a larger, more concerted action, the Reich seemed to be falling apart and they felt surrounded.

Meanwhile, the editors of the *TAZ* also continued to fan the fear of a radical rightwing action at the beginning of November 1923. The main middle class newspaper reported on radical rightwing events developing in the region and carried the headline that the national government warned of impending civil war. According to their reports, the *Stahlhelm* were using the opportunity at their national convention in Magdeburg to call for a “national dictatorship.” They argued that only a national dictatorship could help the millions of starving Germans and they publicly urged *Reichsminister* Stresemann to form a government that would not be hindered by parliaments, political parties or interest groups. Meanwhile, on the borders between

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Bavaria and Thuringia, the TAZ reported that bands of the rightwing Erhard group were operating with an estimated thousand men. In response, the Thuringian and Bavarian state governments deployed hundreds of state police on both sides of the border. And in Saxony, having accomplished their task of maintaining peace and order by disbanding the leftwing government, the national military units deployed across the entire state and prepared to march into Thuringia in order to force the ruling leftwing government to step down.

After regional military authorities carried out this so-called Reichsexekution, forcing Communist leaders to withdraw from the ruling leftwing coalition government in Thuringia, the police believed they could sense “tepidness” among local working class leaders. Their reports had evidence to suggest that local police and employer efforts were in fact containing radical working class politics, perhaps even breaking it in key Communist bastions like the Hagans Locomotive Factory, but those same reports also reflected the continuing ability of local Communist activists to mobilize masses of people, especially the unemployed and least skilled and successfully manage their fears about work and police suppression to navigate the fringes of working class political culture, workplace regimes, and police surveillance.

At the end of November, a group of about sixty unemployed men marched via the sidewalk to the inner city after a meeting in North Erfurt, singing the Internationale and other songs. The police reported that they were able to disperse the demonstration near the old cemetery on the Johannesstrasse, thus demonstrating their control of local

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331 "Verteilung der Reichswehr über ganz Sachsen," TAZ, November 7, 1923.
332 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 47.
333 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 72.
334 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 53.
radical working class politics, but at the beginning of December, about one thousand people gathered at another unannounced assembly of unemployed to discuss sending a delegation to an upcoming “Unemployed Congress” in Berlin. Local police read the unofficial organization of events as a sign that Communist activists had begun to mask their activity in order to avoid arrests. But the meeting in itself demonstrated that the concerns of unemployment were strong enough again to move large numbers of working class people to organize and suggested that Communist adherents were not afraid of the consequences, especially if they had little if no job to lose.

Consequently, Erfurt’s police became increasingly concerned about more clandestine Communist activity, on the one hand, and more publicly visible demonstrations on the other. Some of their reports indicated that the Communists were increasingly on the defensive, even in areas of town that were sympathetic to working class politics, yet the Communists’ demonstrative ability to rally hundreds, even thousands to commemorative events and the founding of new auxiliary organizations in the second half of 1924, suggested an image of continued Communist capability, and motivated the local police not to take local Communist actions any less seriously.

For their part, Communist organizers wanted to find ways to reach out to other groups which had not paid attention to them in the past, but they found themselves still limited to gatherings of the unemployed, the uninsured, injured war veterans and their dependents. From the police notes on these gatherings, Communist speakers tended to employ strategies that both invoked their audience’s anxieties and offered ways to allay their concerns. Yet even when Communist leaders were able to organize these groups and march them toward key places of public assembly and protest in Erfurt, the police

335 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 60.
were quick to break up public activity through all the means at their disposal and therefore felt confident that they could employ their usual strategies to disperse radical leftwing crowds and sustain the suppression of Communist activity in the streets in the future.

Erfurt’s police also noted that local Communist leaders like Kellermann, Schiller and many other KPD members had not been re-employed at the Hagans Locomotive Plant because they were known as inciters and agitators, which reveals that some employers also continued to use the threat of the loss of employment as an effective coercive means to suppress radical working class politics. Much of the continuing Communist activity looked to the police authorities like the signs of a political party on the defensive, illegally posting fliers in selected streets in the city and even painting graffiti on the side walls of working class residences in North Erfurt. At the beginning of March 1924, the police reported that a large number of houses in North Erfurt had been painted with the inscription in red paint, “Cheers for the Communist International” and canvassed with Communist fliers. The police had determined that that those responsible were the youth Hans Riepl, Robert Apel, Fritz Topstedt, Otto Schröpfer and Hans Eckardt, indicating that Communist youth were becoming more active in clandestine actions.336

Yet even as Communist membership roles and attendance at meetings visibly declined, and their activities appeared more veiled, Erfurt’s police still took Communist underground activity very seriously and kept notes on the persistent appearance of the Soviet star insignia in public places and the reappearance of Communist fliers in early February that called for renewed civil war and the establishment of the paramilitary

336 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 99.
Communist leaders also began making more appearances at the meetings of other local groups. In one case, the police noted that Communist activists showed up at a local gathering of unemployed workers and took control of the meeting by speaking to their audience’s concerns about unemployment insurance and their grumblings over the purported embezzlement of Christmas bonuses at the factories, and offering to create an organization of the unemployed and provide them with insurance. After the meeting, the Communist leaders led a parade of about eighty people past the police checkpoint, number six, and then clashed with the police unit present. After a few arrests had been made, the police concluded that the crowd had dispersed and order had prevailed.

War invalids also continued to cause concern for local police authorities. Even though their meetings were small and their members seemed to assume a pariah status in the town, local police reported more on their activity because of their links to radical leftwing activity. In the second week of January 1924, 51 delegates from different war invalids, veterans and surviving dependents’ associations met in Jena to discuss concerns about their own well being, especially the staff cuts in the welfare system which had led to deteriorating services for victims of the war, including the severely wounded and their surviving dependents. The insured war invalids and their dependents, according to the report, sought to help the Reich create a comprehensive welfare system, but there did not appear to be much Communist interest in commandeering that conference, and the war invalids did not seem to be much of a real threat to local authorities or the state.

Communist organizers attempted to sustain an emotional economy that aimed to mobilize the unemployed and uninsured around their everyday concerns about work and
welfare and translate their anxieties over work and their fears of police suppression into a fearless display aimed at confronting the capitalist system. Despite the state ban on the town’s Communist newspaper in early 1924, local Communists continued circulating other materials from other regional Communist centers such as the *Neue Zeitung* from Jena, which was surprisingly still allowed to appear under military censorship. According to the police reports, the *Neue Zeitung* in effect provided another medium to reproduce the recipe for working class struggle: the unemployed were supposed to cooperate with workers in a mass refusal to carry out obligated work. The elections in Thüringen were supposed to lead to further revolutionary mobilizations among the broad masses of workers, thus accelerating the path to civil war, which would then culminate in a “decisive battle” between “work and capital” and the overthrow of the military dictatorship by an armed uprising.337

Despite this fearless revolutionary economy, however, Erfurt’s police noted that morale among some Communist activists was actually very low and some, especially those who had been most targeted for police and workplace suppression, were more seriously considering emigration to Soviet Russia as an alternative to remaining in Germany. At the end of January, sixty people attended the first meeting of the newly founded “Association for Settlement in the East,” where the Communist leader Schiller and almost all of the KPD members who used to work at the *Hagans* Locomotive Factory discussed the possibility of emigrating to the east. The combination of workplace regimes and police surveillance, therefore, demonstrated the ability of local authorities to achieve the desired effect of suppressing radical working class politics among those groups they targeted.

337 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 77.
But the results of these efforts aimed at suppressing Communist activism also proved limited and fell into a pattern in which Communist activists organized public events that local police authorities then disbanded, leading the authors of the police reports to believe that they had local affairs under control. Other Communist leaders, however, just as quickly began filling the gaps created by the suppression of their comrades. They used events that commemorated Communist heroes to publicly sustain a Communist emotional economy and they coordinated their efforts by word of mouth and the circulation of flyers to attract larger and larger crowds and reinvigorate local activism over the course of 1924.

The local Communist leader, Alfred Schmidt, used the local unions’ commemoration of Lenin at the end of January to attack the Social Democrats and middle class citizens. In the middle of May, Communist organizers gathered over five hundred people for a memorial service at the Kaisersaal in honor of a fallen Communist leader in Halle named Beyer. The Communist leader Kellermann focused his audience’s attention on the threats that the Social Democratic leadership, military and security police posed to radical working class activism, as evinced by the death of a Communist activist, and sought to convert those feelings of fear into a fearless and aggressive vision of revolutionary activity. He called for the removal of the propertied classes, the dictatorship of the proletariat and a group of thirty men from Erfurt to participate in the burial of Beyer. The audience sang the *Internationale* as they left the Kaisersaal. They shouted “Down with the police and bloodhounds” and “Long live the Communist Party and International,” and marched along the Johannesstrasse, in a fearless display of their politics until the police stopped the procession.

338 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 141.
But by the middle of August, it became more apparent to the local police that their efforts to contain local Communist activism were indeed failing. The police reports suggest that Communist activist felt confident again that they could regain influence in the unions and more workers were becoming sympathetic to the Communist Party. The KPD mustered between five and six thousand people, including women and children at the Kaisersaal for the founding meeting of the new Communist paramilitary group, the Red Front Fighter Association.339 Fliers surfaced in police reports that called for the founding of the Communist paramilitary youth group, the Red Jungsturm, indicating both increasing Communist interest and police concerns in radicalizing working class youth.340 But in a sign of continued intra-working class tensions, Communist activists clashed with members of the Social Democratic paramilitary organization, the Reichsbanner, on the way back from the International Youth Day in Greussen.

Instilling Hope in Völkisch Nationalist Politics.

Despite their best results yet in the elections of 1924 and the strong impression of that the völkisch nationalist political parties, namely the DNVP and DVP, appeared poised to make, local rightwing politics fluctuated much more under the surface of middle class nationalist unity and major shifts were underway in the emotional economies that sustained them.341

Based on the confidential police reports that also tracked rightwing political activities local German Nationalist political activity continued to decline in the summer of 1923 despite the persistent fears of a Communist threat and other dangers to the nation.

339 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 191.
340 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 204.
341 Compare Raßloff, 232-261.
As the anonymous Nazi supporter from Weissensee put it in his recollections of German Nationalist politics during this time, the DNVP had lost all sense of its character.\textsuperscript{342} German Nationalist activists continued to invoke the range of fears that framed \textit{völkisch} nationalist politics, but the police reported that the German Nationalists could only attract 23 members to attend its meeting in May 1923 to hear a former police officer from Berlin named Hörig lecture that Jews were responsible for the whole misery of Germany.\textsuperscript{343}

The speaker asserted that most Germans either still did not recognize the misery that Jews had wrought upon Germany, when they should have known because of their “birth and education,” or they just did not care enough about the threat. The Jew, according to the speaker, was making his way slowly but surely toward world power and the DNVP was the only party that had stood against the “Jewification” of Germany from the very beginning. The local pastor Breithaupt used the occasion to link the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who were becoming more active in the region, to an overarching Jewish conspiracy. Drawing from the prewar conspiracy theories that Jews had broken Germany through Socialism, the pastor asserted that Jews were now paying Jehovah’s Witnesses to do the same work at their bidding. However, the pastor believed that when the millenarian prophecy of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, which foretold the end of the world in 1925, did not materialize, the threat they posed to Germany (and his own ministries) would end.

Invoking particular national anxieties and converting these into a nationalist sense of peril continued to play an important role in how some middle class leaders envisioned the dangers to the nation and encouraged ordinary Germans to act more aggressively.

\textsuperscript{342} \textit{Geschichte der nationalsozialistischer Bewegung in Weissensee/Thüringen}, in StVAE.5.350.W27, 5-6.

\textsuperscript{343} Compare StVAE 1-2/154-2, 13-14, 16 and 20.
toward perceived threats to the nation, but this practice of invoking fear clearly did not prove capable of enlarging, let alone sustaining membership roles and attendance at local German Nationalist meetings.

For one thing, numerous patriotic and civic associations, which had flourished under the aegis of the more patrician-dominated rightwing nationalist parties during the early years of the republic, increasingly began to carve out new forms of political activism that anticipated, as Peter Fritzsche contends, the “dramaturgy of Nazism” and undermined the influence of local notable-style social networks and politics.\textsuperscript{344} According to this argument, radical rightwing populist groups instilled a collective sense of national despair, which the Nazis transfigured into an offering of hope that attracted ordinary Germans to support the Nazi Party. Yet local German Nationalist political practice also bore part of the responsibility for the transfiguration of their own emotional economies and the loss of attraction for ordinary Germans. They continued to adhere to a semi-private, elitist format that failed to adequately address the issues of ordinary Germans. They did not offer an emotional alternative to the feelings of peril and danger that they helped instill and they could not decisively eliminate the threat of radical working class politics or overcome their own internal debates about the threat posed by the “Jew.”

That summer, the local German Nationalist newspaper, the \textit{MZ}, again focused on the renewed threat of Communist activity and civil war.\textsuperscript{345} At first, the \textit{MZ}’s editors displayed some resistance to the familiar practice to simply invoke the fear of Communism and more surprisingly, even expressed some faith in the ability of the

\textsuperscript{344} Compare Fritzsche, \textit{Rehearsals for Fascism}, 71-109.

\textsuperscript{345} “Die Bürgerkriegshetze,” \textit{MZ}, July 19, 1923.
national government to handle the threat. They explained to their readers that different articles had recently appeared in the wider press, which discussed the possibility of a civil war that threatened an “intense cold bloodedness” for the nation. Yet they also conveyed the national government’s declaration that such announcements in the press had no basis in reality and the overwhelming majority of the German people openly rejected the idea of being driven into a civil war by any side. Should it come to such attempts, however, the MZ’s editors assured their readers that the national government would apply all means of force necessary without reservation in order to suppress such an uprising against the property and constitution of the Reich.

As the MZ perceived a more serious threat in the posturing of the Communist press and local activity over the summer of 1923, its editors raised its expectations that the national government would intervene in a fair manner against radical leftwing politics that equaled its response to previous rightwing putsch plans. The MZ made the situation look increasingly dire. Its editors reported that the Communist newspaper in Berlin, the Rote Fahne, demanded more and more that workers mobilize in the factories, demonstrate their “steely decisiveness” and drive the “fascist middle class riff raff” into an open conflict. Neither the Socialist nor the Democratic press bothered to mention the public preparations for the Communist revolution and did not appear bothered at all by the growing threat. Moreover, the nationwide demonstration that the Communist Party hoped to stage on July 29th against the “fascist riff raff,” really masked the mustering of the “Red Army” for renewed civil war. In the MZ editors’ estimation, the language which the Rote Fahne used day after day to incite people to class hatred and civil war represented a challenge to the national government’s authority.
Yet the MZ’s editors still expected the national government to respond both impartially and effectively with force and they appeared to hold to the moral and ethical standards that the local rightwing middle class press had established in the wake of the political assassinations the year before to limit radical rightwing violence. They pointed out to their readers that the section of the national criminal law code regarding agitation toward class hatred had not yet been suspended, and the Law for the Protection of the Republic did not simply exist on paper, as demonstrated by the “feverish activity” of the state against the rightwing paramilitary forces gathered around Hermann Ehrhardt, who had also colluded with the assassins of Rathenau a year earlier.

The announcement of the Prussian state’s ban on a Communist march planned for July 27, 1923 initially reassured the MZ’s editors, but the announcement by the ruling leftwing coalition in Weimar, the capital of Thuringia, that no special measures were necessary and their subsequent decision to permit Communist marches on July 29, 1923 increasingly alarmed groups of middle class citizens in the region and motivated them to more directly express their concerns and expectations to the state government. At the beginning of September, the MZ reported that anti-communist leaders from the non-socialist parties in cities like Jena had begun to deliver their own petitions to the Thuringian government, demanding the dissolution of the Communist paramilitary Hundertschaften, which were springing up again in the region.

Given the growing sense of leftwing encirclement in Thuringia and the declining situation of völkisch nationalist activism in Erfurt, the local rightwing middle class editors in Erfurt turned their readers’ attention toward the German Day festivities

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organized in lieu of any events explicitly commemorating Sedantag at the beginning of September and focused in particular on experience of the German Day in Nuremberg.

The middle class TAZ noted with skeptical detachment that nationalist organizers had been “singing and proclaiming the turning point in Germany’s fate” for weeks.\(^\text{348}\) In reality, according to the TAZ editors, the German Day in Nuremberg was mostly a “calm” national demonstration, which only differentiated itself from other nationalist events by the number of participants. Moreover, reports varied too much. One count placed those participating in the procession at around 150,000, but others suggested that the procession exceeded 500,000. According to the report of the Frankfurter Zeitung, which the TAZ included, leaders expected to speak, including Hitler, Hindenburg and Mackensen, did not even make appearances. There were gestures of reconciliation between the “Black-White-Red” patriotic associations and the “Blue-White” Bavarian organizations. The Nuremberg-Fürth Montag-Morgenblatt, according to the TAZ editors, even went so far as to make the “somewhat bold claim” that swastika flags also flew from Jewish homes as a sign of support in all the excitement of the celebration.

By comparison, the editors of the German Nationalist MZ were actively involved in redirecting their adherents’ hopes toward völkisch nationalist activities in Nuremberg and away from the DNVP, which at least one local activist recalled in his anonymous Nazi-era memoir as at a complete loss for political character.\(^\text{349}\) In stark contrast to the lack of hope, utter despair and recent public calls for reliance on the treacherous republic, the MZ featured an anonymous firsthand account that relayed the feelings of hope and rejuvenation which völkisch nationalist organizers sought to invoke and conveyed the

\(^{348}\) “Deutscher Tag in Nürnberg,” TAZ, September 5, 1923, 2.

\(^{349}\) Geschichte der nationalsozialistischer Bewegung in Weissensee/Thüringen, 1-6.
enthusiastic experience of thousands of Germans participating in the German Day events at Nuremberg:

New life stirs itself. Military music from all sides. The festival procession begins. Gothic sables rise and tell of Germany’s great past. Enthusiasm swells. Calls of Heil that do not want to end. A light shower on the marchers. Handkerchiefs flutter, the eyes flash: Germany awake. Orders resound. Whispers go through the rows, “Attention, Ludendorff!” The rows square their shoulders. Calmly, approvingly, the clear eye of the Field Commander looks at the new army marching by. Endlessly, the groups process by (two hours long in rows of eight). The masses gorge themselves in the halls of the city. Hindenburg’s bust looks out earnestly from behind evergreens and black-white-red [colors]. Old marches resound. New German leaders, who came of age in an “iron time,” speak to the people. Admiral Scheer speaks about Skagerrak. Ludendorff’s looming figure appears. His plain and simple words sound clear and receive an excited echo in the hearts of his faithful followers. The day will come on which they will offer their loyalty as once before. Then Adolf Hitler, the leader of the völkisch Freedom movement. His words express ardent love for the fatherland. And every one feels that he is deeply convinced about what he says. That is what allows a hundred thousand to follow him today. Glowing desire for freedom flashes from the words of innumerous other speakers and poets. The divisions march to their quarters singing in the night. The battlements of the old castle blaze in the firelight. The Day of Nuremberg was the most powerful German experience, a milestone in the history of the young German freedom movement. It sowed new belief and new hope about Germany’s future in the hearts of countless thousands. One day, what has been sown will grow and bear a thousand fruits.350

As Christoph Kühberger has shown in later Nazi literature related to the planning of festivals during the Third Reich, the decorative aesthetics of völkisch nationalist activities in the early Weimar Republic purposely sought to invoke individual emotions and collective emotional states through the careful selection of material objects.351 The way materials moved or the colors they displayed were explicitly chosen to affect the Gemüt, i.e., the disposition, the heart and soul of Germans, instill feelings like joy and excitement.

351 Kühberger, 181-182.
and suppress any inkling of fear. Yet the German Nationalist eyewitness also drew attention to the physical features and actions of participants and imbued them with desired meaning in order to mediate the experience of national rejuvenation for MZ readers and profile a rising charismatic leader.

Gothic sables, torch lit battlements, the battle of Skagerrak, the bust of Hindenburg and the image of men born in a time of iron were supposed to invoke notions of Germany’s great past and heroic models and simultaneously mark the transition to a different time of new leaders. Participants’ handkerchiefs fluttered like flags to create a lofty feeling. Eyes blazoned with the call for Germany to awake. A light shower refreshed participants. Whispers conveyed anticipation and directed participants’ attention toward their featured war hero and leader. Hearts echoed participants’ excitement. Squaring the shoulders with other participants created the collective sense of order and unity. Evergreens stimulated a “natural sensitivity” for German traditions and invoked notions of life and health, feelings of warmth and a fresh aroma. The military marches and accompanying music all reinforced the sense of martial potency. The words of the numerous speakers expressed the hope in Germany’s future freedom. And the eyewitness finally drew readers’ attentions to Adolf Hitler as a new, charismatic leader, who rose above all the other völkisch nationalist speakers, except perhaps for the old war hero, General Ludendorff, and testified to the prized emotional traits in Hitler’s speaking, his conviction, his love of the fatherland and his desire for Germany’s freedom.

However, the editors of the Independent Social Democratic Tribüne emphasized the violence that occurred in Nuremberg as a result of the German Day spectacle in order to warn their readers that the völkisch nationalist organizations were for all intents and

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352 Kühberger, 182.
purposes operating like a second government in Bavaria and therefore posed an immediate threat to working class politics and the republic. According to their report, the German Day turned bloody and bore the frightening characteristics of völkisch nationalist violence. In the course of Sunday evening clashes occurred in the working class suburb of Steinbühl, where a Professor Braun from the Continuing Education School made use of a firearm. As a result, comrade named Oberle lay severely wounded in hospital and another comrade named Krämer fell victim in the shooting, who, the editors emphasized, was a fifty year old father of five children. It was lucky, according to the editors of the Tribüne that the shootings in other areas of Nuremberg did not claim any other victims. The suspected Professor Braun was supposed to have been taken into custody, but from the Tribüne editors’ point of view, the police had remained completely passive during the course of events and signaled the loss of police protection for working class activists from the threat of völkisch nationalist activists. If there was any consolation for the Tribüne editors, it was the frosty reception that reportedly greeted the former General Ludendorff because of the Bavarian sympathies among a majority of the participants and their “special” relationship with the “feared and best hated” House of Hohenzollern.

Despite the ostensible setback to the völkisch nationalist movement with the collapse of the Nazi putsch attempt in early November 1923, the völkisch translations of despair and hope inspired resurgence in nationalist activities and a whole host of competing public forms in Erfurt. The police estimated in their confidential reports to

354 StVAE I-2/154-2, 51.
Erfurt’s magistrate that many völkisch nationalist activists had in fact ceased their activities after the collapse of Hitler’s putsch because they knew that they were being observed by the police. Yet the same confidential magistrate reports also indicated that radical rightwing organizers appeared more fearless in the face of police surveillance and more intent on orchestrating a new wave of nationalist experiences that reproduced the feelings hope and enthusiasm for völkisch nationalist politics.

At the beginning of December, the Jungdo, Stahlhelm and Jungsturm attracted about six hundred people to an “All German Organization” that led participants in cheers for Hitler and Ludendorff and directly built on the “glory” of those men who participated in the putsch. Most of these völkisch nationalist organizations, however, appeared more intent on developing their own activities and pursuing personal interests in leadership rather than sustaining a coherent movement and carrying out the things they promised.

Each group focused their adherents’ attention on different variations of the perceived threats to the nation and translating those fears into notions of fearless action. At their meeting in November, for example, the German Nationalists reaffirmed that the “enemy” had to be driven from the land, which from the police report was not exactly clear what was meant, but then the report added the note that the Jews had “to be shown to the door” first. The local Jungsturm association, by comparison, attracted two hundred people to its meeting in December to hear a Major Schnöppe speak about “Germany’s History in the Past and Present” and assert that France was still the bitterest enemy of Germany.355 Roughly 150 people heard the graduate secondary school teacher and longtime organizer of nationalist youth activity, Dr. August Heil, speak about the

355 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 53.
importance of Germany’s military and emphasize that the French were heading toward their downfall because they had recruited African colonial soldiers to serve them. At the beginning of January 1924, the police noted that the local German Officer Association, the Deutscher Offizierbund, was propagating its own sense of the dangers to the nation. The letter expressed the vulnerability of the German people to the threats of international and pacifistic ideas and outlined a list of four specific activities in which members were to engage in response to the perceived threats. According to the letter, members of the Offizierbund were supposed to actively participate in all patriotic endeavors, fiercely fight against international and pacifistic ideas, ruthlessly eliminate all “elements” that contravened officers and restore the ability of the German people to defend themselves.

Local Stahlhelm activity also dramatically increased in early 1924. At first, the organization focused its membership meetings and public spectacles on commemorating Imperial Germany and their comrades who had fallen in the World War. According to the confidential magistrate’s reports, the flag-bearing groups of the Erfurt and Arnstadt Stahlhelm associations appeared in their field grey uniforms on the anniversary of the founding of Imperial Germany in January 1924, which mostly led the police report to speculate on whether or not the military commander in Weimar had granted permission for the wearing of uniforms. Yet the wearing of uniforms, the speeches, rituals and entertainment all emphasized the centrality of the German nation. In contrast to other völkisch nationalist activities, however, the Stahlhelm did not threaten the republic or vilify any internal enemies. Instead, about one thousand people gathered to enjoy music,

356 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 57.
357 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 69.
singing and theater pieces and listen to a speech by the local Stahlhelm leader, Amend that retold the story of the German Kaiserreich’s establishment and remembered the nation’s fallen in the World War. Interestingly, the Jungdeutsche Orden also avoided the vilification of the nation’s enemies at its own well-attended commemoration of Imperial Germany’s founding and focused instead on contributions of music, poetry and theater pieces that were intended to bridge the divisions among the people and facilitate the glorious rise of the nation.

But at another large regional gathering towards the end of February in Erfurt, 1300 members of the Stahlhelm gathered to hear the leader of the Reich Agrarian League, the aristocratic landowner von Goldacker, deliver a speech that reverted to projecting the nation’s perils and expressed the fear of Prussia’s downfall in order to mobilize Germans to act against its foreign enemies. According to the speaker, Prussia could not be allowed to go down, and Germans had to prepare for war, because “war was the present and war was the future.” In contrast, however, to the lack of hope at past events, von Goldacker concluded by asserting that the völkisch movement would triumph.

By the mid summer, the leader of the local Stahlhelm, Amend, also invoked the fear of growing leftwing paramilitary activity inside the nation that recalled the image of völkisch nationalists drowning in a red sea of socialist activity. At the local assembly of about 130 members, Amend pointed out that the Social Democratic paramilitary organization, the Reichsbanner, posed an immediate threat to nationalist activity in the region and had to be matched in its efforts. According to Amend, the Black-Red-Gold

358 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 92.
359 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 100.
Reichsbanner numbered 64,000 in Thuringia and they could not be allowed to grow over the heads of the Stahlhelm.

Interestingly, radical rightwing youth activity also began to flourish in early 1924 and members began to model their appearance more after Hitler’s movement in Bavaria and other rightwing paramilitary organizations in the region rather than their own parent organizations. Rightwing youth group meetings also became a key place for adult leaders to recall the collective memory of Germany’s past, tell the story of the nation’s rise and betrayal, and prophesize its renewal and ascent. The police made note that many youth, who belonged to rightwing organizations, were increasingly wearing military cockades on their so called “Hitler caps” that were blue-white, black-white-red or black-white in color. The members of the organization Wehrwolf also carried the sign of the death’s head on their caps underneath black-white or black-white-red cockades. Concerned by the increasing appearance of these signs, the police noted in their report that that they had written a special letter to the military commander in Weimar to see if carrying these military signs had been forbidden.

Some of the invocations of fear in youth meetings mirrored those in their parent paramilitary organizations and civic organizations, but some youth groups were also key places for pushing what was deemed permissible and sustaining more radical völkisch nationalist emotional economies. The paramilitary youth organization, the Jungsturm, held a home evening at the beginning of January 1924 with their leader, Langbein, who provided an overview to Imperial Germany’s history from 1871 to November 9, 1918.

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360 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 80.
that refrained from going beyond the end of Imperial Germany and invoking any sense of the nation’s peril or hope in times of despair.\textsuperscript{361}

The most radical local rightwing youth organization, however, appeared to be the Wikinger, which ostensibly aimed to prepare young German men for military service and defense of the nation. At their own commemoration of Imperial Germany’s founding in mid January 1924, which attracted about one hundred people, the Wikinger leader, Wustmann, gave a familiar speech that sketched Germany’s history up until the Reich’s founding in 1871 with a special mention of Bismarck, a description of events in the First World War and the downfall of Germany. Wustmann expressed his hope to the youth in attendance that they would rid the land of its enemies after the “internal foe” had been defeated. In February, the Wikinger held another meeting that drew six hundred people to see lecture with visual projections by General Francois about the Battle of the Tannenberg and hear the Wikinger leader, Wustmann, demand that the old soldiers stand true behind their old leaders.\textsuperscript{362}

More striking, then, in the confidential magistrate’s accounts was a split that appeared to be emerging among German Nationalist supporters over their reactions to the threat of the “Jew” and the growing attraction of the völkisch movement. The first sign of trouble for local German Nationalist leaders came from within their own youth activities at the end of 1923 in the wake of the failed Nazi putsch. According to the confidential magistrate’s report, the German National youth group von Hindenburg did not want to be identified with the DNVP anymore, nor with its political goals, and

\textsuperscript{361} Compare StVAE 1-2/154-2, 74 and 123.
\textsuperscript{362} StVAE 1-2/154-2, 88.
sympathized with more explicitly völkisch-oriented organizations. Antisemitic agitation was therefore beginning to reveal an important set of effects on nationalist politics.

The fear of the Jewish enemy, the thinly disguised internal enemy in many public formulations, and the concomitant expectations of how non-Jewish Germans should act, assumed a more prevalent place in local debates about the divergent future of nationalist and völkisch nationalist politics, and heightened the expectations that potential adherents should more clearly take sides based on their sense of the threat or lack thereof that Jews posed to the nation. Even a speech at the local German Democratic Party’s first meeting in mid January 1924, which the confidential police reports also observed, reflected the capacity of antisemitism to raise the expectations of middle class activists and influence the discussions in moderate middle class politics. Still able to draw two hundred people to local German Democratic Party meetings, the speaker, Frau Dr. Bäumer, felt compelled to touch on the “Cultural Political Question” about who belonged to the German people in her critical remarks on the economic conditions and the relationship between the Reich and the states.

At the end of January, however, the völkisch question began to preoccupy German Nationalist meetings even more, reinforcing the divide between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans in Erfurt. In front of a notably larger gathering of 250 people the Dr. Heil, the lawyer Dr. Schneider, and the First Lieutenant Fleischhauer spoke about the völkisch question in response to the recent lecture series from the local branch of the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (CV). According to the German Nationalist leaders, the CV only showed the “good side” of Jews, so they suggested that the DVNP invite local Jewish leaders to present a similar lecture series in front of a

363 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 81.
völkisch audience and see how it fared. Despite this invitation, however, it appears that no such mixed meetings occurred.

In the months that followed, the Jewish question continued to influence German Nationalist meetings and began to force members to take different sides. At an assembly of eighty people in mid February, a woman named Sahlender led a discussion on the racial question of Germany with a talk entitled “Why we should be völkisch,” which did not indicate any differences of opinion on the subject.364 Yet by the middle of October, the police reports described a “crisis in the German Nationalists” and noted a clearly growing split with proponents of a stronger völkisch position in the party. Most of the local German Nationalist organization’s members were völkisch, according to the police report, and some were more openly considering a working group with the National Socialists.365

As radical rightwing adult and youth organizations and activities proliferated, local German Nationalist leaders were also increasingly vexed by declining membership and attendance at their public events and began considering more radical solutions in order to sustain their own political activity, including making alliances or working groups with the Agrarian League, the Nazis or even forging a “Red” army consisting of German Nationalists, National Socialists and Communists.366

Interestingly, more everyday concerns made worse by the anxieties and fears about hyperinflation and unemployment also became more important in the competition between the patrician-dominated rightwing parties and reemerging völkisch parties for the support of ordinary Germans. German Nationalists, in particular, began to attend more to

364 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 88.
365 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 224.
366 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 77.
the everyday concerns of more ordinary Germans in their activities, reflecting their awareness of growing discontent below the surface of their traditional constituencies and the potential that other political parties saw in attracting ordinary German voters through everyday concerns.\footnote{367} At the beginning of 1924, they held a meeting with about one hundred people in attendance that focused on the financial issues of property owners, small farmers and civil servants. The graduate secondary school teacher Sade spoke about the issue of the inheritance tax and surprisingly suggested that the German Nationalists should establish stronger contact with the Agrarian League since things were going so poorly for small farmers and the prices of their goods stood below their market value. According to the police report, the government councilor Stegner and Pastor Breithaupt also talked about the jobs cuts among civil servants and the low pay for civil servants and state workers.\footnote{368}

In a sign of the increasingly crowded and competing political field in the town, the National Socialists also returned in 1924 and appeared intent on pursuing a new populist electoral strategy to national power. In order to remain active in public while under closer surveillance by local and state authorities, they began to distance themselves from paramilitary forms and focused more uniting the fractured and often feuding völkisch nationalist parties and on recruiting new support through the issues that worried both middle and working class voters. At the commemoration for the one year anniversary of Albert Leo Schlageter’s death on May 26, 1924, which eight hundred people attended, Pastor Humbert from Cobstedt held a speech that sought to distance

local Nazi activity from “criminal motives” or the “desire for adventure” that had conveyed a sense of threat even to many middle class voters and emphasized instead the love of the fatherland and trust in God as leading Nazi motives.369

At the end of that May, the National Socialists met with the German Völkisch Freedom Party (DVFP) to discuss their fusion. According to the police report, the newly allied party’s committee included the first chairperson, the local teacher Kneisel, the second chairperson, the storeowner Lessner, the first secretary, Dr. Reissner, the first treasurer, the bank clerk Kuehn and the political adviser, the master tailor Jacobskötter, reflecting the lower middle class origins, artisanal and professional origins of Nazi activists in the community. Jacobskötter, incidentally, was the son of Erfurt’s most ardent prewar antisemite, Johannes Jacobskötter, the prewar president of the local chamber of commerce and a conservative deputy of the Reichstag in Imperial Germany.370 Interestingly, the newly allied party emphasized the issues of adequate residential living and the need for a construction bank to finance new housing, which had been key points of local Communist politics, and indicated that the local Nazi Party was serious about attracting both middle class and working class voters who felt that other political parties did not adequately address their concerns, but it still remains to be seen how serious the newly allied Nazi Party was about more respectable politics and how much their supporter distanced themselves from their desires for “criminal activities” and the “desire for adventure.”

369 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 154.
370 See Raßloff, 232.
Chapter Summary.

At first glance in 1923, working class activism appeared poised for the full assertion of its presence in everyday life and local politics, successfully projecting collective feelings of reunified working class politics – workers’ strength, courage, hope and joy, while simultaneously reinstilling a sense of fear among many middle class citizens about the threat of radical working class politics to their lives, their property, their cultural traditions and their nation.

Moderate working class political leaders, however, could not fully contain Communist activity in the factories and streets or at the polls, nor could they fully suppress or eliminate radical rightwing politics, and they found themselves increasingly isolated in the region after the national government’s suppression of ruling leftwing state governments in Thuringia and neighboring Saxony. The balance of power in the region had quickly turned, leaving moderate socialist leaders feeling confused, divided and uncertain about the future.

Marginalized by moderate working class leaders, under frequent police surveillance and still subject to workplace regimes, some Communist activists expressed fears that ranged from despair about the possibility of revolution in Germany to concerns about the morale of Communist activists and the risks that their activism meant for their lives, their employment and the welfare and security of their families. However, rather than fully give into these fears and completely give up revolutionary aspirations, Communist activists proved very successful in directly attending to the fears of ordinary working class people about inflation and unemployment and translating those feelings into an emotional economy that brought mostly unemployed workers and their families...
back into the party, recruited a new generation of activists, particularly among young, unskilled working class men, re-militarized Communist activities, reinstilled courage in the face of local suppression and reinvigorated a sense of hope in Communist revolution.

There were also a few signs at the local level that social and political relations on the extremes were not completely polarized by opposing fears or threats. Some working class citizens were at least as open to the socialist elements in the early National Socialist movement as some völkisch nationalist citizens were to Communist activities and did not appear all that concerned about opposing the thinly veiled antisemitism in local völkisch activism.

More interesting is the transfiguration of middle class fears in local völkisch nationalist politics. German Nationalists tried to display a middle class sense of courage, but they proved incapable of allaying the fears of Communism and national despair that they invoked among their adherents or developing a mass-based form of politics at the local level. Moreover, they actively sought out new sources of hope and fearlessness in more radical rightwing nationalist circles, especially the völkisch nationalist activities in Bavaria, and played an important role in translating middle class fears and the sense of national despair into the hope and fearlessness of early National Socialist activism that they so greatly desired and expected of younger generations of Germans.

After the rapid collapse of the Hitler Putsch, local authorities believed that their suppression of radical rightwing activity was succeeding as well as that against radical working class activism, but the völkisch national emotional community captured by the Nazi attempt to militarily seize power in Bavaria generated greater interest among middle class citizens and youth disaffected with local notable-style rightwing politics and
interested in the prospects of a new national fighting community. Consequently, radical rightwing organizations fully moved out from under the umbrella of German Nationalist politics and proliferated around the region. These groups fluctuated between more public, semi-private and even clandestine activities given the interests of regional military commanders, local police authorities and working class activists, but they continued to build on the earlier attempts to cultivate a new militant nationalist emotional economy that invoked both the glory of the nation’s past and the fears of external and internal enemies and translated those feelings into courage and hope for the nation’s renewal and, at least rhetorically, on the elimination of internal enemies and preparation for another war.

Despite these changes in local radical rightwing activities, which attempted to harness rightwing populism in the wake of Hitler’s failed putsch, the more established rightwing political parties continued to consider other subtle albeit radical changes in their politics. More fully attending to the everyday concerns of ordinary Germans, especially in terms of employment, government salaries, housing and welfare benefits, reflected German Nationalists’ growing awareness of people dissatisfied with their politics, but open to parties who attended to their issues. The changes in rightwing politics therefore also reveal one of the new key battlegrounds already crowded by Communist organizers and reemerging völkisch activists and Nazis, who actively sought to attend to these fears that resulted from the everyday experience of ordinary Germans.

Finally, the reemergence of völkisch nationalist activities also focused more attention on the fear of the “Jew,” which increasingly informed public debates, especially among German Nationalist activists, and consequently raised expectations among non-
Jewish German citizens about how they should interact with their fellow Jewish citizens. Local archival research indicates that the so-called Jewish question appears to have been a stronger factor for division among German Nationalist activists and a greater source of everyday fear between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens than currently understood in the scholarship on the Weimar Republic. The full effects of antisemitism in local politics and everyday life, therefore, present another key object for study in the next chapter.
Chapter 6

Rethinking the Effects of Antisemitism in the Provinces of Germany

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“The ill-fated Beer Hall Putsch of Adolf Hitler in November of 1923 had its repercussion in Nuremberg, as a frustrated mob tried to vent its anger against the Jewish population. They smashed windows in our house and the neighboring section and scared us children to the very bones. I also remember, how a non-Jewish dentist living in our house stood ready to defend the house, should any need arise.”

- From the Reflections of Kurt M. Goldstein 371

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“We, however, want peace and quiet in Weimar and Thüringen. We do not wish for any confessional agitation and have no prejudices against our fellow Jewish citizens. They are dear to us. Weimar is no battlefield for political campaigns of lies and the businesspeople, especially, have no desire to be frightened or driven out by strangers.”

- The editors of Allgemeine Thüringische Landeszeitung Deutschland in March 1925.372

The physical signs of fear that antisemitic violence induced in the early Weimar Republic may appear universally familiar, but for most assimilated Jewish citizens living in Germany after the First World War, the threat of antisemitism they felt was in effect altogether new and very real.373 For many years, most scholars did not pay much attention to these feelings and their effect in everyday life and politics, but the most recent literature demonstrates that the effects of antisemitic agitation and violence did not simply ebb with the end of hyperinflation and political upheaval in the early years of the Weimar Republic, and some scholars such as Cornelia Hecht have shown that beyond the deeply felt shock of pogrom-like attacks and the personal threats to Jewish citizens and

371 Kurt M. Goldstein, Retrospect and Reflections, Leo Baeck Institute (NY), ME 196, MM 29, 45.
372 Quoted in the Israelitisches Wochenblatt für den Synagogenbezirk Erfurt, March 27, 1925, 192.
373 Hecht, 401-405.
their families, antisemitism actually began to more deeply affect social relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans in ways that not only exposed the lack of civil courage in German society, but also revealed the assault on civic behavior during the middle years of the republic. Ironically, however, the subjective experiences of antisemitism remain absent and relatively little is still really known about how antisemitism affected people, both Jews and non-Jews, in their everyday lives and politics.

Based on the examination of local newspaper articles, police reports, and individual memoirs and oral history testimonies presented in this chapter, I argue that antisemitic violence occurred in a wider variety of everyday forms of discrimination and led to a greater variety of responses among Jewish and non-Jewish citizens to the fear of antisemitism than currently understood in the scholarship on the Weimar Republic. Moreover, the fear of antisemitic discrimination not only hindered the social acceptance of Jews in their everyday lives and politics, but actually threatened the very possibility of peaceful coexistence in German towns, facilitating the racial definition of communities and priming German society for more radical forms of antisemitism after the Nazi seizure of power.

Beyond Shock.

For several years, many scholars have been calling for closer study of the provinces during the interwar period and urging more research in local archives in general, but especially in regard to the rise of radical forms of politics. Michael Wildt has suggested that a closer look at the subjective experience of antisemitic violence in the
German provinces may very likely have more to reveal about how ordinary Germans reshaped their sense of community and contributed to the racial redefinition of the notion of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.374

Yet many local studies of communities in the Weimar Republic, like historian Steffen Raßloff’s work on Erfurt, are just beginning to make use of Jewish records if at all and generally neglect the interactions of Jewish and non-Jewish German citizens in their analysis of middle class politics in the Weimar Republic.375 Even in the research that focuses on the problem of antisemitic violence, a few scholars have made note of the everyday effects of antisemitic violence such as the way people altered their behavior or changed the clothes they wore in order to protect themselves, but they have not gained much more access to the subjective experiences of antisemitism, and remained locked in a strict focus on Jewish experiences of antisemitism that ignore the non-Jewish dimensions and their effects. What persists is more or less the impression that Jews were simply shocked by the increasingly aggressive antisemitism in their communities.376

Research in the Municipal Archive of Erfurt (StVAE), the Leo Baeck Institute Archive (LBI) in New York City and the Shoah Foundation Institute’s Visual History Archive (VHA) in Los Angeles reveals a much more varied and changing view to how

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375 To be fair, Steffen Raßloff and others in Erfurt have been working to collect more firsthand accounts and continue to augment the picture of modern Jewish history in Erfurt. See Raßloff, “Antisemitismus in Erfurt zwischen Reichsgründung und ‘Machergreifung,’” *Jüdisches Leben in Erfurt*, vol. 8 (Erfurt: Stadt und Geschichte, 2008), 29-31.
376 Compare Kauders, *German Politics and the Jews*, 91-92 and Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung*, 72-100. See also Cornelia Hecht, *Deutsche Juden und Antisemitismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: Dietz, 2003), and Richard S. Levy, “Continuities and Discontinuities of Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Germany, 1819-1938,” in *Exclusionary Violence. Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History*, ed. Christhard Hoffmann et al. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 185-202. Dirk Walter in particular explores the reception of antisemitic violence and notes the important role that the Scheunenviertel riots of November 1923 played in shocking people, especially because of the growing role of people coming from otherwise ordinary walks of life and not from more radical political circles. See Walter, 151-176.
the resurgence of antisemitic violence and the advent of the Nazi movement affected the feeling of fear among Jews and non-Jews in the region. The testimonies of Jewish people who grew up in central German towns like Magdeburg, Nuremberg, Erfurt, Gotha and Weimar offer memories, some dating back over eighty years, about how Antisemitism more broadly affected the feeling of fear through the everyday interactions of Jews and non-Jews and generated further debates about what to fear and how to act morally and ethically in the face of this fear.

Memories like those that Kurt Goldstein captured in his autobiography, as the 15 year old son of a hops dealer in Nuremberg in 1923, express the feeling of being scared to the very bones by a frustrated pro-Nazi crowd’s smashing of windows in their home, but they also reveal acts of civil courage that transcended confessional or ethnic lines in moments of immediate danger. I argue that such acts of civil courage cannot simply be dismissed as too little too late and forces more serious consideration of what happened to civil courage as antisemitism became more apparent in everyday ways and what that may tell us about the way that terror operated in quotidian ways at the end of the Weimar Republic.

The records on the history of antisemitism in Erfurt and the surrounding region after the First World War are sparse and fragmented, but the available materials are also revealing in several ways. There were, for example, generational continuities between local antisemitic agitation in Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic, most visible in the leading role of the Jacobskötter family, who promoted antisemitic politics in Imperial Germany and facilitated the transition to völkisch nationalist and Nazi politics in the Weimar Republic. Local antisemitic propaganda in Erfurt did not appear to deviate much
from materials found elsewhere and in fact reflected the increasingly radical antisemitism that emerged after the First World War.

Walter Corsep, for instance, the military officer who had advocated hardening young men against pain before the First World War and actively participated in local German Nationalist politics after the war, made numerous antisemitic sketches which depicted the dangers of the “Jew.” Intended for German Nationalist propaganda, but interestingly never accepted for official party use, the sketches portray the stereotypical assimilated German Jew with a pronounced nose, dark, hairy eyebrows, bushy mustache and thick lips, who poses in the guise of a successful German businessman turned war profiteer or *Kriegsgewinn* as written on his coat pocket.

![Sketch by Walter Corsep of the Jewish profiteer misleading the German people.](image)

Figure 22. Sketch by Walter Corsep of the Jewish profiteer misleading the German people.  

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377 StVAE, 5.110.C.1.3 Corsep.
The sketches also reveal Walter Corsep’s own uniquely imagined fears of the “Jew” misleading the gullible German people and strangling the innocent, but gullible German man - both images that an anonymous female author invoked in her editorial to the local German Nationalist newspaper, the *MZ*, after Sedantag in 1920. In the first image, the German people appear as figures mostly representative of the working classes, e.g., a metal worker, maid, and injured war veteran, marching in the name of “Freedom,” but blindfolded, bound, some with both hands, and pulled along by the “Jew” (Figure 22).

Figure 23. Sketch by Walter Corsep, “The Development of Jewry in Germany or the Clever Jew and the Dumb Michel.”

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378 StVAE, 5.110.C.1.3 Corsep.
In the second sketch, entitled “The Development of Jewry in Germany or the Clever Jew and the Dumb Michel,” Corsep depicts three stages of the Jewish presence in Germany (Figure 23). In the first phase (1820), the Jew is drawn in a diminutive form, much weaker than the towering figure of Michel, the innocent, unassuming archetype of the German man. In the second phase (1870), the Jew has equaled Michel in physical stature, if not surpassed him in weight and wealth, and swindled the new nation out of its wealth. In the final phase (1923), the “Jew” straddles the prostrate form of Michel, strangling him to death; Michel’s left hand is clenched and his arm struggles for his last gasp of life. From Corsep’s perspective, the strength of German people had diminished over time and their innocence had played into the hands of their nation’s internal enemies, who had grown stronger over time and appeared as murderers in the völkisch nationalist imagination.

In terms of antisemitic violence, events in Erfurt appeared relatively mild when compared with reports from other regions. Around the time of the Scheunenviertel riots in early November 1923 in Berlin, for example, the Zionist newspaper in Berlin, the Jüdische Rundschau, reported antisemitic excesses across Germany on their front page, describing events in places like Nuremberg and Oldenburg as if Jews were living in the “middle ages” again. According to its reports, National Socialist youth groups attacked Jewish pedestrians and injured many people in Nuremberg, including a well known lawyer who was attacked with a blackjack and three Jewish merchants who were stabbed.379 Various “troops” invaded the homes of well known Jewish citizens. They conducted “house searches,” broke the display windows of Jewish businesses and posted placards on the public advertisement columns demanding that the Jews “be killed like

379 “Antisemitische Exzesse in Deutschland,” Jüdische Rundschau, November 6, 1923, 555.
dogs.” In response, the *Jüdische Rundschau* ran the headline on Thursday, November 9, 1923, “The Hour of Fate for the German Jews.”

It was in the context of that wave of antisemitic violence that Kurt Goldstein, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, used the expression, “scared us children to the very bones,” in his autobiographical recollection of what happened in the wake of the failed Nazi Putsch in Nuremberg in November 1923. Not surprisingly, it was the mob violence and the smashing of the windows in his family’s home and neighboring homes that invoked the memory of the frightening experience from his childhood. Yet packed into this memory was also the image of a non-Jewish boarder standing ready to defend the Goldstein house from the antisemitic mob, which also heightened both the original experience and memory of fear in antisemitic violence, and reveals another set of perspectives in the experience of antisemitic violence, i.e. the non-Jewish German that will require further attention below.

Interestingly, the Jewish experience in this wave of antisemitic violence did not always result in the same feelings of fear among Jewish eyewitnesses, and, therefore, reinforces the hunch that underneath the mob-like appearance of antisemitic violence in Nuremberg and elsewhere, some Nazi activists systematically organized antisemitic violence and terror. From the visual history testimonies maintained at the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Liselotte Kahn, born in 1906 in Nuremberg, actually remembers feeling excited that something was happening in the fall of 1923. According to her testimony, family friends had been tipped off about an impending action and warned Liselotte’s parents that her father was on a black list. That family, according

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to Liselotte, had a maid who had learned through her brother in the Nuremberg police
force that the Nazis planned to take prominent Jewish people prisoner during their putsch
attempt. Since Liselotte’s father was a prominent banker and member of several different
civic organizations in the city, he had been purportedly listed as a potential target. So the
maid’s brother decided to pass word through his sister to help protect the prominent
Jewish family.

Subsequently afraid for his family, Liselotte’s father decided to tell his wife and children that they could not sleep at home and on the evening of the Nazi Putsch they slept on the floor of her father’s bank office. She could not understand why her parents handled things so secretly and could not tell anyone what they were doing. After the putsch had been aborted, however, Liselotte went to school from the bank the next day and returned home in the evening as if everything had returned to a sense of normality. It was the first time that they really had any conflict with the Nazi movement, but Liselotte recalls feeling more excited as a sixteen year old girl than anything else. She admitted that she did not really know what Nazism was about, but she added that when her father was shortly thereafter asked to become the minister of finance for the state of Bavaria, he declined, explaining to his daughter that as a Jew he did not want to get into politics, most likely anticipating the danger that this might mean for his life and his family.

In Erfurt, the accounts of antisemitic violence were much less organized, relatively mild in comparison and still subject to more active police investigation than elsewhere. The confidential magistrate’s reports noted repeated insults to Jewish citizens in the streets in the fall of 1923. On the night of September 19, 1923, for example, the windows, front doors and garden doors in a few Jewish residences were broken. The

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382 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 37.
police reported that the culprits had been identified and noted that they just happened to be members of the German Nationalist Youth Group von Hindenburg, indicating that the cultivation of antisemitic propaganda within German Nationalist politics was beginning to bear more aggressive fruits among a new generation of German youth.

In the wake of the remerging threat of antisemitic violence, some Jewish adults chose to sound the alarm in Erfurt, but also urged people to do something more about antisemitic violence than simply express feelings of shock, and thereby articulated a Jewish emotional economy to deal with the antisemitic violence they were experiencing. In the first edition of the weekly paper for Erfurt’s German Jewish community in 1924, the editor and local lawyer, Leo Kamnitzer, declared that Jews were indeed alone in Germany. Despite legal emancipation, as Kamnitzer asserted in the paper’s introduction, the development of the last century had demonstrated that Jews could only rely on themselves and they could not hope for rescue from any other source.383

From Kamnitzer’s perspective, the First World War had devastated the life of the Jewish community and destroyed a good part of the idealism in Judaism. The clearest sign of decline was the fact that people wanted to wipe out the history of emancipation for which Jews had so grimly suffered for over a century. It was also worrisome to the editor that most Jewish organizations were not capable of fostering enough of the religious spirit necessary to give people a sense of belonging. In response to the fears of antisemitic violence, the gradual erosion of Jewish legal emancipation and the lack of Jewish unity in the face of more aggressive antisemitism, Kamnitzer suggested that only the open profession of their Jewish faith and the assertion of a Jewish identity could get the attention of their Christian Volksgenossen. More disconcerting from Kamnitzer’s

vantage point, however, was how Jews were reacting to the antisemitism that stemmed from their fellow Christian citizens. Many Jews, the editor claimed, chose to demonstrate their anti-religiousness or deny their Jewish identity altogether in the faceoff increasing antisemitism, and he rhetorically wondered how these responses would affect the souls of their children.

In the editor’s opinion, the everyday disrespect that Jews confronted had embittered their lives. Some of his fellow believers had indeed been jolted by antisemitism run amok, but had become stronger as “conscious warriors” who were proud of their one thousand year history and their contribution to the world’s culture with the Hebrew Bible, which was clearly a reaction to the fear of antisemitism that the editor valorized. A much larger number, Kamnitzer claimed however, still enjoyed their lives without worry, which was a widespread reaction that both worried the editor and motivated him to explicitly denigrate reactions of willful ignorance. According to Kamnitzer, this group of Jewish citizens did not allow themselves to be disturbed from their sense of levity by the palpable scorn they faced. Instead, they stuck their heads in the sand, lived carelessly for the day or even denied their Judaism altogether.

For further role models and a clearer sense of a Jewish emotional economy, Kamnitzer suggested that his readers should look to the past for how Jews should respond. When faced with vilification and oppression from external sources, Kamnitzer recalled how Jews had historically cultivated the sense of family, hard work, charity, modesty, frugality and religiousness in order to strengthen the love of belonging together. And the greater the feelings of misfortune and destitution had become, the more Jews had valued the ideals of their religion and life together as Jews.
In light of the growing danger of antisemitism that he perceived, Kamnitzer hoped to use the pages of the *Wochenblatt* to report on events and announce the activities of various organizations in Erfurt’s Jewish community with the intentions of increasing the Jewish sense of community, promoting the feeling of sticking together, awakening the Jewish spirit and bringing members of the community closer to Judaism. The most fervent ambition, the editor concluded, was to arouse those who stuck their heads in the sand or denied their Jewish identity in the face of antisemitism.

In reading through the fragmented record of Erfurt’s *Wochenblatt* that are available for viewing in the Leo Baeck Institute’s archive in New York City and the municipal archive in Erfurt, Leo Kamnitzer and other contributors began to build an alliance network against antisemitism that also went beyond local Jewish social networks. The second page always announced the activities of local German Jewish organizations like the National Federation of Jewish War Veterans (*Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*), the Jewish Women’s Association, the Zionist Organization, the Zionist Youth Group and the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (der *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (CV)), as well as regional meetings like the annual gathering of the Union for the Defense Against Antisemitism (*Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus*) in Stuttgart.

The *Wochenblatt*’s editors also advertised the activities of their members who decided to confront Antisemitism through lectures like those at CV meetings held by Emil Kann, a local CV-Councilman on “Jews in Germany’s Political Life,” Rabbi Dr.

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384 The record of Erfurt’s *Israelitisches Wochenblatt* is fragmented. The Leo Baeck Institute in New York City maintains a complete collection of the first year, but only fragments from later years of the paper between 1926 and 1932. Erfurt’s Municipal Archive is missing roughly the first two years of the paper, 1924 and 1925, but maintains a complete collection of the paper from 1927 to 1933.
Schüftan on the Talmud, the lawyer, Dr. Freudenthal on “Our place in Light of the Law” and the lawyer syndic, Leo Kamnitzer, on “The Political Situation.”

Interestingly, Erfurt’s police also kept tabs on some of the Jewish and non-Jewish interactions stemming from this activity for the magistrate’s confidential reports, which provide more context to some nationalist events that have been described in the previous chapter. When the CV actually held their new lecture series in the second week of January 1924, representatives from all of Erfurt’s leading offices and political parties attended the invitation-only events. However, at a meeting in regards to the völkisch question at the end of the month, the police noted that a local preparatory high school teacher, Dr. Heil, the lawyer Dr. Schneider, and the Lieutenant Captain a. D. Fleischhauer explained to a gathering of about 250 that the CV only showed the good side of Jews. Speaking on behalf of the DNVP, they believed that the CV should hold a similar lecture series in front of a völkisch nationalist audience in order to see both sides.

There was no sign that such a meeting testing the activities of local Jewish leaders before a völkisch nationalist audience ever occurred in the months that followed, reinforcing the impression of a growing social and political divide as the “Jewish question” intensified debates within local German Nationalist politics and reflected a more threatening tone in the actions of German Nationalist activists toward local Jewish activists.

Yet in the fall of 1924 in Erfurt, it was more striking how broadly antisemitic activity began to affect everyday Jewish experience and the role that the Wochenblatt and others played in mediating that experience. On the evening of the annual festival for St.

386 StVAE, 1-2/154-2, 81b.
Martin on November 9th, some children characterized as völkisch nationalist youth by the Wochenblatt carried lanterns like other children and their parents, but with the sign of the swastika inscribed on their lanterns’ sides.\(^{387}\) At the end of the month, the Wochenblatt reported on “Jew baiting fliers” that were anonymously distributed on passenger cars and the President of the Reich’s Train Administration’s rather meek response to the petition people had sent him as a result, which strongly advised train personnel to examine the compartments as soon as they took over the trains in the rail yard for antisemitic literature and remove it if found.”\(^{388}\) By mid December, the Wochenblatt reported on how some of the unemployed were roaming the streets, wearing the black-white-red insignia of völkisch nationalists and harassing innocent Jewish pedestrians.\(^{389}\)

The editors of the Wochenblatt did provide some signs of hope that the tide of antisemitism was cresting, perhaps even ebbing. They announced at the beginning of 1925 that Dr. David Baumgardt, the son of the local merchant Samuel Baumgardt, had been admitted as an associate professor at the University of Berlin.\(^{390}\) A policeman was sentenced to six months imprisonment for his involvement in the physical assault of Jewish Veterans who had tried to protect the Scheunenviertel during the riots of November 1923.\(^{391}\) In the District Court of Fulda, the Fuldaer soap maker, Franz Josef Kaiser publicly asked forgiveness for falsely accusing another soap maker, Max Wolf, in a flier he had distributed in the summer of 1924 with the title, “Germans, only buy from

\(^{387}\) “Völkische Geschmacklosigkeit,” Wochenblatt, November 14, 1924, 47.
\(^{388}\) “Antisemittismus im Eisenbahnbetrieb,” Wochenblatt, November 21, 1924, 55.
\(^{389}\) “Unfug,” Wochenblatt, December 19, 1924, 87.
\(^{390}\) No title, Wochenblatt, January 2, 1925.
\(^{391}\) “Die Ausschreitungen gegen jüdische Frontsoldaten,” Wochenblatt, January 2, 1925, 97.
those with German blood.” The defendant pledged not to conduct such activity in the future and was ordered by the court to pay a fine of five hundred Marks.392

The Wochenblatt also paid particular attention to the signs of the National Socialists’ decline, which signaled a possible reduction in the threat that their readers faced. They noted the closing of the local Nazi newspaper, The Erfurter Neuesten Nachrichten, and even offered their own set of reasons for the Nazis’ problems: the confusion amongst the German völkisch nationalist movement about the Nazi organization’s name, internal divisions, the absence of a mass distributed press, the lack of money and the “fact” that no political party could build itself up through lies.393

At the same time, the editors of the Wochenblatt published announcements from some non-Jewish Germans in the region which expressed their concerns about the frightening effects of Nazi agitation in the region. In response to Hitler’s speeches at the end of March 1925 in nearby Weimar, for example, the middle class editors of the so-called Deutschland newspaper, the Allgemeine Thüringische Landeszeitung Deutschland, wrote:

We, however, want peace and quiet in Weimar and Thüringen. We do not wish for any confessional agitation and have no prejudices against our fellow Jewish citizens. They are dear to us. Weimar is no battlefield for political campaigns of lies and the businesspeople, especially, have no desire to be frightened or driven out by strangers. Hotels and guest houses, cafes and restaurants, all depend on tourism and the example of Bavaria frightens. It is bad enough that a portion of the Weimar public does not perceive and is susceptible to participating in the agitation against respectable fellow citizens. They are the first to bear the consequences.394

394 No title, Wochenblatt, March 27, 1925, 192.
With their use of the expression of “fright,” the editors of the *Deutschland* revealed a point of non-Jewish reflection on the effects of antisemitism and Nazism in their town and above all else their fear for the breakdown of German civil society. The “example of Bavaria” indicated a deeper, more troubling and open reflection among some local editors than what some scholars have found so far in how the non-Jewish public dealt with antisemitism.\textsuperscript{395} The editors of the *Deutschland* actively drew their readers’ attention to the confessional agitation and antisemitic prejudices that was becoming increasingly more common in Weimar’s public life, and brought to light the disturbance of the town’s peace and quiet, the potential for even greater loss of local business and tourism, threats to their fellow Jewish citizens and the erosion of respectable, middle class society and values.

So months after signs that antisemitism and Nazi agitation were actually increasing and becoming more effective in the region, while coupled with *völkisch* nationalist losses in the Reichstag elections of December 1924, the editors of the *Wochenblatt* posed the question to their readers whether or not the threat of antisemitism was decreasing.\textsuperscript{396} They referred to the declaration of the president of the German *Reichsbank*, Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, which he had made in an interview with the American publicist Hermann Bernstein that antisemitism had reached its high point in Germany and was already decreasing. Yet the *Wochenblatt*’s editors chose to warn their readers about such optimism. From their view, the rise of such a historically unprecedented antisemitic campaign in the wake of Germany’s defeat in the Great War would not ebb so quickly and a new “infectious herd” (*Infektionsherde*) had been created. Moreover, antisemitism

\textsuperscript{395} Hecht, 235.

\textsuperscript{396} “Befindet sich der Antisemitismus im Rückgänge?” *Wochenblatt*, May 1, 1925, 233.
was still strong amongst academic circles according to the editors. Farmers still invoked
the “Secret Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” suggesting that the Jews had plans to rob
rural Christian people of their possessions and land (Grund und Boden). And völkisch
nationalist supporters, Protestant theologians, innkeepers, teachers and civil servants were
reportedly meeting secretly to recruit more members through a form of antisemitism
more dangerous than the so called Radau-antisemitism most often associated with the
lower classes of German society.397

As a further sign of how successfully antisemitism was still spreading, the
Wochenblatt began posting lists on the advent of the summer vacation season in June
1924 with the names of sanitariums, hotels and pensions throughout Germany that they
had determined to be anti-Jewish.398 And by the end of the touristic season they carried a
letter originally submitted to the editor of the Münchener Post which had determined that,
thanks to antisemitic agitation, German health spas, especially the sanitariums in Bavaria,
were significantly less visited than usual, not only by their Jewish patrons, but also by
Christian guests who were opposed to antisemitism, and even some foreigners who
would prefer to remain in the bigger city centers like Berlin, Munich or Hamburg, or seek
out places in other countries instead. The author of the letter suggested that the German
Tourism and Hotel Associations had “Ludendorff, Hitler and Company” to thank for this
trend.399

In reaction to the intensifying antisemitism that they perceived, the Wochenblatt’s
editors urged its own readers not to remain inactive and instead, actively seek to

397 “Versteckte völkische Werbesammlung und ähnliches,” Wochenblatt, January 27, 1925, 162.
398 “Verzeichnis der judenfeindlichen Erholungsorte, Hotels und Pensionen,” Wochenblatt, June 19, 1925,
399 “Der ‘Erfolg’ der Antisemitenhetze,” Wochenblatt, September 4, 1925, 378. According to the
Wochenblatt’s editors, the letter originally appeared in the Münchener Post, August 30, 1925.
“paralyze” the likes of the regional Nazi leader Artur Dinter and his comrades in Weimar with all the means at their disposal. If people continued to place their hands in their laps and leave things to the passage of time, the editors warned their readers that antisemitism would continue to fester underneath the surface of the *Volkskörper* (the body of the people) and then suddenly explode like a disease.400

The return of the National Socialists to politics, therefore, most likely disturbed the editors of the *Wochenblatt* the most. At the end of January 1925, the *Wochenblatt* reprinted documents under the title “Frightful Discoveries,” which a former Nazi leader turned informant had published in another local paper, which turned out to be the reunified Social Democratic *Tribüne*. The most interesting part, according to the editors of the *Wochenblatt*, was a secret order issued in August 1923 from the Command Post (*Kommandostellen*) of Hitler’s SA to their various state divisions:

All local groups have to establish lists through the “S.-A.” leaders or their adjutants, in which a) the names of all Jews are to be alphabetically ordered with special attention to their professions and political views and b) the names of all Democratic, Social Democratic and Communist leaders, editors, city council members, parliamentary representatives and party functionaries.

For [points] a. and b. there are special personal conventions of the effected, their particular places of residence such as offices, Rathaus, café, etc. to exactly determine through daily observation, control, etc.

2. Arrest orders (*Festnahmeordres*) are to be filled out immediately for all those named under [point] 1. prepared according to the formula “B. G.” – without a date – so that on the day of the takeover of political power, no special difficulties arise. On the day of the seizure of power, all rabbis are to be immediately arrested, compared with the already prepared lists, and in case their numbers exceed the lists, the rest of the Jews are to be immediately – issued with subpoenas – at best through the use of the synagogues. Then all economically prominent are to be strictly isolated, the others released with the order to report daily (12-7) at the schoolhouse. – Proceed in the same way with the leaders of the Democrats, Pacifists and Social Democrats, with the instructions to handle as quietly as possible, inconspicuously and avoiding unnecessary hardness. In the case of

400 “Befindet sich der Antisemitismus im Rückgänge?” *Wochenblatt*, May 1, 1925, 233.
opposition, however, one is to make use of the most intense means of
brute force (Brachialgewalt). –

3. In the arrest of Communists, one is to proceed with the greatest caution
and to strictly differentiate between leaders and misled. Here the calm
instruction will be more of an asset than force. It will also be advisable in
given cases to let Communists assist in the arrest of profiteers (Schiebern),
Jewish traders, etc., whereby, however, one is to maintain a closer watch
on the Communist leaders. –
b) One is to inform the main party leadership in regards to the completion
of lists, for Bavaria, Westphalia and central Germany to the Leader of the
N. A. Schreck, Munich, Schellingstr. 39, for Württemberg to N. A. z. H.
29I. Simultaneously, one is to enclose a copy of each corresponding list.
All observations regarding the possession of weapons in the hands of
Jews, Social Democrats or the Communists are to be communicated to the
main command.
M., August 23.
F. d. R. gez. H. Beck 401

After their readers examined this document, the Wochenblatt’s editors suggested that any
Jews, who still did not notice anything about antisemitism and believed that the need to
fight it was exaggerated, would perhaps now open their eyes to the reality of the threat
they faced in Nazi activism.

It is not yet clear how authentic this document was and how much it illuminates
the early Nazi movement and their attempted putsch in 1923, but its publication in 1925
in Erfurt provides the opportunity to further trace the interactions of local Jewish and
non-Jewish citizens through the ways in which different groups mediated the fear of
Nazism. What appeared as hard evidence for the threat that Nazis posed to local Jewish
readers served to harden local Social Democratic resolve to eliminate their reactionary
opposition and moved a few Nazi activists to respond through the German Nationalist
press with veiled threats of retaliation.

401 “Furchtbare Enthüllungen,” Wochenblatt, January 30, 1925, 131. Compare “Ludendorff, Hitler,
Bankrott der Völkischen,” Tribüne, January 28, 1925 and “Unser Gewährsmann schreibt uns weiter,”
Tribüne, November 10, 1925.
The document first appeared as part of a full page report on the front page of the *Tribüne*, from January 27, 1925.\textsuperscript{402} The original report was entitled, “Ludendorff, Hitler, Gansser & Co. Revelations from the Black White and Red Swamp,” and was the first of a series of articles intended to document the rise and fall of the National Socialists. Two more reports appeared in the following days, which detailed the corruption of the Nazi Party and the rise of a local antisemitic speaker and völkisch author, Adolf Schmalix.\textsuperscript{403} The source, according to the *Tribüne*’s editors, was a former Nazi leader, who had recognized as an “honest person” that it was impossible to work with the Prussian aristocracy and still achieve the best for the working people of Germany. The *Tribüne*’s editors hoped that reactionary voices would reveal themselves in response, essentially doing anti-Nazi opposition a favor in the process by publicly expressing themselves over the reports on the Nazis, and help local Social Democrats more easily rid political life of the “black, white and red pests and criminals.” From their view, the threat of Nazism was declining and not even Hitler could rescue his movement from the “rubble of its lies and deception.”

In direct response to the *Tribüne*’s exposé, anonymous representatives of the local Nazi Party group wrote into the *MZ* on February 1, 1925.\textsuperscript{404} The authors said that they would wait for the conclusion of the *Tribüne*’s article series before fully responding. Yet in the mean time they tried to undermine the credibility of local Social Democrats by linking them to national Social Democratic leaders’ involvement in the so called Barmat Kutisker scandal and including a list of names also meant to make the role of Jewish


\textsuperscript{404} “Enthüllungen,” *MZ*, February 1, 1925, 3.
influence in Social Democratic affairs clear to German Nationalist readers. The authors then suggested that the Tribüne’s informant was nothing more than a scoundrel since no real National Socialist would ever reveal such information, even if he had a different opinion than his Nazi leaders, and choose to begin a campaign against his old comrades in the press of the “internationally oriented” Social Democrats. Interestingly, the Tribüne chose not to continue the series and the anonymous Nazi authors did not follow through with their publicized intentions to more fully respond either. Instead, the Tribüne did not publish anything more from their “special correspondent” until almost ten months later, when they published their informant’s report on his experiences in the Nazi’s paramilitary organization during Hitler’s Putsch in 1923, suggesting the possibility that the editors and their informant had made note of the veiled threat in the anonymous Nazi editorial to the MZ.405

In his study of antisemitic crime and violence in the Weimar Republic, Dirk Walter has clearly demonstrated that Nazi cells and their recruited supporters generally lacked such strategic and systematic planning in their first, rather naïve attempt to seize power in 1923. There was an explicit consensus to target Jews and accepted ways to identify Jews by stereotypical appearances, names and locations, but there is little evidence that Nazi activists prepared lists of prominent Jewish citizens to take hostage or systematically implement a plan that would have followed through on those lists.406

The publication of the informant could have been a falsified report on the part of the local Social Democratic newspaper, intended to harm the image of Nazi activism, which was fragmented and in disarray after the failure of their putsch, or diminish the

405 “Unser Gewährsmann schreibt uns weiter,” Tribüne, November 10, 1925, 1.
406 Walter, Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt, 111-139.
fear that some still felt about Nazi activities in the region. Much of the knowledge
gathered through the investigative committee of the Bavarian Parliament on what actually
transpired during the putsch did not reach public consumption until the mid 1920s, but
the informant’s description of events during the Nazi putsch in large part corresponds
with what is known in the scholarship. When coupled with the testimony of Liselotte
Kahn, however, about events surrounding the Nazi putsch in Nuremberg, this alleged
Nazi document reinforces the suggestion that some Nazi activists may have been working
more systematically toward their leaders’ intentions in their first attempt to seize power
and their invocations of fear than currently understood in the scholarship.407

Transgressing the Sacred.

In her examination of Jewish cemetery desecrations in the Weimar Republic,
Cornelia Hecht has raised the question about how much if at all the desecration of Jewish
graves affected a wider German public beyond local and national Jewish discussions of
the subject and the relatively periodic and therefore limited declarations made by a few
local or nationally prominent non-Jewish leaders, mostly denigrating so called radau
forms of antisemitism or writing off the acts of desecration as the work of errant young
men.408

What Hecht has found suggests that the desecration of Jewish cemeteries did not
go much further beyond a few periodic Jewish/non-Jewish partnerships against
antisemitism, nor lead to much more substantial non-Jewish reflections on the wider

407 On the publication of the evidence gathered by the Bavarian parliament’s investigative committee on the
failed Hitler Putsch, see Walter, p. 151. Compare Liselotte Kahn, Interview Code 395, USC Shoah
Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, December 13, 1994, New York City, USA, segment 16.
408 Hecht, 225-235.
problems underlying the threat that cemetery desecrations posed to Jews. For Jewish citizens, the desecration of their local cemeteries may have been experienced as the survival of yet another wave of antisemitic violence, yet Hecht argues that the effects could not be more injurious to the holiest of Jewish religious feelings and in fact posed a real threat to Jewish life in Germany. Inside those public invocations of fear that Germany could regress back to barbarism, however, there were also older, more widely sources of fear present that affected both Jewish and non-Jewish Germans about the purity, safety and contagion of German civilization.

As Monica Black has noted in her study of social fear and the politics of burial in Nazi Germany, and borrowing from the work of cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas, improper dealings with the dead invoke a widely held cultural taboo that serves to defend human communities as a “bulwark” against the fear of moral contagion. Physically attacking Jewish gravesites, as far as is known, did not go so far as to physically violate the interred remains of Jewish people, which would have been an even more serious transgression of both Jewish and non-Jewish cultural codes. The act of destroying Jewish gravesites did, however, invoke fears among non-Jewish citizens too that expressed the injury to sacred values, warnings about völkisch activism and personal concerns about fellow Jewish citizens.

In the middle of March 1926, most of Erfurt’s newspapers reported on the desecration of Erfurt’s old Jewish cemetery and expressed their shock over the apparent fragility of German civilization. No record of the Wochenblatt’s Jewish editors has yet been found, but the middle class and working class media reacted immediately.

409 Monica Black, “Purity and Danger: Social Fear and the Politics of Burial in Nazi Berlin” (paper presented at the annual international meeting for the German Studies Association, St. Paul, MN, USA, October 2–5, 2008).
According to the editors of the *TAZ*, one of whom was married to the daughter of a locally prominent Jewish family, it was “an unheard of act of vandalism in Erfurt” carried out on a Saturday night around 2AM in the old Israeli cemetery on the *Cyriakstrasse* by members of the *Wikinger* Association.\(^{410}\) According to the editors, the damage was astonishing and it was hard to believe that such “systematic devastation” could have been carried out, apparently without any noise or timely discovery.\(^ {411}\) The cemetery, they pointed out, was ideally situated. It was “historically and culturally valuable” with memorial stones dedicated to Israeli families who had lived in Erfurt long ago, but it had been turned into a heap of rubble overnight.

The editors of the *Tribüne* pointed out that the culprits were “brutes of the black-white-red couleur,” who proved their cowardice when they scrambled to escape after they had been discovered.\(^ {412}\) The editors of the *Tribüne* then used the desecration of the Jewish cemetery to warn their readers about the persistent “fruits” of a nationalist German education and the consequences of continued antisemitic agitation in the local nationalist organizations. They also pointed out that one of these *völkisch* “renewers” of Germany, which mocked the sacred claims of *völkisch* activists, most likely included the notorious Walter Laudien. The editors of *Tribüne* reminded their readers that this “noble *völkisch* youth” had carried out a previous break in and had, along with other similarly thinking “Teutons,” stolen records at Erfurt’s Police Headquarters. The *Wikinger* Association was therefore a danger to society, the editors declared, and the people were powerless in the face of the “mild justice,” which unfairly handed down light sentences for *völkisch* activism. By comparison, the editors pointed out, Communists had often

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\(^{410}\) “Antisemitische Grabschänder,” *TAZ*, March 14, 1926.

\(^{411}\) “Die Untat der Erfurter Grabschänder,” *TAZ*, third supplement, 2.

endured longer interrogations for much less serious crimes and received harsher sentences.

How people actually dealt with cemetery desecrations after the immediate public discussions so far remains glaringly absent from the examination of public discourse in the scholarship. Most of the public discourse appears to have focused on the wider implications for German civilization, but interestingly, drew little if no attention to how Jews and non-Jews actually went about dealing with the gravesites that had been violated, which had often been smashed or toppled, and attempted to restore any possible sense of moral redress if at all that reaffirmed the sanctity of human burial or allayed the fears that the act of desecration had invoked. It is the absence of these details and what they may have meant for local Jewish and non-Jewish citizens that remains puzzling. It must have been obvious to local Jewish citizens and perhaps even some non-Jewish citizens that they had to do something to restore a sense of sanctity and allay the fear that desecrations invoked, but what does the absence of this evidence indicate, if anything, about the effects on the moral universes of Jewish and non-Jewish Germans?

Two days later, for instance, the editors of the Tribüne continued to point out the threatening level of antisemitic activity in the town after thousands of people had shown up to look at the desecration of the Jewish cemetery, but they did not discuss what people did at the site.\footnote{“Die Schändung des Judenfriedhofs in Erfurt,” Tribüne, March 15, 1926.} For years, the Tribüne’s editors explained, “antisemitic orgies of the worst kind” had been celebrated in Erfurt. For many months, they noted, the local author Schmalix had been allowed to peddle his “unparalleled Jewish agitation. Antisemitism had also surfaced in provocative speeches during the sessions of the city council where “patriotic” youth eagerly assembled. Antisemitism could still be found in the actions of
pro-nationalist business people in the area and a large number of upper level teachers. Consequently, the editors of the Tribüne called on all workers, white collar employees and civil servants to defend the republic. Their weapons, the editors proclaimed, were “intellectual” and they urged their readers to work with them on the education of the youth and misguided members of the German people. The danger was great, they explained, and reactionary forces were at work to send them all back to a level of barbarity that they could only associate with the Huns.

The association with the Huns invoked the fears of regression and the lack of civilization, which the Tribüne’s editors used to paint a more threatening image of local patriotic associations. According to their report, local police had found weapons caches in the possession of the Wikinger Association and Erfurt’s city councilor Erich Zech in Alt-Daberstedt. Moreover, hand grenades and ammunition had also been found in the possession of Kurt Wustmann, the leader of the local Wikinger Association.

The MZ, by comparison, chose to wait and published the police report about the desecration of the local Jewish cemetery a few days after events had transpired, but noticeably did not take any explicit stand against the antisemitic act itself. Interestingly, the MZ published a statement in the middle of the week from Kurt Wustmann, the leader of the local Wikinger Association, who had been reported by the Tribüne to have been in illegal possession of firearms. Wustmann wrote into the MZ, and made the rather astonishing claim that he had first learned from their “esteemed newspaper” that two members of his own association had carried out the act of desecration the previous weekend. Wustmann used the opportunity to publicly declare

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that the *Wikinger* Association had nothing to do with the “outrageous game,” thus distancing the organization and his own activities from the acts of a few young men, and explained that the *Wikinger* solely aimed to train its members for defense and physical fitness. They did not practice politics, Wustman concluded, and he condemned those “shameful acts” of young fanatical people exactly as any other “decent” person would do.

At least in public discussions, then, some *völkisch* activists had clearly crossed a line that the middle class and working class media, with the notable exception of the German Nationalist editors, sought to defend in order to protect their collective sense of moral values, but the lack of public coverage on how to specifically deal with the acts of desecration and the absence of evidence on what people actually did suggest perhaps that most people did not recognize that a profound rupture had occurred in the moral universe of both Jews and non-Jews and they could not look to cultural traditions, rituals or even language to articulate and redress the injuries that cemetery desecrations inflicted. Underneath the exclamations of a civilization on the verge of collapse, therefore, was perhaps a deeper, more unconscious fear of moral disintegration that requires further research and consideration. It also remains to be seen how, underneath the public declarations to defend civil society and the public limits to *völkisch* activity, both Jewish and non-Jewish people actually felt and acted in the face of resurgent antisemitism.

Locating Fear in the Testimonies of Jewish Survivors.

Locating the subjective expressions of fear at first glance appears rather straightforward. Scholars can turn to sources of individuals, the so called “ego documents” of personal correspondence, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies and oral
history testimonies to locate expression of fear and tease out the details about the situation that informed the original experience of fear, the thoughts that went through people’s minds and framed how they managed their feelings, if at all, translated what they felt into visible expressions of feeling and other actions.

Yet historians have generally regarded the historical records of subjective experience with skepticism and pointed out the limits to what individuals could have known about much larger historical events and the validity of their memories. As Dori Laub, the cofounder of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale, a psychoanalyst of Holocaust survivors and their children, and a child survivor of the Holocaust, has argued, the victims of trauma are not capable of assuming the detached position of the witness inside the event of trauma as it occurred. Memories of traumatic experiences, therefore, present an enigma for historical study. The memories of an adult, as Laub points out, go beyond the capacity of the child who experienced the traumatic event and only produce knowledge of historical significance through the combined actions of testifying and bearing witness to that testimony, speaking and listening for some novel thing that not even the survivor could know beforehand, most often, ironically, through the silences or breaks in the narration of memory.

In her recollections from growing up in Nuremberg, Marie Craig, for example, born in 1928 and a practicing psychotherapist, knows that she blocks the visual recollection of her memories when the interviewer asks her on film in English about

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childhood antisemitism. She cannot remember complete things. Yet she recalls children yelling and throwing stones at her and her brother and she remembers what she calls a “feeling memory” of trying to run away (trying, but unable to?). She also remembers hearing the word, Jude, but the only visual memory that she allows to surface during her interview is of women, coming up to the fence around the park where she was playing, lifting their skirts and urinating through the fence. Looking back on this event, she tells the interviewer that the memory feels “disgusting, awful and humiliating,” which in her view, when asked by the interviewer, “was the point.”

Yet the memories themselves are rather disjointed, admittedly blocked. Some are visual, some more visceral. Craig has in fact also reflected on the memories that have come forward. She has attributed words to the memories of her feelings and may have reached some of her interpretations and conclusions for the first time by talking to someone who is listening. At best, then, the feeling of fear that the discussion of antisemitism yields is the precisely reconstructed memory of an experience, but is more likely a composite set of memories, a montage of fear that is unstable, subject to alteration and additions from other sources, and entwined in the personal struggles of dealing with the past, testifying and surviving.

Memories therefore have an archaeology with layers of listening and telling, words chosen to convey past experiences that survivors did not witness but lived in a separate time and place, only later to tell and reflect when fortunate, choosing words and

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420 The visual record of interview subjects offers another way to approach the problem of Antisemitism’s affects through interview subjects’ physical gestures and expressions, especially when recalling traumatice experiences, but most interview records used for this project did not offer any conclusive visual evidence of fear or other effects.
interpretative framings, emplotting their memories for narration, listening, viewing and questioning.

In his novel, *Midnight’s Children*, Salman Rushdie cautions both author and reader about the concreteness of events that have receded beyond individual memory. As scholars or ordinary people are able to more closely peer at the past through oral history accounts and other types of archival materials, they may create a composite of historical knowledge, but the details about people events often take on proportionally larger significance so that the retelling of the past assumes a reality that may itself in part be an illusion shaped by how people, whether as scholars, politicians, teachers, artists, media producers or countless ordinary people, select, forget and construct cultures of remembrance.

Taken together, there is a tremendous amount of information to glean from these testimonies, but in fact so much has been lost from these lives in the form of parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, social networks of friends and acquaintances, workmates, schoolmates, street scenes, neighborhoods, apartment building hallways, private homes, Jewish and non-Jewish relations, early antisemitism, civil courage, and the myriad recollections of thoughts and feelings that these stories evoke in the retelling of their lives.

Despite these challenges, however, oral history testimonies offer an important and relatively untapped source to combine with other types of archival materials for historians interested both in the subjective experience and memories of antisemitism and fear.

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particularly in the Weimar Republic, i.e., before the more intensely studied Nazi seizure of power and twelve years of Nazi dictatorship, persecution, war and genocide.

Saul Friedländer points out that the voices of the victims may reveal more about the policies of the perpetrators, the attitudes of surrounding society and the world of the victims, and writes:

> For it is their voices that reveal what was known and what could be known; theirs were the only voices that conveyed both the clarity of insight and the total blindness of human beings confronted with an entirely new and utterly horrifying reality. The constant presence of the victims [...], while historically essential in itself, is also meant to put the Nazis’ actions into full perspective.423

However, even with his incredible collection of survivors’ voices spread across socio-economic status, gender, age, profession, region, religion, language and ideology, it is striking that Friedländer points out the continued absence of ordinary perspectives in the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany, something which other scholars also note about the Weimar Republic.424

The majority of studies have focused primarily on the experiences of Jews who lived in one of the seven largest German cities and, as Michael Wildt hypothesizes, miss out on the possibility that there is much more to learn about the experience of antisemitism in the provinces.425 Although these metropolitan populations comprised roughly half of the 650,000 Jews who lived in Germany, most studies have little to say about the rest, including the 100,000 or so who lived in cities with less than 20,000 inhabitants or the remaining 225,000 who lived elsewhere, and therefore too simply

424 Friedländer, 168.
425 For the Jewish demographic data in the Weimar Republic, see Hecht, 98.
assume that what we know is relatively representative, especially when many interview
subjects recall seeking out the relative anonymity of metropolitan spaces and the related
sense of security among more cohesive Jewish communities.

The study of the Shoah Foundation Institute’s Visual History Archives (VHA)
comprises the examination of testimonies from 101 interview subjects who were born in
the towns of Erfurt, Gotha, Weimar, Magdeburg and Nuremberg, and could recall the
time before the Nazi seizure of power. 97 of their interviews were conducted in English
and four in German, but there were several other interviews in other languages that
should be the basis for further study. Several were conducted in Polish for people who
passed through these communities, particularly as forced laborers during the Second
World War, and several others in Spanish, French, Portuguese or Hebrew for those who
adopted the languages where they eventually settled after their force emigration from
Germany.

The Nuremberg group is the largest sub group with 67 interview subjects,
followed by Magdeburg with 20, Erfurt with ten and Gotha and Weimar with two each.
38 are men and 63 are women (see table 1 below). The oldest was born in 1902 and the
youngest in 1930. 16 were born before the First World War; 14 during the war and the
majority, 71, between the years of 1920 and 1930. If 1995 serves as a base line for those
interview subjects who could remember the First World War, some of the events they
describe lie 80 years in the past. The end of the Wilhelmine monarchy, then, lies about
75 years ago in their minds, the events surrounding the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, 72
years, the Nazi seizure of Power in 1933, 62 years, and the pogrom of November 1938,
57 years in the past. However, the memories of fear gathered from those interview
subjects who could remember the years preceding the Nazis, which includes 33 people if those born in 1919 are included, suggests that antisemitism had a greater range of affects on Jewish and non-Jewish German citizens in the Weimar Republic than currently understood.

As for their family backgrounds, most of the interview subjects describe their parents as loving, sometimes strict, even doting parents. Their mothers were housewives, a nurse in the First World War, a kindergarten teacher, the founder of a bridge club, a patron of music and even a mountain climber. Many of their mothers helped their fathers in the family business and many of their fathers developed companies in Nuremberg’s famous toy manufacturing or the region’s hops and livestock trades.

Their fathers were leather factory owners, furniture manufacturers, or shoe makers; some owned hat stores, construction companies, department stores, lumber mills
or breweries. There were bankers, traveling salesmen, lawyers, doctors, engineers, kosher butchers, a stove manufacturer, a brush maker, a tailor, an architect, a judge, a pediatrician, a scrap dealer, a court jeweler and the custodian of the town’s main reformed synagogue. Several parents had immigrated at the turn of the century or in the wake of the First World War from Poland, Hungary or the Ukraine in search of a better life. Yet many of these people could trace their families’ genealogies back centuries in Germany’s history.

Their grandparents had been some of the first Jews allowed to return to the city in the early years of the Second Reich. They were highly assimilated and they felt German. At least 28 of their fathers served the German nation in the First World War, as did many of their uncles and even some of their brothers. Many had served on the front and at least six of their fathers had been awarded with various degrees of the Iron Cross for their bravery in service to their country.

When asked about their childhoods growing up, most interview subjects recall increasing seclusion. The majority of those interviewed remember early childhoods full of feelings like happiness, comfort, and warmth; in some cases, close friendships with non-Jewish playmates, for some segregated but still convivial experiences with their non-Jewish neighbors; lives that were generally peaceful, carefree, with no worries and the sense of protection. Several of the VHA interview subjects actually noticed nothing or cannot recall any particular incident or feeling before 1933, while others felt like they had to deal with antisemitism as long as they could remember, well before the advent of the Nazi regime.

Interestingly, almost none of the interview subjects born in Erfurt experienced open antisemitic discrimination or direct antisemitic violence during the Weimar Republic, which is not to say that antisemitism did not happen or invoke fear in Erfurt, but the lack of evidence contrasts starkly with other interview subjects, especially those in Nuremberg, a key focal point of early Nazi activism. Only Eva Florsheim, who was born in 1924 in Erfurt, remembers the image of her parents listening to Hitler’s speeches on their new radio with “mounting anxiety” in 1932.428 Eva recalls Hitler’s screaming through the radio as if that was the source of her parents’ worries and she remembers that her parents forbade her to say Hitler’s name, as if to avoid what frightened them, or mention to anyone that they listened to his speeches.

For most, however, in part because of their later birth dates, in part because of the narrative structure that cultural forms of memory have established well after the fact for interviewer and interview subject alike, the break in people’s narrative of their memories occurred “when Hitler came” into power, or “in 1933,” as some were wont to say in recalling the past. But even for these survivors who framed their narratives with dates or Hitler’s figure, there is no uniform or linear development across the event’s horizon. For some, change came quickly, literally over night, the next day in school, on the playground, in the street, on the tram, in the apartment building hallway or right in their home among their families; for others it was earlier than 1933, or more gradual after 1933, linked to newspaper kiosks, signs outside of public swimming pools, in front of restaurants and theaters, or on park benches.

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428 Eva Florsheim, Interview Code: 771, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, January 31, 1995, Long Beach, CA, USA, segments
However, others recall the reemergence of antisemitism in ways more ordinary, but no less dramatic and not necessarily directly associated with Nazi activism. Dr. Elizabeth See (born in 1909 in Nuremberg) expresses the feeling of desperation when she recalls the feelings that the words of her peers and other actions invoked on the streets of Tirschenreuth, a little town in the Oberpfalz region to the south of Nuremberg where she grew up. Elizabeth has very early memories of other children throwing stones at her and her mother in the street and calling them Dreckjuden! (“Dirty Jews!”), but it is the memory of the way her high school classmates treated her that leads Elizabeth back to what she means by desperation. Around the age of fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen (ca. 1924-1926), Elizabeth remembers her high school classmates smearing her books with swastikas and saying things to her like, “You have no business here,” and “Why don’t you go to Palestine?” which led her to think about killing herself and talking with her mother about what to do.

Anny Kessler (born in 1915 in Gotha) has more visceral memories around the age of eleven (ca. 1926) of shivering and feeling goose pimples on her body, when she heard her teacher call her family name for the morning’s role call and she anticipated her peers’ derisive responses. Every year, as she explained to the interviewer, the teacher took a full record of each student, including their family name. Whenever he asked her about her father’s name, she became afraid when she had to say his first name “Isaak” because she knew the other boys and girls would make fun of her. The teacher knew her father’s name very well, according to Anny, but he would ask her to repeat the name so that the

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students could make a little more fun of her. She also expresses a feeling of relief in the memory of what happened every time afterwards, when she could pronounce her mother’s more German-sounding first name “Hilde,” as if the a more German-sounding name invoked some sense of security or respite from her peers prejudice and discrimination.431

Hans Hammelbacher (born in 1911 in Nuremberg) recalls feeling isolated when he was about fifteen years old (ca. 1926), but in response to what he describes as growing antisemitism, he actively chose to confront his tormentors without fear rather than seek refuge.432 Hans began seeing Nazi slogans and swastikas painted or written with chalk on street walls all over Nuremberg. Hans and his friends would erase or alter the swastikas they found by filling in the “missing” lines and he fought back against his peers when they called him names like Saujud (“Pig Jew”).

More striking is how Hans’ memories also revealed how everyday forms of discrimination and prejudice affected his non-Jewish German friends and acquaintances before the Nazi seizure of power, separating them and increasing the risk of remaining associated with their Jewish friends before the Nazi coordination of conviviality.433 Most non-Jewish acquaintances stopped associating with Hans and the two other Jewish boys in his class altogether. One longtime non-Jewish friend kept his distance and would not even acknowledge Hans when they met. Another former non-Jewish friend looked away in passing on the street and only one non-Jewish friend remained “faithful,” which

433 Compare Bergerson, *Ordinary Germans in Extraordinary Times*, 146-158.
according to Hans, amounted to taking a big risk, especially after the Nazi seizure of power.

Herbert Aal. (born in 1916 in Nuremberg) remembers not taking the violent antisemitic threats of his classmates very seriously, but also feeling determined to persevere despite the growing everyday persecution by his peers. Moreover, as Nazism became more omnipresent in Nuremberg in the latter years of the Weimar Republic, Herbert’s memories are also striking in their evidence that some of his non-Jewish German peers were already translating the fear of the “Jew” into murderous ideas of eliminating the “Jew” that punctuated everyday life through taunts and singing. One day in 1932 when Herbert was about sixteen, a classmate, who was the son of a high ranking local police officer and who had generally been friendly and no trouble to Herbert, came into school brandishing a pistol saying, “I shoot you. I shoot all you Jews.” When the interviewer asked Herbert if this experience was frightening or if it made people want to leave, Herbert responded that two other Jewish students quit school right away. The threat of murder was “scary enough.” He thought for certain the boy was bluffing, but he remembers that he wanted more than ever to complete his high school degree, as if he were anticipating that things could worsen.

In response to the proliferation of antisemitism in more everyday forms, many interview subjects also recall paying attention to how their mothers and fathers responded to antisemitism and to influence how their children managed what they were feeling. Increasingly pervasive forms of every day discrimination and prejudice heightened the sense of expectations that some Jewish parents felt to protect their children and

communities, but they also communicated a wide range of ways to deal with the feelings that antisemitism invoked. When Dr. Elizabeth See shared her suicidal feelings with her mother, for example, her mother’s threatening reply invoked a counter effect. “I swear to you, if you kill yourself,” her mother explained, “I am going to kill myself.” She recalls feeling the conviction in her mother’s words and that, Elizabeth claims, motivated her to live.

Other parents also chose to encourage their children and help them persevere or fight back in the face of growing discrimination. The mother of Ruth Heiman (born in 1923 in Nuremberg) impressed upon her daughter that she was not inferior to others. Susanne Schachori (born 1922 in Nuremberg) remembers that her father kept a revolver and a long staff, a type of blackjack made of leather with a lead ball on the bottom end, in his locker inside the synagogue’s cloakroom, signifying the danger that her father perceived. Yet Susan also remembers hearing her father talk about what they called the “anti-Jewish excesses” perpetrated as early as 1922 by the Nazis and her father’s decision to begin patrolling the area outside of the synagogue with some of his friends where, in her words, there were always “ruffians” about.435

In the case of Magdeburg, Kurt Wallach (born in 1926) recalls that his father was a “Nazi basher” who sought to counter Nazism before the seizure of power in his own way.436 He had many tenants in his apartment buildings who were Nazi sympathizers. When he discovered that these Nazi tenants were holding clandestine Nazi Party meetings, he would go in, at times with the police when the Nazis were outlawed, or with

friends when the Nazis were legal, physically throw the Nazis out and have the Nazi tenants evicted because he had strictly forbidden these meetings in his apartment buildings. After a while, Kurt’s father became a very hated man among the local Nazi Party. Kurt does not recall that his father suffered consequences from this behavior, but when the Nazis seized power in 1933, his father came home and said they were leaving immediately because he believed he would be killed.

Chapter Summary.

The fear of the “Jew” invoked different responses among non-Jewish citizens. For some, the “Jew” represented an external enemy that had infiltrated the German nation, deceived the German people for profit and stood poised to strangle them. Antisemitic activists translated this fear of the “Jew” into actions meant to threaten actual Jewish citizens and their non-Jewish allies and antisemitic activists achieved a degree of success in inciting some non-Jewish German youth, particularly those in völkisch nationalist associations, to antisemitic acts of violence, i.e., accosting Jewish citizens in the streets, posting fliers that imagined killing the “Jew,” delivering anonymous letters to Jewish families that threatened their lives, or desecrating sacred Jewish sites, synagogues and cemeteries.

Yet in the cases of Erfurt and neighboring communities like Weimar, the increasing antisemitic violence against Jewish citizens also alarmed local police authorities and much of the non-Jewish public about the threats to their communities’ public reputations, personal economic interests and the safety of their fellow Jewish citizens. There is evidence in the local archives, therefore, which suggests that some
non-Jewish citizens were in fact afraid of völkisch activity, particularly originating from early Nazi activism in Bavaria, and frightened about how antisemitism was beginning to affect their own communities. But not all of them simply stood by the side to let antisemitism undermine their values and reshape their communities. Some did begin to more openly reflect on the deeper origins and wider effects of antisemitism in their communities and some assumed greater risks to their lives to call attention to the threat of antisemitism and defend their fellow Jewish citizens. The fear of antisemitism, therefore, also strengthened some of the bonds of civil society and moral values that both Jewish and non-Jewish Germans still shared.

The radicalization of antisemitic violence in the provincial towns and cities of Germany after the First World also invoked a wider range of feelings than shock among Jewish citizens, which revises an assumption about Jewish feelings in the literature on antisemitism in the Weimar Republic. In Erfurt, there were no reports of the physical attacks and damage to property that appeared to occur elsewhere with great frequency, but the increasing incidents of open threats on the streets and anonymous threatening letters or graffiti scrawled on private Jewish homes nonetheless began to affect local Jewish citizens and alarm local authorities, working class activists and even middle class newspaper editors.

According to local sources, many Jewish citizens reacted to these increasing incidents of antisemitic violence by simply sticking their heads in the sand and hoping it would all go away. Some even believed that the fate of German Jewry was already at hand during the wave of antisemitic attacks that occurred in the fall of 1923, but others translated the fear that these attacks invoked into a concerted effort to confront
antisemitism head on by looking to Jewish cultural sources for guidance, encouraging
greater Jewish solidarity, articulating their views in public, reaching out to non-Jewish
allies and displaying fearlessness in the face of a growing threat to their lives, their
families, their relationships with their fellow non-Jewish citizens and German civil
society and values in general.

Yet even with the more concerted public efforts to limit antisemitic violence and
maintain the moral values of German civil society, antisemitism increasingly pervaded
everyday life in more diverse forms of discrimination and prejudice against Jewish
citizens and their families. The threat of antisemitism could be felt in the mid to late
1920s more through the sight of Nazi graffiti on town walls and schoolbooks, the sounds
of verbal taunts from strangers and acquaintances, the feeling of stones pelting children in
the streets on their way to school, the call of their “Jewish” sounding names in the
classroom, the shunning by former friends, the sound of Hitler’s voice on the radio, the
threat of murder from their peers, and the words and actions of their parents than the
more sensationalized reports of physical attacks against Jews.

Antisemitism therefore occurred more often in the spaces and places of everyday
life and invoked feelings of fear through otherwise ordinary social interactions with
peers, neighbors, teachers and strangers on the streets. As one survivor put it, when she
heard the sound of Hitler’s voice on the radio in 1932, she “wanted to crawl into the
woods.” Yet there was in fact also a much more diverse spectrum of reactions to
increasing everyday affects of antisemitism and the growing threat of Nazism. Some
Jewish survivors interviewed recalled feeling goose pimples or shivers, but also other

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437 Compare Herbert Aal, Interview Code: 11077, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive,
Bayside, NY, USA, January 18, 1996, segment 8, Hans Hammelbacher, segments 8-12, Anny Kessler,
segment 4 and Elizabeth See, segments 14-17.
feelings of offense, agitation, excitement, anxiety, determination, desperation, isolation, invisibility, the sense of racial difference, the urge to flee, commit suicide, persevere or fight.

There was also a wider range of ways to deal with the increasing everyday threats of antisemitic discrimination and prejudice that Jewish parents conveyed to their children. Some Jewish parents began to create more sheltered worlds for their families and friends, tell their children not to worry about what they perceived or simply accept everyday forms of anti-Jewish persecution as their historically Jewish fate. Yet others armed themselves to protect their families and communities and even became known as “Nazi bashers.” Some told their children to persevere, guarded them with dogs on their way to school or trained them to fight back.

Fewer, but no less significant, are the glimpses of non-Jewish German peers and neighbors, who would no longer risk open friendship or association because of the knowledge of growing persecution and the fear that association with their Jewish peers and neighbors could lead to repercussions for their own lives, their children or business. The everyday forms of antisemitism, therefore, also invoked fear among some ordinary Germans by heightening the racial expectations in their daily interactions with their fellow Jewish citizens, thereby making compliance with these racial expectations a source of safety for some who were worried about their jobs or their children’s futures. Even fewer are the pieces of evidence for those non-Jewish citizens who did risk that increasing possibility of persecution out of friendship or other reasons less visible to tip off their Jewish neighbors about a pending assault on their home or physically bar their Jewish neighbor’s door from the attacks that had already begun. The increasing everyday
forms of antisemitism, therefore, not only affected Jewish citizens and their families, but their non-Jewish peers as well, in the process assaulting the social bonds and values of German civil society and further facilitating the racial delineation of German communities. For non-Jewish citizens who risked their lives in support of their Jewish peers, the possibility of inclusion still remained, but for their Jewish peers, the fear of exclusion was growing.
Chapter 7

Rethinking the Foreshadow of Nazism in Thuringia (1926-1932).

* “Beyond the question of parliament is a question of the goal and that is to be coldly judged.”
  – Artur Dinter, at the Nazi Party Rally in Weimar, July 1926.

** “The German Reich will stand and fall with the Nazi movement.”
  - Adolf Hitler, at the Nazi Party Rally in Gera, July 1930.

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“German Citizens – Awake! […] From the sentence, ‘Heads will roll’ right up to the high-handed dictatorial treatment of his Harzburger Front comrades, [the coming of Hitler’s dictatorship] yields an unambiguous line, which shows everyone who wants to look where this path leads and must go.”
  - Franz Kammerzell, Head of Erfurt’s City Council (DVP), in the TAZ, March 10 1932. 438

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“Don’t worry about it. That will pass.”
  - Arnold Friedman’s mother.

Much of the ground-breaking scholarship on Nazi activism during the Weimar Republic has focused on the flexibility and organization of local Nazi electoral strategies during the time of the world economic crisis and Germany’s political instability in the last years of the Weimar Republic and has drawn much less attention to the emotional effects of Nazism before 1933. 439 Compounding the lack of visibility of Nazi emotional efforts, more recent scholarship has shifted the focus away from the impact of Nazi forms of

438 Quoted in Raßloff, 390.
terror toward the Nazi practices of manufacturing consent after the Nazi seizure of power. Based on the examination of archival materials presented in this chapter, I argue that revisiting the emotional effects of Nazism before the seizure of power reveals more about the ways in which the fear of Nazism operated in ways that the historiographical focus on the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 and beyond miss by the very nature of their underlying assumptions and theoretical approaches to potential sources.

Robert Gellately, for example, writes that “Consent and coercion were inextricably entwined throughout the history of the Third Reich,” but argues that widespread consent among ordinary Germans to Hitler and the Nazi regime from early 1933 onward was more important than terrorizing ordinary Germans. Consequently, recent scholarship tends to blend out any study of the emotional effects of Nazism before the seizure of power and downplay the impact of the fear of Nazism in the Nazi ability to establish total control.

Yet other research such as Andrew Bergerson’s study of Germans’ everyday greetings and the Nazi manipulation of conviviality and material culture suggest that Nazi forms of terror operated in more quotidian situations in which many ordinary Germans continued to find themselves after 1933, strongly informed by their local context and

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personal circumstances in the provinces.\textsuperscript{441} From this view, Nazi terror did not always assume the brutal forms of paramilitary violence and secret police and also depended upon the Nazi ability to colonize social relationships and space through everyday practices like greetings and flag colors – practices they had employed much earlier than 1933, which in turn confronted Germans daily with the micro-situations of making sense of Nazism and its techniques of persuasion and coercion.

Moreover, several leading scholars have commented on the importance of Thuringia in Nazi politics, among other things, as an experimental field for Nazi politics in the latter years of the Weimar Republic, a key battleground between democracy and dictatorship, a model for the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 and a prelude to the Nazi regime.\textsuperscript{442} Much of the scholarship on Nazi activity in Thuringia still tends to focus on Nazi electoral activities, but some scholars such as Donald R. Tracey identify a whole host of questions that remain unanswered about the activities of local nationalist and völkisch nationalist groups, their membership, voters, leaders, networks and conflicts. Given the importance that the Nazis placed on Thuringia in their legal return to German politics, it is therefore even more interesting that not much is known about the nature of Nazi activities and their effects on everyday life and politics beyond the electoral data, including the role of fear, in the communities of Thuringia.\textsuperscript{443}


Archival research in Erfurt and surrounding communities, not too surprisingly, reveals growing antisemitic violence and Nazi provocations of working class activists beginning as early as 1926. More surprising, however, are the revelations about the extent of nationalist dissent against Nazi politics in the region, the evidence of its suppression before 1933 and the consequences for civil society and democracy. Rethinking the emotional practices of Nazi activism before the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 therefore begs the question about their sources and development in the latter years of the Weimar Republic: how did Nazi activists invoke emotions before 1933 in order to attract support or frighten opposition and how did the attraction and fear of Nazism work together to affect ordinary Germans in their everyday lives and politics?

The Rise of Nazi Activism in Thuringia with the Exception of Erfurt.

Erfurt appears rather unique in terms of the local presence and development of Nazi politics during the middle and later years of the Weimar Republic. In nearby Gotha, which was a much smaller city, the Nazis had recruited 240 party members and even the tiny city of Apolda had 150 Nazi Party members by 1929. By comparison, however, Erfurt’s local Nazi Party organization only gained 150 members over that same period of time and managed just one seat on Erfurt’s city council, their only mandate on Erfurt’s city council until their national seizure of power in 1933.444

Ironically, the region around Erfurt had been an important center for völkisch activity since Imperial Germany. Continuities in terms of personnel, social networks and institutions also helped resurrect völkisch activity and influence after the First World War and made Thuringia an important focal point of reemerging Nazi activism after Hitler’s

444 Raßloff, 364-372.
release from prison. Yet all of this radical rightwing political activity in fact rendered Thuringia a virtual battleground between opposing völkisch organizations and enabled patrician-dominated political parties to articulate political alternatives with notable differences in emotional economy and the potential for further dissent.445

Steffen Raßloff, the leading historian on Erfurt, offers several reasons for the weak Nazi presence in Erfurt. For one thing, most local völkisch activists continued to serve their own competing interests and support Erfurt’s patrician-led Nationalist parties and organization. The Nazis also failed to establish any sustained auxiliary organizations in Erfurt and maintained no local media presence of their own, apparently willing to bypass Erfurt with its contentious rightwing politics and strong working class activism early on, in a sort of “island-hopping” strategy, in order to make headway elsewhere first.

Moreover, the TAZ remained distant and the MZ continued to split its support for the Nazis with the patrician-dominated German Nationalists. Local civil servants continued to remain loyal to the Prussian state, which oddly enough still held jurisdiction over Erfurt’s district within the state of Thuringia, and therefore led many local civil servants to see almost no benefit to their careers in joining the Nazi Party. Local Communist activists even boasted that the Nazis had failed to establish any political activity in the factories. Yet despite all of this, there were also increasing signs in 1929 that local Nazis were expanding their presence in the offices of the railroad, post office, telegraph and police.446

446 See also Schumann, 223-224.
Hitler took an interest in Thuringia and particularly in the influence of Artur Dinter in the völkisch politics of Weimar. While still in prison, Hitler appointed Dinter Nazi Gauleiter for Thuringia, who then quickly established the Nationalsozialist newspaper in Weimar as the organ of the Nazi movement in Thuringia. The February 1925 city council elections in Thuringia bore the first fruits of renewed Nazi efforts, yielding 770 votes and one city council representative in Weimar and an even more impressive 1800 votes and three representatives on the city council of Gotha.447

Consequently, Hitler continued to devote more effort to the development of the Nazi movement in Thuringia. At their meeting with Hitler in March 1925 Weimar, Dinter succeeded in recruiting Fritz Sauckel to the Nazi movement. Sauckel had been a district leader for the German völkisch Schutz und Trutz Bund and since 1922 had led a secret Nazi organization in Ilmenau disguised as a German Wanderverein. Sauckel quickly began to expand Nazi campaign activities throughout Thuringia. He brought in other Nazi activists for support and aimed their activities particularly at the völkisch strongholds of the DVFP in northeastern Thuringia. Soon leading Nazi figures from the northern and southern branches of the party began appearing at Nazi events to help further the movement in Thuringia and enhance their own political profiles, including Julius Streicher, the editor of Der Stürmer, Otto Strasser, one of the leaders of the leftwing of the Nazi movement, Hermann Esser, the editor of the Völkischer Beobachter, and Gottfried Feder, the Nazi economic theorist.

But Hitler remained the leading star in Nazi efforts in Thuringia. He spoke publicly in July 1926 at the Nazi Party rally in Weimar and followed up with a more intensive series of speeches in the fall. At the end of October, Hitler spoke in Weimar

447 Ibid., 58.
before eight hundred and in early November, he spoke again in Gera and Jena, culminating with a speech before a crowd of 1800 in the city of Altenburg in northeastern Thuringia on the border with Saxony.448

The following Landtag elections netted a still rather meager 3.4 percent of the Thuringian electorate’s support with even poorer showings in Saxony, Mecklenburg-Schwerin and Lübeck, but did gain Dinter and Willy Marschler, another former DVFP activist, seats as Nazi representatives in Thuringia’s Landtag. By the end of 1928, however, Sauckel had organized a Nazi campaign apparatus in Thuringia that finally rivaled the SPD and KPD in their abilities of scale and placed candidates in almost all of the urban district elections and one half of all the rural districts in Thuringia, a state where only one quarter of its citizens lived in cities with populations great than 20,000.449 In the December 1929 Landtag elections, the Nazis managed to stage events throughout Thuringia, in some places even three to four events per village. Consequently, the Nazis won eleven to fourteen percent of the electorate in most locales with populations greater than 1000, gaining 11.3 percent of the overall vote and six representatives to Thuringia’s parliament with similar gains in Saxony.450

So at the beginning of 1930, which is known as the breakthrough year for the Nazi Party at the national level in general, Nazi electoral success in Thuringia meant that the middle class nationalist parties seriously had to consider the Nazis as coalition partners in order to maintain a nationalist coalition government in Thuringia and keep the Marxist parties in the opposition, which held a combined 24 mandates in the Landtag

448 Ibid., 59.
449 Ibid., 69.
450 Ibid., 71.
Seizing on that opportunity, Hitler paid a surprise visit to Weimar in early January 1930 and negotiated the appointment of Dr. Wilhelm Frick in the dual role as both Minister of the Interior and Education. This Nazi success, which Hitler orchestrated, translated into an interparty defeat for the Strasser-led leftwing of the Nazi movement. Control of the ministries of police and education also enabled Hitler to pursue a new set of goals to purge the state civil service and police of Marxist influence, reform the state school curriculum, establish an institute for racial studies in Jena and identify an issue through which the Nazis could oppose the national government and boost their national profile.

Mixing Emotions in Local Nazi Activism.

According to the TAZ reporter from Erfurt, everything that the Nazis had prepared in Weimar for their first official rally since Hitler’s release from prison in 1925 looked good. Four large pine trees and Nazi flags decorated the stage in the National Theater, invoking both the sense of traditional German culture and the return of the Nazi movement. Outside, however, the reception in the city seemed cooler to the reporter. Public spaces were only partly decorated with flags. There were numerous people gathered along the parade route, curious to watch the procession to the market square for the main rally, but also clearly more reserved rather than enthused about the Nazi rally. The TAZ reporter suggested that this cool reception was the result of the long lasting calls of Heil that had disturbed the citizens of Weimar the night before. Six thousand men

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451 Neliba, 76.
452 Ibid., 77.
assembled in their brown Stormtrooper jackets with nearly two hundred Nazi flags and exchanged what the TAZ reporter referred to as the “Mussolini greeting” with their leaders, as if the greeting were something foreign to German customs.

In their speeches, prominent Nazi leaders invoked the anxieties and fears of ordinary Germans, more so than the feelings of hope and rejuvenation that had played such an important role in attracting völkisch adherents before the Nazi Putsch in 1923. Invoking anxieties and fears was not a new rhetorical strategy in regional politics by any means – the practice was common across the political spectrum, but Nazi leaders sought to project the image that they were the first to recognize the origins of the problems that threatened ordinary Germans and the first to act aggressively. Reichstag delegate Gottfried Feder, for instance, declared in his speech that National Socialism was the first to notice the economic perils that threatened Germans and the first to decisively take up the struggle against them. He suggested that the Dawes Plan, brokered by US leaders to stabilize the German reparations payments, had in fact led to the “economic death” of two million Germans and the low value of the German mark remained had destroyed the savings of many Germans. Feder contrasted this bold image of Nazi activity with the weakened state of the German national government, which had become a “slave of the economy” and did not dare to respond to Allied policies in any forceful way. The Nazis therefore promised to take back control of German money and reinstate a currency for the people that had the value and stability of the old Rentenmark.

Other Nazi leaders pointed to the threats within the nation and vacillated between suggesting their own radical responses to those threats and emphasizing their commitment to legal forms of politics. Dr. Wilhelm Frick, for example, invoked the
threat of Marxism within Germany’s government, claiming that “revolutionary” civil servants threatened the civil service in order to justify their removal from public office. Julius Streicher, on the other hand, criticized the narrow-mindedness of Weimar’s middle class Spiessbürger and their Lord Magistrate, which picked up on a radical rightwing complaint about middle class values in the early Weimar Republic. He called out threateningly to those bystanders who had cast “cold looks” at Nazi supporters as they marched to assembly, but then also declared that National Socialism only wanted a “legal struggle.”

Artur Dinter, the leader of the Nazi Party in Weimar, reassured his listeners too that the Nazis were committed to a new legal strategy of parliamentary politics. He characterized National Socialism as an organization that stood above all the political parties and conveyed the sense of duty that Nazis felt for the higher interest of the fatherland, that is, their willingness for self-sacrifice. “Yet beyond the question of parliament,” Dinter phrased it, “was a question of the goal,” and that, Dinter suggested in a rather veiled threat, was to be “coldly judged.”

In a second speech that Dinter gave toward the end of the rally after it had been announced that Hitler was “too exhausted from battling” to speak (zu abgekämpft), the local Nazi leader also declared that the next goal of Nazism was the “death of Marxism” and a German Reich founded on the shoulders of the workers who found their way back to the fatherland. Dinter, therefore, refocused the attention of his audience on the elimination of Marxism, but he held open the possibility for working class opponents and skeptics to cross lines and symbolically rejoin the nation. Dinter then turned his attention as well toward narrow-minded middle class citizens and their values as Julius Streicher
had done earlier. “You Spiesser,” he exclaimed, “you Burgher are finished.” Leading Nazi figures, therefore, targeted both Marxist enemies and narrow-minded middle class values, in effect aiming to finish what radical middle class citizens had started: invoke the threat of radical working class politics, denigrate undesirable middle class attributes like passivity and cowardice and neutralize middle class opposition to the radicalization of middle class values, i.e., the valorization of fearlessness, sacrifice and aggressive, eliminatory forms of politics.

As always, the TAZ editors explained, Adolf Hitler was greeted with the most enthusiasm, but he kept his remarks rather limited in order to avoid the more militant language which could land him in trouble with state censors. He invoked both the racial threat to the German people as well as the more quotidian concerns of ordinary Germans in his exposition of Nazi politics. He asserted that the last and greatest task of politics was the fulfillment of the desire to maintain the Volk, but he also claimed that this struggle depended on the question of how to provide bread for both the individual and the whole national community. The key to this problem, Hitler explained, was land, which was not sufficient for the use of the people and, therefore, had to be acquired by force. “Germans,” Hitler warned his audience, “were ripe for overthrow when they were no longer prepared to die because they no longer believed in the goal and that was the case with Germans now,” thus implying that Germans needed to sacrifice more for the nation in order to avoid the downfall of the German people.

Finally, Hitler countered the claims of some German state governments that portrayed the völkisch movement as an enemy and suggested that those states were illegitimate, expressing at the same time his convoluted criticism of the continued ban on
his ability to publicly speak in Saxony and Prussia, which included the district of Erfurt. With that barb, Hitler concluded his speech with a call of Heil, which was met, according to reports, with “unending” applause.

The Nazis’ first national rally since Hitler’s release from prison drew widespread attention from Erfurt’s newspapers, revealing a mixed reception to Nazi politics in the region. The editorial staff of Erfurt’s German Nationalist MZ, for example, directly reinforced the message of Nazi organizers that this rally represented the advent of a new time in German politics. They pointed out for instance what Nazi leaders had wanted to signify in their decision to have Hitler stand at the table where Friedrich Ebert and Philipp Scheidemann had once sat as two of the Social Democratic leaders responsible for the founding of the Weimar Republic. “Those who stood there decisively to help build the new state,” as the editors of the MZ explained, “were also determined to give their blood and lives for their nation’s ideals as the Nazi dead had done on that memorable day in front of the Feldherrnhalle in Munich in 1923.” The editors of the MZ thereby helped equate the Nazi attempt to seize power in 1923 with older German ideals of heroic sacrifice and reinstilled a sense of hope for the threatened German nation in the return of the Nazi movement.

By comparison, the middle class TAZ newspaper published a favorable albeit more sobering account of the Nazi Party rally in Weimar that also shed any illusions about the Nazi desire for middle class respectability through the glimpses of raucous Nazi behavior, verbal threats and outbursts of violence on the periphery of the official Nazi events. According to their report, Adolf Hitler spoke fairly moderately in stark

455 “Nationalsozialistentag in Weimar,” TAZ, July 6, 1926, 5.
contrast to the threat that the editors still perceived in the activities of prominent Communist leaders. “One could think what one wanted about Hitler,” the TAZ editors explained, “but it was not a smart idea to continue the ban on Hitler’s public speaking, while Ernst Thälmann, the leader of the German Communist Party, was permitted to incite the Communist paramilitary organization, the Red Front Fighters, to fratricide.”

The editorial staff of the TAZ, however, made it very clear to their readers that the National Socialists were by no means to be mistaken as a political party in the mold of the middle class politics and values. The Nazis were not a bürgerliche political party, they explained, nor did the Nazis want to be. Yet from the perspective of the TAZ editors the general impression that the Nazi leaders made was actually quite good. Nazi public events were exceptionally impressive in their size and order and they appeared to attract large numbers of workers to their events, which seemed to match Nazi aims and convinced the middle class editors that the Nazis could draw some support away from working class forms of politics, both moderate and extreme.

Individual Nazi Party leaders explained the goals of the National Socialist organization one after the other in their speeches. But from the TAZ editors’ view, there was nothing really new to note about Nazi politics. “It was certainly more easily said than done for the German people to claim the right to reject the state-binding agreements of the Versailles Sham Peace and the Locarno Treaty,” they explained, “but one had the impression amongst all the effusiveness of their speaking that the Nazis should put more of what they said into practice.”

But the TAZ editors did not shy away from also covering what happened on the periphery of the Nazi rally in Weimar either. They reported clashes later in the evening,
which were mostly light in nature, but they also noted that the Nazis clearly often displayed a bias against Weimar’s police, which is remarkable given the stated Nazi aim of legality, and the persistent assumption in the scholarship that the Nazis sought to emulate respectable middle class values. The editors of Erfurt’s main middle class newspaper, however, did not ignore the facts about Nazi activists, their subversion of middle class values and attacks against municipal authorities. According to their report, a horde of people attacked a city police watchman near the train station and wounded him with a revolver shot to the shoulder. Luckily the wound was not life threatening, the editors explained, but the culprit had still not been apprehended.

It was also noteworthy to the TAZ editors, however, that neither Social Democratic Reichsbanner activists nor Communist Red Front Fighters made any appearance or attempt to oppose the Nazis the whole day of their national rally in Weimar, which suggested rather favorably to the TAZ editors that the Nazis could have an imposing, even neutralizing effect on local working class activism. Nazi activities clearly did not conform to local middle class standards and appeared to promote violent excesses that even subverted middle class conventions of law and order and physically assaulted its agents of authority, but given the circumstances, i.e., the threat of radical working class politics in the region, the radical forms of Nazi politics appeared understandable, even attractive and desirable to local middle class newspaper editors.

By comparison, the editorial staff of the Social Democratic Tribüne had drawn greater attention to the growth of völkisch activity in the region surrounding Erfurt, particularly since völkisch activists had begun to rejuvenate Nazi activism in nearby
Gotha. According to the editors of the Tribüne, a group calling itself a “community of necessity” in Gotha had promised to free the nation from chaos. It was supposed to stand above all political parties and its members had sworn to eliminate Marxism.

In response to their perception of a growing threat, however, the editors of the Tribüne sent mixed messages about how workers should feel and act. On the one hand, they argued that reactionary forces could never return to some glorious vision of the nation’s past. They assured their readers that the local working class movement was as unified and strong as ever and any future Nazi actions would ultimately prove futile. But on the other hand, the Tribüne’s editors warned their readers about the intelligence and craftiness of their rightwing political opponents. They pointed out the first visible signs of a growing public völkisch presence in Erfurt unafraid to appear at working class rallies and they therefore more fervently urged their readers to be mindful of division within their own ranks.

That year’s May Day festival was a case in point. The editors described how thousands of Erfurt’s citizens crowded the streets and thousands of people wore red carnations on their clothing as a sign of working class strength and solidarity. But they also pointed out that many workers marched out of step with the lines of their working class comrades and many “satiated citizens” and “hate-filled reactionaries” stood along the route of the May Day procession.

The fear of working class disunity, which some workers’ behavior in the May Day procession invoked, prompted a detailed response from the editors of the Tribüne. “Those who believed that they were too good to march in the same tact as their working

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class comrades,” the editors explained, “were most often the ones who made the same false step all year and hindered the full unfolding of the proletariat’s power.” As a way of maintaining working class discipline in the current generation, they urged their readers to remember those who celebrated the First of May a generation ago. They reminded their readers that the older generation had been harassed by the police and regulated by employers, and had often risked their lives and freedom as well as their existence in the name of working class politics. Current workers, therefore, would do well to remember the older generation of workers and act like them.

However, in response to the völkisch presence at Erfurt’s most important working class festival there was no sign of working class fear, only the hope that völkisch activists would feel the frightening power of working class solidarity and strength with an accompanying sense of optimism that workers would attain a revolutionary future. The editors countered that the May Day procession had always been aimed at affecting their opponents anyways, so their presence was in fact welcomed. Every May Day, they explained, was intended for their opponents to experience the power of working class solidarity and for working class people to see the “crumbling forms” of bourgeois society with their “moldy ideology.” “May they howl in their newspapers,” the editors suggested. “No power,” they asserted, “could hinder their march upwards before and no power would be able to stop them in the future.”

The events surrounding the Nazis’ first national rally in Weimar, however, invoked the darkest fears of local working class activists. “In hundreds of ways,” the Tribüne’s editors proclaimed, “the worst was roused on those days to rabble.”

“Hakenkreuzler psychopaths,” as the editors called them, moved through the streets of

459 “Hakenkreuzler schiessen einen Polizisten nieder,” Tribüne, July 5, 1926, first supplement.
the state capital, roaring like a “horde of wild animals” in the city that was once known as the “bastion of intellectual freedom and education,” making rude and coarse remarks to people and young women they encountered along their way with a fearless sense of impunity. Local Social Democratic newspaper editors thereby invoked the fear of barbarity and, ironically, became the defenders of middle class values and German civilization in the process.

A few hundred of these “Hakenkreuzler boys,” “Bavaria’s extra finest,” and “riff raff of the worst kind,” simply occupied the train station and blocked all free traffic. An old woman walking by with a cane was driven back with shoves. Some travelers felt an “exceptional sense of rage” and heavy clashes ensued with the Hakenkreuzler. Some people only managed to get through to the trains by force. The editor of Jena’s Social Democratic newspaper Volk, comrade Kranold, and the theater critic of Apolda’s Volkszeitung were jostled in the most “unabashed” and “lowest” manner. Only the prudence of comrade Kranold and interestingly, the intervention by pro-Nazi citizens held the mob back from further clashes.

The breakdown of police authority was especially disconcerting from the editors’ point of view. The police unit of four men present at the train station stood by powerlessly and did nothing at all to maintain orderly traffic in public spaces. Many pedestrians were made fun of and insulted as Jews. The security officer, Paul Schmidt, was badly injured early in the morning around 3AM in front of the Hohenzollern Hotel by a National Socialist with a pistol shot to the left breast. The assassin, who had not yet been captured, was reportedly twenty years old and wearing a shirt blouse and cap. The car of the factory owner Michael, who wanted to drive students to Umpferstedt, was
attacked by National Socialists. One of those students riding in the car, the Tribüne’s editors added, had been injured by a knife stab to the left eye.

The editors of the Tribüne concluded by pointing out the inaction of the local town leader, Herr Sattler, who in their opinion could have take the opportunity to provide for the security of peaceful citizens. The editors of the Tribüne thereby also criticized the passivity of middle class leadership in the face of an imminent danger to ordinary citizens, but then proceeded to threaten municipal leaders with a familiar vision of working class mob violence, if they did not take the issue of security more seriously. “Wherever security was most in danger,” they explained, “Sattler apparently saw nothing and focused on banning filmed works of art instead.” So “the day was coming,” the editors of the Tribüne warned, “when the people would avenge themselves and they would be the judges.”

Interestingly too, the editors of the Tribüne covered some of the dissenting public reactions in Weimar to the events surrounding the Nazi rally, which reveal anything but middle class attraction to Nazism or acquiescence to the fear of Nazi violence. According to their report, Weimar’s city council demanded a ban on future völkisch party rallies in the city after some citizens had registered a “sharp protest” in the meeting of the Weimar city council two days after the rally ended. The Lord Mayor declared that this was the second time that the National Socialist Party rally had taken place in Weimar and that violent attacks had occurred against peaceful citizens and police. “The majority of Weimar’s citizens,” the Lord Mayor added, “vehemently opposed this violence and added that the city director would be charged to approach the government of Thuringia in order to forbid National Socialist Party rallies in the future in Weimar because of the

460 “Weimars Bürgerschaft protestiert,” Tribüne, July 7, 1926, first supplement.
threat that the Nazis posed to the cultural reputation of the city.” Even more striking, all of the members of the Weimar city council, according to the editors of the Tribüne, supported the city council resolution against the Nazis, including the Social Democrats, Communists, Centre Party, the Aufwertungs-Party, and even the local German Nationalist chairperson and former cultural minister of the Duchy of Weimar, Undeutsch. No one opposed the measure, not even the National Socialist’s city council representative.

In their coverage of the Nazi response to this resolution, the editors of the Tribüne noted the “impertinent” declaration of Dr. Dinter, which served to distance Nazi leaders from the actions of lower-ranking Nazi Party supporters and focus the blame on working class activists (whom media reports had noted more for their absence). 461 Moreover, according to Dinter, his people had been provoked by Weimar’s police. The Nazi leaders had issued explicit instructions and it was unthinkable that these instructions were not followed given the discipline of his people. “If things happened,” he suggested in attempt to redirect the threat, then “without exception it was due to the work of Marxist opponents.”

Transfiguring Nationalist Emotional Economies.

The persistent threat of Marxism to the middle classes and the fear of national disunity appear to have provided the main impetus behind a coalition government in Thuringia that included the Nazi Party. In the elections of December 1929, it became clear that the political parties which had maintained a national coalition government since 1924 could no longer maintain that coalition without the support of the Nazis, who had made substantial gains in Thuringia’s elections at the expense of the patrician-dominated

nationalist parties, special interest groups and the Agrarian League. In his support for the selection of Dr. Wilhelm Frick, who was approved by a vote of 28 to 22 in the Landtag, representative Krause of the Wirtschaftspartei explained that despite their conflicts with the Nazi Party, the larger goal was to maintain the life of Thuringia and the middle class. This “national position” therefore bound the Wirtschaftspartei to a coalition with the Nazi Party. In their public statement on the alliance, the German Nationalists also declared their support for an “emergency coalition” in order to “rescue Thuringia.”

Fritz Sauckel, who had replaced Dinter as the new Nazi Gauleiter in Weimar, captured this fear of radical working class activism and translated it into a display of Nazi courage and aggressively anti-Marxist politics in his declaration on Nazi political aims for the new coalition government. The whole expression of the Left, he explained, consisted of nothing else other than to continue the harassment of the German people. The National Socialists were therefore the greatest enemies of class struggle. They did not push themselves to coalition government, he claimed. Instead, it was the middle class parties who over and over expressed their wish that the Nazis participate in government. Their joint struggle, he asserted, would move forward to free Thuringia of the pest of Marxism.

Regional nationalist and völkisch associations also perceived an increasing terror at the beginning of March 1930, which stemmed from Communist activity in the factories. They therefore reinforced their calls for further security measures in the factories and a national front of Germans regardless of their class. At a meeting of the Stahlhelm in Weimar, for example, First Lieutenant Düsterberg declared that liberation

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462 “Klare Mehrheit für die Thüringer Regierung,” TAZ, January 24, 1930.
was only possible in the union of all the nation’s strengths. He urged that it was therefore necessary to integrate the majority of German workers in the national front in order to solve their present political questions. Moreover, he claimed that hundreds of thousands of German workers were extremely loyal and prepared to sacrifice themselves to the nation as members of the Stahlhelm. However, Düsterberg suggested that the “fear of terror” (Furcht vor dem Terror) in the factories, presumably from leftwing working class activists, hindered further organization of workers with nationalist sympathies, and in many cases, the very same workers lacked the necessary protection from their employers. It was, therefore, the task of the employer, according to Düsterberg, to provide security and enable the development of the national idea among the working classes in the factories.

The TAZ also reported that radical working class activists increasingly led more open attacks against public nationalist ceremonies and other events, which ironically then pegged Nationalist Socialist activity in a more respectable and sympathetic light. In the middle of March 1930, the TAZ reported clashes on the People’s Day of Mourning in Weimar. According to the editors, it came to a dissonant note on the return march of the National Socialists from the commemoration at the local cemetery. As the editors pointed out, such closed marches were allowed in all of Thuringia in contrast to the continuing ban in Prussia, which included Erfurt. According to the report, the National Socialist column was accompanied on both sides by onlookers and participants of the event. During the procession, an older gentleman was supposedly so threateningly set upon by a pack of young men that he called for help. The last group of National

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464 “Schlägereien am Volkstrauertag,” TAZ, March 17, 1930.
Socialists stormed by and a fist fight unfolded between them and the attackers, whom the TAZ suspected were Communists and Reichsbanner people. The police reported that they were able to identify the people involved, but the investigation was not yet complete. Moreover, at other locations reports of conflicts between Communists and National Socialists continued to come in.

Erfurt’s German Nationalist MZ, by comparison, conveyed a much larger struggle against “Cultural Bolshevism” that captured different fears and anxieties about the nation. At the state convention of German Nationalists meeting in Erfurt in the spring of 1930, Professor Paul Schultze-Naumburg, Frick’s newly appointed director Higher School for Architecture and Craftwork in Weimar, invoked the fear of racial degeneration. He argued that individualism was conditioned through inheritance and race and therefore vehemently opposed miscegenation. Frau Pohle, the chairperson for the Queen Luise Association of Thuringia, asserted that the “danger” of an aging German population was high; thereby invoking the fear of Germany’s declining birth rate and the resulting ruin for German family life. Frau Pohle argued that the danger of an aging German folk was high. Moreover, she faulted German parents, especially those who were so highly valued in biological terms like civil servants for their lack of will to have more children. Finally, Lieutenant Ulrich Fleischhauer spoke about the planned demoralization of the German people and claimed that Bolshevism and Marxism were the military instruments of high finance to morally disarm the German people and destroy their religion. Germany was in his view a true slave colony and he claimed that an

“ Asiatic style” was leading to widespread degeneration in the universities, school assemblies, art, architecture, civil servants, judiciary; family life and sport.

Local middle class newspaper editors, however, generally ignored negative depictions of Nazi actions such as the provocation of the Reichsbanner activists in January 1930 in Erfurt or acts of terror in the surrounding region and neighboring states. Instead, local middle class newspaper editors focused on the increasing presence of Hitler in Weimar and Thuringia’s politics since his political maneuvering had led to the dual appointment of Wilhelm Frick as the state minister of the interior and education as part of the deal for the formation of a new nationalist coalition government. The appointment of Frick to a state-level ministerial position represented an important first-time achievement for the Nazi Party at the national level and a political success for Hitler’s leadership. Consequently, Nazi events in Thuringia became important sites for Hitler and his subordinates to advance the national profile of the Nazi Party, bolster the leadership position of Hitler among the contested ranks of the Nazi movement and further articulate his own vision of a national emotional economy which aimed to govern how ordinary Germans felt and acted in response to nation’s peril.

The TAZ editors evinced a cool detachment in their reports by suggesting that Hitler expressed many ideas that were already part and parcel of nationalist ideology, but they also expressed their conviction that Hitler sincerely believed what he said about the struggle over the daily bread, the need for Grund and Boden, and the struggle for existence among different races.466

The editors of the MZ, by comparison, offered more detailed coverage of Nazi activity in Weimar, which revealed Hitler’s intentions to defend Nazi politics in

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466 “Hitler spricht in Weimar,” TAZ, January 12, 1930, 2.
Thuringia and further subordinate the Nazi movement to his leadership. \(^\text{467}\) Hitler used his appearance alongside Joseph Goebbels and Wilhelm Frick to demonstrate Hitler’s support for Frick’s already contentious activities within the coalition government and also to reinforce the Führer’s own position within the Nazi movement since Goebbels had until recently sided with the leftwing of the Nazi Party gathered around the Strasser brothers.

But the political stage of Weimar also offered Hitler the opportunity to more widely disseminate his views and attempt to assert his authority over diverging nationalist emotional economies. Hitler made it very clear in his speech that coalition government in Thuringia could never mean the slightest abandonment of National Socialist principles and the idea of national renewal began with renewal in Thuringia. For anyone who supported nationalist, anti-Marxist politics in Thuringia, this foreshadowed the Nazi attempt to control nationalist emotional economies. “The unconditioned will to strength and power alone at any price,” Hitler argued, “could promote and maintain a people in the struggle for existence.” “The will to power and strength had to become a living ethos in the whole German people and Germans,” Hitler explained, “needed weapons bearers, who believed in the law of strength and the idea of the Führer.”

Toward the end of March 1930, however, the national government’s opposition to the reforms sponsored by Wilhelm Frick, in particular his desire to purge the state police of leftwing influence, played into the hands of Nazi leaders to frame the dispute as a new front in the war with the national government, which drew national media attention to Nazi efforts in the region and led the local middle class press to reframe the dispute as a

struggle over Thuringia’s sovereignty.\footnote{“Severings Kampf gegen Thüringen,” \textit{TAZ}, March 21, 1930. Compare “Die Rettung Thüringens, ein Erfolg des Nationalsozialismus,” \textit{Völkischer Beobachter}, April 20/21/22, 1930.} In response to the national minister of the interior’s attempt to intervene in Thuringia by withholding federal funds for the state police, the newspaper of the Agrarian League in Thuringia conveyed the view that Minister Severing had disturbed Thuringia’s constitutional right to its sovereign existence without closely examining the claims involved.\footnote{“Höfer zum Severingsangriffe,” \textit{Thüringer Landbund}, April 5, 1930.} The Agrarian League framed the affair as “one of the many political grotesques and perhaps the most clever of the Social Democratic leaders in power.”\footnote{“Staatsminister Frick über den ‘Krieg’ mit Thüringen,” \textit{Thüringer Landbund}, April 3, 1930.} In their view, Frick had not pursued a single personnel change in the Thuringian state police, although, as they pointed out, there were still many Social Democratic officers employed, which made the Thuringian state police in effect a partisan police troop and a threat to the security of the citizens of Thuringia.

Opposing Nazi Governance in Thuringia.

Not surprisingly, the editors of the Social Democratic \textit{Tribüne} were quick to point out several concerns about the increasing influence of the Nazis via Dr. Frick in Thuringia’s state government. For one thing, they noted that the Nazi proposal to reintroduce the warehouse tax resembled a strategy of their antisemitic predecessors in the region to use the warehouse tax to force Jewish stores out of business and gain the support of non-Jewish handlers, small shop owners and traders.\footnote{Compare “Der Haushaltsplan der Faschisten-Regierung,” \textit{Tribüne}, April 9, 1930, first supplement and “Nationalsozialistische Steuerdemanologie,” \textit{Tribüne}, Ibid., third supplement.} For another, the editors of the \textit{Tribüne} claimed that the Frick-dominated coalition government also used the power of taxation to sabotage municipal self government in towns like Gera.\footnote{“Frick-Regierung sabotiert Gemeindeselbstverwaltung,” \textit{Tribüne}, April 10, 1930, first supplement.}
However, dissent against the Nazi-led coalition government also began to emerge among middle class opponents and rightwing middle class sources of support. Almost immediately in response to Frick’s appointment, the Democrat leader in the Thuringian Landtag, Kallenbach, publicly expressed his concern over such a one-sided rightwing coalition, publicly stating that he was afraid (er befürchte) of Nazi experiments and dangers in government.473

In response to the ruling nationalist coalition government’s acceptance of the Enabling Act that Frick crafted in March 1930, for example, the TAZ carried the warning message of the Social Democratic representative Brill, a compromising act in itself of tolerating working class opinion that middle class media and politicians had generally avoided since 1919.474 Brill, it should be noted, suggested that with the passage of the new Enabling Act, Thuringia’s leaders had abandoned the grounds for constitutional legislation and willingly provided an instrument for the elimination of political opposition in their state.

Frick’s proposals to return Christian prayers to the state’s school curriculum, by comparison, played rather favorably in the local middle class press and national newspapers, which had openly opposed the threat of Social Democratic anti-religious reforms in the schools for years, but even here signs of middle class concern began to surface over the course of public debate. The TAZ, at first, simply conveyed Frick’s arguments for the new school reform proposal in their report on related deliberations in the legislative committee.475 Addressing the longstanding fear that Marxism threatened Christianity and German cultural values in general, Frick argued that the education of

473 “Klare Mehrheit für die Thüringer Regierung,” TAZ, January 24, 1930.
475 “Fricks Schulpolitik,” TAZ, April 2, 1930, 2.
children and the German people had to happen on a Christian-national basis. Education had to turn away from the crass materialism of the present and turn toward the “eternal values” that were the basis of the nation. In an attempt to mitigate any concerns over his proposal to reintroduce prayers in the school curriculum, Frick emphasized that the new school reforms would not lead to confessional schools. There would be negotiations with representatives of the church and the teachers over an appropriate school prayer. And Frick added that the prayer would not be made obligatory, but it would be recommended.

Under the headline “School prayers against Jews,” which made the antisemitic threat of Dr. Frick’s proposed school reforms more explicit, the national Social Democratic newspaper, *Vorwärts*, published the resolution text of the Social Democratic fraction in the Thuringian *Landtag*, which expressed their concerns about Frick’s school reforms and threat they posed to democracy and those Germans who supported the republic.476 The text of the Social Democratic resolution read:

The National Socialist Minister of Education, Dr. Frick, recommended the introduction of five prayers in the schools of Thuringia through the order of April 16, 1930. All of the prayers are politically influenced. They are prayers for war, which make propaganda for the “liberating deed” of the National Socialist Party. They are prayers against the reconciliation of peoples, greater international understanding and peace. They are prayers of partisan political hatred, which accuse the pro-republican and peace-loving portion of Thuringia’s people of deception and treason in a slanderous and un-Christian-like manner. The claim that godlessness and treason have destroyed the German people and torn them apart is a political provocation of the worst kind. The official declaration of such claims, which present an insult to broader groups among the people and thereby cause injury, is an open violation against the clauses of the Reich constitution, according to which the sensibilities of those who think differently are not allowed to be infringed. The prayers are a misuse of religion and a misuse of the school for partisan political agitation. The government is therefore requested to rescind the prayer order from April 16th.

*Vorwärts* also published Frick’s response to the Social Democratic *Landtag* fraction’s statement, which countered with the invoked counter fears of racial and moral degeneration. “I want to be very open and clear,” Frick stated, “We do not need to fool ourselves. The moral decay of the German people stems from racially foreign elements, namely the Jews.” In reply, the editors of the *Vorwärts* asserted that Frick’s interpretation was the lowest form of Jew-baiting and did not comply with the basic clauses of the Weimar Constitution.

Other decrees from Frick, however, prompted even more attention from regional and national media, which revealed further divisions within the local middle class media and even prompted the defense of the Weimar Constitution against the threats that Nazi decrees posed for individual citizens’ rights. Frick’s war on Jazz, in particular, raised widespread and divergent reactions. The *Volkszeitung*, for instance, published the introduction of Frick’s decree which justified police censorship of Jazz in order to protect German moral values: “For years foreign racial influences have been asserting themselves in almost all areas of culture in increasing mass, which are capable of undermining the moral strengths of the German folk.”⁴⁷⁷ The editors of the *Volkszeitung* then pointed out that the new decree even rescinded permits already issued to actors in the state of Thuringia who performed Jazz. Frick also pointed to the moral downfall of Munich as a city of art in order to serve as a warning for the people of Thuringia, especially the citizens of Weimar, but the editors also cautioned that Frick’s decree presented a legal problem. The decree was based on the reintroduction of the censor in

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Weimar, which had been abolished by the national constitution, and in their view, it was ridiculous to make the police the guardians and judges of culture.

Erfurt’s leading middle class newspaper, the TAZ, took particular exception to Dr. Frick’s decree against Jazz music and used the occasion to more explicitly criticize Frick’s proposed school prayer reform in a lengthy exposition of their grievances. In an article entitled, “Frick’s Sunday Surprise,” the TAZ editors first explained the justification of the new decree against Jazz. For years, they wrote, foreign racial influences had increasingly influenced almost every area of culture, and were capable of undermining the moral strength of the German Volk. Jazz bands and drumming, they continued, supposedly glorified “Niggers” (sic! Negertum), and “slapped German cultural sensibilities in the face.” Prohibition was therefore in the interest of maintaining and strengthening the German Volk.

Yet the TAZ editors noted that the form and content were characteristic of the “private work” of Frick, who proved himself capable of continually creating new “disturbances” among the parties of the nationalist coalition government in Thuringia. In their estimation, it was practically impossible to empower police authorities to decide according to National Socialist Party dogma what was to be understood as the “Glorification of Niggerdom.” The editors, for example, wondered whether or not “Othello” fell under this category, and pointed out that according to the wording of the order it did. They also argued that it was legally very alarming to want to punish businessmen through revocation of their licenses for racial offenses that occurred in the past, which were not previously punishable by state law. Finally, they sarcastically asked whether or not it was possible for a theater or cabaret owner to reconcile his program

478 “Fricks Sonntagsüberraschung,” TAZ, April 13, 1930, 2.
according to the tastes of the ruling coalition government without the threat of punishment.

In the view of the TAZ editors, it was not permissible to allow National Socialism to establish a National Socialist cultural enclave in Thuringia, which they felt was digressing from the rest of Germany in terms of world view and customs, simply because the National Socialists happened to be able to make use of the ruling coalition government. Jazz music, however, was a convention of civilized life, the editors wryly noted, which many Nazi Party members did not reject out of hand as “glorifying Niggerdom.” Jazz, they argued, was just as international as the dress coat and tails, which Herr Dr. Frick often wore to festive occasions and did not really present a threat to the German culture. By comparison, they suggested that the example of America showed how little Jazz contributed to the “glorification of Niggerdom,” because it was well known that the black person represented a second class citizen and despite all that, Jazz had not changed anything in the United States. It was also a complete illusion to want to suppress foreign culture by means of the police or control the cultivation of German culture by police order. As a final note, they also claimed that Professor Schultze-Naumburg’s racial ideas were dangerous and contradictory too. Schultze-Naumburg, they explained, wanted to return to a lost idyll, which could not be reconciled with the forward thinking and revolutionary spirit of National Socialism.

In reaction to an action which would have important repercussions later for the possibility of democratic government in Thuringia, both local and national newspapers also drew their readers’ attention to Frick’s attempt to reshape Thuringia’s police force by decree and open threat. The editors of Erfurt’s Social Democratic newspaper, the
Tribüne, reported Frick’s ban on any criticism of his actions from police officers and the “revenge” that Frick exacted from one police officer in particular who had dared to criticize him.\(^{479}\) The editors of Vorwärts reported Frick’s defiance of national government and his decision to go ahead and appointed pro-Nazi police directors in key towns throughout Thuringia: High Government Councilor Hellwig in Weimar; Police Major Kehrl in Gera (previously employed in Weimar); former Leader of the Upper Police School Major Finke in Jena; and a former specialist for improvements in the Thuringian Ministry of Economics, High Government Councilor Rohde, in Gotha.\(^{480}\)

Suppressing Nationalist Dissent.

As a result of growing public opposition to Frick’s actions from both political opponents as well as coalition party members, and strengthened by the decision among a majority of Thuringia’s Landtag delegates to oppose Frick’s leadership, the leader of the Nazi fraction in the Landtag, Fritz Sauckel, drew a line in the sand and threatened any opposition to National Socialism, in particular from among Thuringia’s Agrarian League and DVP fractions, which had supported coalition rule with the Nazis, by stating that any opponents of National Socialism were Marxists and Bolsheviks.\(^{481}\) The Nazis thereby attempted to make opposition, any opposition at all, a threat to national unity and aimed to suppress dissent within the ranks of the supposedly unified nationalist front in Thuringia.

\(^{479}\) “Frick rächt sich an den Polizeibeamten,” Tribüne, May 2, 1930, third supplement.
\(^{480}\) “Frick gegen Wirth,” Vorwärts, May 20, 1930.
\(^{481}\) “Mehrheit gegen Frick-Regierung. Ein Drohung gegen den Landbund?” Vossische Zeitung, September 16, 1930.
Despite the admittedly inconsistent support of their coalition partners, the misunderstandings and even opposition that they now faced, the editors of the *National Socialist* in Weimar asserted that the Nazis were the only political party that served the interests of the people.\textsuperscript{482} They claimed that the Nazis were the only political party which had held to their guiding principles and, unlike other political parties, including their own nationalist coalition partners, they were also the only political party which did not tolerate the narrow interests of an economic group or a professional class. Moreover, they pointed out that Frick had rejected almost 400 Eastern Jewish immigration applications for Thuringia, which contrasted starkly to the near tripling of Eastern Jewish immigration applicants that the “red” state of Prussia had accepted over the same period of time. So despite some of the misgivings over their leadership in Thuringia, the editors of the *National Socialist* emphasized the increase in their representation to six delegates in the Thuringian *Landtag* as a clear sign of their growing support in the region and their ability to develop a “fanatical opposition” to Marxism and “will to freedom” in Thuringia.

Leftwing media, however, reinforced the dilemma that the Nazi’s nationalist coalition partners faced by suggesting their cowardice in the face of Nazi rule. The editors of *Vorwärts* pointed out the split that Nazi politics created in the ranks of the unified nationalist coalition. In his report on conditions in “Frick’s Reich,” the Social Democratic editor August Fröhlich noted favorably that the state DVP leader, Herr von Kardorff, was an open supporter of the republican system who called the National Socialists “undeveloped political children” in their parliamentary manner.\textsuperscript{483} But in

\textsuperscript{482} “Ein Jahr Frick,” *Der Nationalsozialist*, January 7, 1931.
\textsuperscript{483} “Das Dritte Reich in Thüringen,” *Vorwärts*, March 6, 1931.
Fröhlich’s opinion, the DVP was so focused on rescuing Thuringia from its feared annexation to Prussia and so invested in the fight against Marxism that DVP leaders would not more openly oppose Nazi actions.

The response of nationalist leaders to the increasing Nazi presence in the public spaces of Thuringia’s capital only seemed to reinforce the impression that nationalist leaders were afraid to risk more than a few symbolic gestures of defiance to Nazi activities. In Weimar, for example, officials increasingly raised Nazi swastika flags at state events such as the introduction of Professor Schulze-Naumburg at the State School of Art. The representatives of the middle class parties left the event, but according to Fröhlich, they did not demonstrate any greater courage to articulate a stronger form of protest. As a result, Fröhlich suggested that the DVP would simply allow the National Socialists to do what they wished in Thuringia and neighboring Braunschweig.

However, when the DVP, Agrarian League and Economic Party displayed some courage in withdrawing their support from Frick’s leadership in the early spring of 1931, thereby enabling enough parliamentary support for the Social Democratic motion to finally depose Nazi influence in Thuringia’s state government, some of the national pro-republican media interpreted rightwing opposition to Nazi rule in Thuringia as a sign of the return to reason in German politics. The national Catholic newspaper, Germania, told its readers at the end of March 1931 that its editors had expressed their concerns for months about Nazi rule in Thuringia and therefore celebrated the end of the National Socialist “experiment” in the art of government.484

The Social Democratic organ, Vorwärts, also suggested that the withdrawal of support from the DVP and the Agrarian League for the National Socialist-led coalition

484 “Das Todesurteil für Dr. Frick,” Germania, March 26, 1931.
government in Thuringia signaled the departure from the recent resurgence of euphoria and the return to sobriety and reason in politics. From their view, the Nazis had achieved much of their recent electoral success by appealing to the mob-like weaknesses of the German people, especially those who were indifferent, those who understood nothing about politics, or those who continually sought out saviors who yelled “Hosanna!” one day and “Crucify!” the next.

Erfurt’s Social Democratic newspaper, the Tribüne, declared the fall of Frick as a major set back for Hitler’s movement and noted other developments which signaled the Nazis’ growing potential for decline. They pointed out the growing conflict within the Nazi camp which had been made more visible by the replacement of Stennes as the leader of Berlin’s SA, and even proclaimed the “downfall of the Nazi press” with the disclosure of a fifty percent decline in subscriptions over the preceding months. And over the next few months, they kept track of the dismantling of Dr. Frick’s policies. At the end of May, the Thuringian Landtag suspended the school prayer decree and at the beginning of July, the new Minister of the Interior, Dr. Kästner, even banned National Socialist demonstrations along with Communist counter demonstrations in all of Thuringia.

Yet Nazi editors promptly began to work toward neutralizing dissent among their former nationalist coalition partners by invoking the fear of national treason, miscegenation and cultural downfall. The Völkischer Beobachter turned DVP opposition to Nazi politics into an act of national treachery that handed Thuringia over to

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485 “Es gelingt nichts mehr!” Vorwärts, April 2, 1931.
486 Compare “Die Seifenblase mit dem Hakenkreuz platzt!” Tribüne, April 2, 1931 and “Niedergang der Nazi-Presse,” Tribüne, April 30, 1931.
Marxism.\textsuperscript{488} Another newspaper sympathetic to the Nazi movement suggested that the withdrawal of support by the DVP, the Agrarian League and the \textit{Wirtschaftspartei} allowed the Democrats, Social Democrats and Communists to remove all constraints from the spread of African culture in Thuringia with the suspension of Dr. Frick’s anti-Jazz decree.\textsuperscript{489}

Nazi leaders and local activists also began more openly threatening nationalist sources of dissent to Nazi activities. The rightwing nationalist newspaper run by the Stinnes family, the \textit{Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung}, reported Hitler’s threat to the DVP at the beginning of April 1931.\textsuperscript{490} Erfurt’s Social Democratic \textit{Tribüne} also briefly noted Nazi reprisals against members of the Agrarian League in the region, but suggested that the Agrarian League leaders had brought this retribution upon themselves and could no longer free themselves from the “demons” that they had helped summon.\textsuperscript{491}

The Nazis, however, were not the only rightwing nationalist activists to invoke the need for national unity in a time of crisis and invoke the fears of treachery and national disunity in order to dissuade nationalist opposition to Nazi politics. Some nationalist activists still expressed subtle yet important differences in their visions for the nation and its emotional economy, but others sought to suppress the dissent emanating from within their ranks in the name of national unity, thereby reinforcing the Nazi aim to suppress nationalist dissent altogether.

In Eisenach, for example, thousands of male and female supporters of the \textit{Jungdeutschen} gathered at the town’s Bismarck Tower on the same weekend as the Nazi

\textsuperscript{488} “Die sogenannte ‘Deutsche Volkspartei’ will Thüringen dem Marxismus ausliefern,” \textit{Völkischer Beobachter}, March 27, 1931.

\textsuperscript{489} “Hoch die Negerkultur!” Newspaper title unknown, May 28, 1931, in BA.R.8034.II.2989, 112.

\textsuperscript{490} “Hitler droht der Volkspartei,” \textit{Deutsch Allgemeine Zeitung}, April 2, 1931.

\textsuperscript{491} “Nazis verprügeln Landbündler,” \textit{Tribüne}, July 2, 1931.
Party rally in Gera, and demonstrated in support of the Ostmark territories in eastern Prussia that had been severed from the German nation by the Treaty of Versailles.\textsuperscript{492}

Four thousand supporters marched to the market square, where the Jungdeutschen leader, Arthur Mahraun, explained that the demonstration was an “expression of the power of community” and “the idea of sacrifice for the fatherland.” “Their actions should bear witness,” he continued, and should aid in the “screaming peril” of the present. Germans had to be strong and brave. They had to work hard for a unified Germany and they had to lend a new strength of “Germandom” to those Germans in the east. Mahraun demanded a new national parliament that would not represent special interests, or recognize class or confession, but the will of the community. In contrast with the Nazi vision of community, however, this community had to be free of the radicalism of both extremes.

In Apolda, by comparison, the Stahlhelm held two days field exercises in Apolda on the same weekend as the Nazi Party rally in Gera and the Jungdeutschen in Eisenach, which emphasized the military training of young men and urged Germans to forsake their differences in the name of national unity. The Stahlhelm Gau leader Schaper asserted that Germany needed a government that supported national rearmament on par with the rest of the world. He declared that the Stahlhelm wanted the reinstatement of general military conscription. He assured his listeners that this army was solely for peace and freedom, but he also reminded participants that the German youth had to be steeled in body and spirit, thereby reinforcing the heroic ideal of the German man hardened against pain and fear. However, all of this, he explained, was only possible with a united people.

and he therefore pleaded for the nationalist parties to look beyond party interests and rescue what remained of the nation.

According to the statement they released to the *MZ*, the leaders of the *Stahlhelm* in Thuringia looked on with concern at the irresponsible division in the national political party life of Thuringia. They asked their district leaders to do everything to unify nationalist government in Thuringia before the onset of winter. Moreover, they called on all national comrades to keep their eyes open in this time of increasing peril and pay attention to those in Thuringia who sought to sabotage the reunification of the national parties. Regional *Stahlhelm* leaders therefore also invoked the fear of national disunity in order to reinforce the militarization of Germans in their everyday life and politics and suppress any dissent from anyone within their own ranks.

Despite the apparent political setbacks for the Nazis in Thuringia, signs of nationalist discontent, even concerted opposition, continuing reports of Nazi reprisals against nationalist dissenters and nationalist suppression of dissent within their own ranks, local middle class newspapers continued to propagate a favorable image of increasing Nazi strength and success in mobilizing Germans across class lines against the threat of Communist activity. Moreover, the middle class media reports reinforced the feelings of hope, excitement and a new sense of purpose that the Nazis attempted to instill through the staging of their public events. Those reports also reveal how some local leaders felt that the Nazis allayed some of their fears about the threats of national disunity, Communism and materialism, and they document how the Nazis continued to radicalize their own vision of a nationalist emotional economy.

493 “Das nationale Thüringen marschiert,” *MZ*, September 8, 1931.
The editors of the *TAZ* insisted that the Nazi Party rally in Gera clearly demonstrated the internal reorganization and growing strength of the Nazi Party in Thuringian towns and cities.\(^{494}\) There was a threefold increase in the number of uniformed participants, more than the 10,000 SA, SS and Hitler Youth that the Nazi organizers had announced. They marched in well disciplined columns accompanied by bands and draped in flags. Many in Gera welcomed them with flowers, which suggested that the Nazis had made a favorable impression among the people. A minister declared that “God had entrusted the Nazis with his holy mission.” “Only fools,” the minister added, “thought Germany’s fate could be changed with winged reason and calm calculation,” ending his sermon with the recently suspended school prayer that Dr. Frick had decreed: “Dear Lord, free us from deception and treason,” and “Germany awake.”

The grand fireworks display, however, did not appear appropriate in the estimation of the *TAZ* editors, for a political party and only seemed to present a reenactment of the “Hell of Verdun.”

By comparison, the *MZ* editors focused more on the Nazi transformation of the city and the positive feelings of support that Nazi activists invoked among the townspeople. On Saturday afternoon, brown shirts rattled down all the highways of Thuringia by truck. Brown uniforms flashed red armbands from the windows of the trains. The closer one approached Gera, the editors explained, the stronger the traffic became and the more the stream of visitors assumed the form of a long procession with a unit of brown motorcyclists leading the way. From the *MZ* editors’ view, Gera now stood completely as a sign of the *Hakenkreuz*. Many houses were decorated in support of

the Nazis. Garlands and Nazi signs spanned the streets. Particularly moving, according to the editors of the *MZ*, were the Nazi paper flags in the working class parts of town, where most individuals did not have enough money to buy a flag.

Hour after hour, the *MZ* editors continued, Gera looked more and more like an army camp. Brown groups emerged from the train station. The units sprang out of the trucks at parking spots improvised since the prearranged ones were long since filled, and marched toward the assembly place singing. Three thousand SA men, accompanied by huge numbers of ordinary people, marched toward the *Schützenplatz* where about 35,000 gathered. Excited calls of *Heil* greeted the flags and leaders as they entered and “endless celebration” ensued when it was announced that Dr. Frick was also there.

On Sunday morning, Nazi units marched along all the streets to the *Schützenplatz* and thousands of men assembled themselves in well ordered columns. Suddenly, a roar of *Heil* calls erupted by the entrance. “Hitler is coming!” the editors exclaimed, and a forest of arms greeted him in exchange. Recalled from their view of the pulpit, the pastor pointed out that the foundation of the National Socialist movement’s success was their belief in God. In this time of materialism, their God had to be a mighty fortress again. After the Lord’s Prayer, the pastor led 15,000 Brown shirts in a commemoration for the fallen. A Nazi leader from Munich, Adolf Wagner, declared that the two million men in field grey uniforms did not die in vain. “No suffering could change the fact that until now they had died without any purpose,” he admitted, “but now the steeled will to freedom embodied in the brown army of Adolf Hitler gave their sacrifice new meaning.” After an oath of loyalty administered by Captain Röhm, the head of the SA, Adolf Hitler presented the Thuringian SA with a set of new flags.
As for the speeches, Frick asserted that the current political system was doomed to fall. He attributed the collapse of the nationalist government in Thuringia to the treason of the DVP and the opposition of the Agrarian League. “The DVP,” Frick explained, “had allowed Marxism to grow in influence and worked with the Marxists to destroy everything he had built. As a result, things had worsened in Thuringia.”

Hitler’s normally central speaking role, by comparison, was cut short in the TAZ coverage, but what the TAZ editors did report was nonetheless striking for the radical political practice that Hitler endorsed. For the world had to know, the Nazi leader suggested, that there was a second Germany next to the official Germany, which did not believe in changing Germany’s fortunes with its “hat in hand.” Hitler therefore openly intended to pursue a more aggressive approach in Nazi politics that rejected middle class ideals of respectability and international agreements.

However, the editors of the MZ provided much more extensive coverage of Hitler’s speech, revealing even more about Hitler’s vision for the nation’s emotional economy under Nazi control that outlined how Germans should feel and act in response to the threats facing the nation. He referred to the causes of the Germany’s political defeat and asserted that Germans could not pursue a politics of unification and uplifting if all means of power were not at their disposal. “If the inner strength was withdrawn from use on the front that faced outward from the German nation,” he explained, “then that front would collapse.” “The entire people had to be prepared to be thrown on the scales in the struggle among peoples, but that could only happen if the people was uniformly built and welded as a block with the same ideological world view.” “For this goal,” however, “no one could permit individuals to exist who had committed high treason or
parties who did not recognize the fatherland.” Hitler, therefore, “preferred twelve years of internal warfare for a unified German will to freedom than one hundred years of subjection to external forces.” “Such an instrument of power,” Hitler explained, “could only be created through the removal of the internal divisions of the German people.” “Only then,” he concluded, “could the German people find new sources of strength in their struggle for freedom.” The message of this Nazi emotional economy was therefore the most radical yet: internal division required internal struggle in order to eliminate those people within the German nation who threatened national unity and the nation’s defense against its external enemies.

Assaulting Working Class Activism in Erfurt.

Since their strong showing in the December 1929 elections and despite the emergence of nationalist opposition to Nazi politics in Thuringia, Nazi activists finally began to concentrate on towns like Erfurt, in which they had previous little success, increasingly provoking working class activists in Erfurt to transgress their own emotional regimes and even physically assaulting ordinary Germans in nearby towns. In response, local working class activists acted quickly to allay the fears that the growing Nazi assault instilled in working class Erfurt and translate those fears into a fearless, more unified working class defense against Nazism. Unfortunately, however, the Nazi control of key positions of local police authority effectively neutralized working class resistance even before the so-called Preussenschlag at the end of July 1932 and thereby foreshadowed the Nazi seizure of power in early 1933.
On New Year’s Day, 1930, the editors of the Tribüne reported that Erfurt’s Nazis attacked a Reichsbanner procession in the Johannesstrasse near the working class area of North Erfurt.⁴⁹⁵ According to an eyewitness account that the editors of the Tribüne provided, as the procession of the Reichsbanner moved through the Molkestrasse on its New Year’s “Awakening” ritual, three Nazis continually called “Heil Hitler” in an attempt to provoke the Reichsbanner men. The leadership of the Reichsbanner only held back the procession’s participants with great effort from doing something to the “bold provocateurs.”

The procession thereafter resumed its planned course. As the procession moved passed the Kaufmann Church through the Johannesstrasse, twenty to twenty five Nazis suddenly appeared from the direction of the Eimergasse, yelling “Heil Hitler” toward the rear of the Reichsbanner procession. The report pointed out that one of the boldest Nazis was a National Socialist named Berger, who had earlier been a leader of the tambourine corps for the Communist Red Front Fighter Association.

The police, who clearly did not anticipate an attack on New Year’s Day, were few in numbers, but they tried to push the Nazis back so that the Reichsbanner procession could continue on. Yet when the procession neared the Alhambra Theater, the Nazis suddenly sprang out again. The Reichsbanner people, whom the Nazis attacked from behind, physically defended themselves, and within a short amount of time they were able to disperse the Nazis. The police pursued the Nazis through the inner city to their local meeting place, the Bauernschänke on the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Platz, and arrested two Nazis, who had initiated fistfights. They also arrested a third Nazi, who had taken the side arm of a police officer and tried to strike him with it.

According to the editors of the *Tribüne*, the behavior of the Nazis was becoming bolder, more violent and more challenging to working class activism in Erfurt. Local Nazis had already acted in an “unheard of” provocative manner on the evening of the elections at the end of 1929 during a *Reichsbanner* procession on the *Anger*, yelling in order to provoke a *Reichsbanner* response. Now the editors noted that this “bold association” was shifting back over to acts of violence.

The aims of these Nazi provocations were clear to the editors of the *Tribüne*: the Nazis “insanely” believed that they could draw their political opponents into physical confrontations, challenge the working classes with impunity, demonstrate the cowardice and impotence of *Reichsbanner* activists, draw more working class men away from the folds of Social Democratic and Communist organizations and ultimately become masters of the political situation in Erfurt. Yet the editors offered a counter emotional economy that translated the threat of Nazism into a display of working class fearlessness, simultaneously intended to instill fear in their Nazi opponents. They denigrated Nazi activists as “politically immature urchins” and “political children” and diminished the threat that increasingly aggressive Nazi activism posed. They claimed that Erfurt’s working classes were fed up with the “brash actions” of these Nazi bands. They asserted that workers would not allow themselves to be drawn out of their “calm dispositions” and would carry out their activities with “calm and reason.” They would remain disciplined and not allow situations to devolve into violent clashes so long as the police “held the provocateurs in check,” but there were limits, the editors declared, which incited even the calmest and most reasonable workers and “struck another chord.” If it came to violence,
as the editors predicted, Erfurt’s working classes were strong enough to protect themselves.

In the spring of 1930, however, the reports of the Tribüne increasingly conveyed the impression that Nazis were acting like barbarians, affecting an atmosphere of terror in places they controlled, physically assaulting communities in surrounding regions where they had little influence and invoking the fear of German civilization’s potential to lapse back into an uncivilized state.

In a report from the “Hakenkreuz-Paradise of Coburg,” for example, the editors of the Tribüne described how the attempts to organize public events critical of nationalist politics were thwarted by the fear of Nazi violence. In response to an attempt to organize a people’s assembly on the theme “Stahlhelm and Hakenkreuz are Germany’s Downfall,” for example, the owner of the scheduled assembly hall informed the organizers of the event, the Free Trade Unions in Coburg, that they could not hold the meeting because the text of their placards would force him to take “exceptional measures of security” that were apparently too much to ask of him in the Nazi-dominated town.

In the neighboring state of Hesse, the editors of the Tribüne also reported on one of the increasingly “well known” forms of attack by the “Hakenkreuz-Barbarians” on the citizens of Michelstadt in the Odenwald. It was not fully clear what all had prompted the Nazi attack, but according to the editors of the Tribüne, the police had determined that the district director of Erbach had forbidden all processions in Michelstadt. The NS chose not to follow the ban and proceeded to process through the town. They stopped roughly in the middle of the town and began to bombard some of the houses and residents.

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496 “Aus dem Hakenkreuz-Paradies Koburg,” Tribüne, April 10, 1930.
standing nearby with stones. They then sprang from their trucks and began hitting the completely surprised populace with leather straps. One sign of the unparalleled brutality of Nazi attacks, according to the editors of the Tribüne, was the fact that a child was so severely injured by a stone thrown from a Nazi hand that the child fell to the ground and had to be carried away from the scene. In total, seven residents were severely injured in the attack, many from stones thrown at their heads. Proof that the Nazis had planned this attack, the editors pointed out, was the fact that they brought the stones with them on their trucks. As they drove away, they yelled threatening calls in chorus like, “Blood must flow!” and “Revenge!” Since such clashes had occurred in many places throughout Hessen, and were also to be feared for the future, the Hessian Minister of the Interior Leuchner decided to forbid all NS events in the district of Erbach. As a sign of the deeper source of the trouble in his district, he also forbade the appearance of the Frankfurter Nazis in Hessen.

Sensing the growing threat as the Nazis appeared to permeate the everyday life and politics of surrounding towns and cities, while orchestrating the suppression of nationalist dissent and instilling feelings of hope and enthusiasm, the editors of the Tribüne continued to draw their readers’ attention to reports in the fall of 1931 that documented how the Nazis terrorized ordinary Germans and anticipated a more systematic, nationwide Nazi attempt to seize power.

In an article entitled, “Hakenkreuz-Terror in Gera,” for example, the editors of the Tribüne described a series of “blows” to the stomachs of the innkeepers in Gera and rhetorically asked their readers, if the editors of the MZ or TAZ had any response to the
latest evidence of Nazi terror. According to their investigation, Nazi organizers had circulated a document among the innkeepers of Gera on August 24, 1931 and a copy of that document had somehow landed on their desk. Unable or unwilling to explain the origins of the document or verify the source any further, they chose to print the “relevant parts” for their readers to see for themselves:

As in July of the previous year, the NSDAP is holding its Gautag for Thuringia again on the 5th and 6th of September in Gera. The regional traffic was so heavy in our city last year that a much larger stream of traffic is expected from the outside because of the rapid growth of Hitler’s movement. Local businesses stand to profit from this event. The guiding maxim of both wings of the Marxists, the SPD and the KPD is: “And if you do not want to be my brother, then I will break your skull!!” Therefore we believe: who is not for us and does not clearly express their conviction with deeds, is against us and should not do any business through us and our people. We expect proof of your friendly attitude that you at least hoist flags, wreaths and pennants on the outside of your buildings (Swastika, Black-white-red or red-white). Green decorations will be delivered free of charge upon request. It should be noted that we will only recommend those locales to our party members and associates for reasons of security and politics, which indicate their friendly opinion through the right decorations. We would further welcome it, if you want to support us for this day with free quartering for our guests.

The Nazi circular was interesting in so far as it employed the economic-generating power of Nazi activism as a technique of terror to first motivate local business people to demonstrate their support for the Nazi movement and provide a measure of security for Nazi supporters in the process. Moreover, invoking the fear of Marxism served to justify the exclusivity of Nazi politics and heighten the expectation that local business people who wanted Nazi business would display the proper signs of support for Nazi activists and their politics – the traditional greens, evocative of German culture, were of course free of charge. Those who did not support the Nazis stood to lose Nazi business.

The editors of the *Tribüne*, however, used the Nazi circular in an attempt to put more pressure on its local middle class media competitors, by singling them out for their anti-Marxist bias and moral cowardice in order to heighten the expectation that the TAZ and MZ should take a stand against Nazi acts of terror. Those papers, they explained, had so “bravely belittled” the Social Democrats in Erfurt, when they announced their monitoring of the electoral sites for a recent plebiscite, and played the role of moral judges, despite the fact that the Social Democrats did not exercise economic pressure on anyone. So they wanted to know if the TAZ and MZ would disavow Nazi terror and they expected an answer, but they were prepared to take no answer for an answer, as they explained, since it would be too difficult for the TAZ and MZ to give an answer.

Such attempts to publicly embarrass their local middle class nationalist counterparts had little or no effect, especially since those middle class nationalist newspapers clearly set aside any moral misgivings about Nazi politics because of the Nazis ability to instill hope in national unity and rejuvenation among more and more Germans and neutralize any opposition to a unified national front, especially stemming from radical working class activism.

For the editors of the *Tribüne*, however, there were other signs of a growing fear of Nazi terror throughout Germany. In the middle of September, they reported the “loud-mouthed heroics” of pastors who increasingly incited their congregations in support of the Nazi movement and justified any sense of transgressing sacred commandments that Nazi supporters may have felt about supporting Nazi politics.\(^\text{499}\) In Hademarschen, for example, a small town in Holstein, a pastor named Treplin held a service for a Nazi assembly. In his sermon he stated that “the Nazis were called by God to free the German

\(^{499}\) “Nationalistisches Maulheldentum,” *Tribüne*, September 17, 1931.
fatherland from the godless and the Communist bands of murderers.” In another town, Glückstadt, a Protestant pastor spoke at a Nazi gathering and declared among other things: “Behind every murdered SA man we do not see the assassin, but the face of the Social Democratic Police Chief, which we bury in our hearts. And the day will come, when we ask the Lord in Heaven, to forgive that we trespass against the Commandment of Love thy Neighbor.”

And as the anniversary of the Nazi Putsch in 1923 approached in early November, the editors of the *Tribüne* helped spread the rumors circulating around Erfurt that another Nazi putsch was planned for the anniversary of the first Nazi attempt to overthrow the government. As further evidence, they printed a copy of a flier that instructed members of the local Hitler Youth organization on how to carry out military training activities and decried the fact that local authorities were doing nothing to stop the Hitler Youth from preparing.500 And one day later, the editors of the *Tribüne* reported on the arrival of Nazi terror in nearby Weimar in the form of the “bestial mishandling” of a socialist youth activist.501 As a result, the editors believed that the reports of Nazi provocations across the nation were in fact evidence of a more systematic Nazi action. Heavy clashes had already taken place with republican supporters in Gera and Jena and they continued to draw nearer with the attack in Weimar.

In a sign of the fear that these disparate reports and rumors were instilling throughout the town, the editors of the *Tribüne* tried to shore up and reunify working class resolve in the face of a looming confrontation with the Nazis, in effect retranslating

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the fear of Nazism into a fearless working class opposition to Nazi terror. They first assured their readers that the workers and their defense formations were on guard. Then they reminded their readers that workers had proven in the Kapp Putsch that they would also defend their social rights and institutions, even if it meant with their lives. Nazi phrases did not frighten the “fighting spirit” of those who defended the republic and they did not stand alone against Nazi activism. They pointed out that the unions stood side by side with the Social Democratic Party and the defense organizations in order to throw their full power on the scales, if the “reactionary bands” of Hakenkreuz and Stahlhelm decided to seize power. The closer the workers drew together in the defense organizations, the editors explained, the more they would stop the criminal activities of the “brown Terror-Assault Troops” in their tracks. “Now is the time,” they urged: “Close ranks and join the Schufo, the Reichsbanner republican defense organization of the working classes.”

In another article, they explained that the workers in the town and country had to fight, united hand in hand, and form a wall of defense. They claimed that local SA and SS units were fed up with the legal political path that Hitler had sworn and they preferred to start fighting sooner rather than later. The Nazi Reichstag delegate, Stöhr, had even found an excuse to relinquish the vow of legality in a speech which he held on October 30, 1931 in the Munich Löwenbräukeller: “If the masters of the current system were to dare a coup, then the vow of legality would no longer hold for the Nazis.” And Wilhelm Frick had reportedly stated in Frankfurt that the Nazis would eliminate Marxism root and branch within 24 hours after seizing power along the lines of the “Italian model.”

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503 “Unser Weg,” Tribüne, November 11, 1931, third supplement.
would not happen through the police or by legal means,” Dr. Frick had apparently explained, but through the “wrath of the people,” and “naturally a few ten thousands of Marxist functionaries will be injured.” So in the estimation of the editors of the Tribüne, the all out battle was approaching in the New Year and would follow in the footsteps of the general test that had occurred in Braunschweig. But this battle, the editors warned, would be a battle “beyond comparison” with any other.

The Nazis did not attempt to seize power in early 1932 as the editors of the Tribüne had predicted, but local media increasingly perceived waves of terror from all sides in the summer of 1932. The MZ, for example, published numerous reports of Communist attacks occurring throughout Germany and warned of a “Red murder campaign raging in Erfurt” that targeted Nazis, working class dissenters and police in North Erfurt.504 The TAZ, by comparison, also conveyed the Nazis’ increasingly open threats against their opponents.505 According to one report, Josef Goebbels claimed that the German people knew that the current national cabinet was only a transition and that the Nazis were the real power behind this cabinet. “The Nazi movement would remain legal until the last minute,” Goebbels insisted, “but people would be hanged (Gehenkt wird doch).”

Therefore, with the swearing in of the “Cabinet of the Barons” at beginning of June 1932, the editors of the Tribüne believed that the “die had been cast,” and at the local level, the editors believed that the end of national parliamentary government meant

505 “Goebbels will henken,” TAZ, July 3, 1932.
the beginning of a new wave of Nazi terror directed at working class activists. 506 Consequently, the editors of the Tribüne announced the Social Democratic Party’s “Declaration of Battle” to their readers at the beginning of July 1932. 507 In their estimation, the national cabinet of barons, along with a supporting cast of generals, industrial magnates and large landowners, appeared ready to tolerate the Nazis. It was equally telling, they pointed out, that this avowed “Workers Party” had declared its willingness to tolerate the openly anti-working class national cabinet, and both the Centre Party and the Bavarian People’s Party rejected any open opposition to the national cabinet and the Nazis.

In reality, the editors claimed, the Nazis only viewed the cabinet of barons as a transition to their own rule. “After their conditions were met,” they explained, “the Nazis hoped to reshape the future Reichstag through the use of bloody terror and the most brutal deployment of Hitler’s private army.” The editors of the Tribüne argued that it was now the task of the organized working classes and Social Democracy to subvert this plan and they assured their readers that resistance was highly possible, if the working classes fully uncovered the “game of the Reaction.”

In response to the Social Democratic call to battle, local working class activists assembled as many workers and their families as possible to bring the “Iron Front” to life in the public spaces of Erfurt and collectively manage the fear that an imminent Nazi attack instilled. Units of the Reichsbanner, representatives of the unions and an honor guard of working class women formed three “freedom columns” with their red and black-

red-gold banners at the *Wilhelmsplatz*, where many listeners had gathered. In a short speech, comrade Schulz, the chairperson of Erfurt’s local SPD, attempted to encourage his listeners. “The Iron Front,” he assured his listeners, “aimed to hinder Nazi plans.” Scholz also criticized the Communist Party in its attempt to disrupt the Iron Front and warned against the Nazi and Communist intentions to destroy working class organization.

According to the description of the event, the procession moved through the *Brühler* quarter, across the *Kartäuserring*, and *Löberring* through the *Leipziger* quarter and attempted to project fearlessness and courage for working class activists and supporters of the republic. Accompanied by the music of the *Reichsbanner* choir and the Socialist Workers’ Youth, the “Freedom Fighters” of the Iron Front marched “earnestly and decisively” for the defense of the social rights of workers and their organizations. They were greeted with excited calls for freedom from the honor guard of the working class women and girls, as well as the entire republican and working class people who gathered along the route. The forward storming youth marched side by side with the old, battle-tested class warriors.

For individual readers, the editors of the *Tribüne* presented a portrait of working class politics and their emotional economy in the face of the looming threat of Nazism. It was “the heart beating underneath that counted,” they explained “the men of steel and iron knew what they and their class had to lose at the work bench, the writing desk and stamp counter when the fascists or a military dictatorship came to power.” The editors also drew their readers attention to the “decisive countenances” and the “enthusiasm when they hammered the calls of ‘Freedom!’ into the workers with their choruses,” to demonstrate the collective courage of workers in the face of Nazi terror and convince

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508 “Strasse frei für die Eiserne Front!” *Tribüne*, July 4, 1932, third supplement.
their readers that it was time “to raise up balled fists as a symbol of the battle for freedom so that one day they would not have to ball them up in their pockets.” As for the effects of this working class display of fearlessness, unity and strength, the editors pointed to the fact that barely any brown uniforms had been seen on the entire path of the procession. “When the Iron Front marched,” the editors explained, “the SA hid in their mouse holes, and it would remain that way, if the workers were only unified.”

At the end of June 1930, the editors of the Tribüne also warned its readers of the likely “Judas role” of the Communist Party, thereby invoking the old fear of working class disunity. The editors claimed to have discovered a secret letter of the Thuringian Communist Party circulated among their district leaders, which detailed a “false game” with the anti-fascist action of the Iron Front. Then, in response to unruly signs of behavior among some local Communist activists during that year’s May Day events, the Tribüne published a letter to the editor from a formerly “non-partisan” worker under the headline, “Outrage over Communist Troublemakers.”

According to the author of the letter, a troop of Communists had appeared after the Iron Front procession had passed through the Pergamerstrasse, and included one intoxicated man who spoke wildly of the “Red Front.” The author pointed out that the Communists said nothing as they passed by the Nazis standing in front of their headquarters at the Bauernschenke on the Wilhelmsplatz (Figure 24). Yet as the representative from the Iron Front spoke, the drunken Communist began to scream the most foolish things. The police had to intervene, and as the author pointed out, the Nazis were able to watch the show from afar as the workers fought with each other and the

police. The Communists attempted to cause further disturbances after the march, but again they let the Nazis alone. From this author’s view, local Communist activities invoked the fear of working class disunity and darker fears of working class cowardice and treachery in the face of their enemies.

Figure 24. Photo of the Bauernschenke, the local Nazi headquarters (the tallest building just to the right of the anonymous man’s head), located on the Wilhelmsplatz, ca. 1937.\textsuperscript{511}

At the beginning of July 1932, the editors of the Tribüne believed that they could finally see the beginning of the Nazi attempt to seize power unfold, initiated in the name of Nazi self defense and national defense against a perceived wave of Communist terror with an assault on local working class activism.\textsuperscript{512} On Sunday, July 3, according to the editors of the Tribüne, Adolf Hitler declared that “the SA would not allow its rights to be taken from them in the streets and would invoke the right to self defense against the ‘red

\textsuperscript{511} StVAE, V4.
\textsuperscript{512} “Neue Herausforderung durch SA,” Tribüne, July 5, 1932.
terror,’ if no one else suppressed it.” Consequently, the SA tested its “Break the Red Terror” campaign on July 4 in Erfurt and more importantly, appeared to draw upon the assistance of local police leadership for the first time in provoking Erfurt’s working class activists and neutralizing working class opposition. From the perspective of the Tribüne, several local police appeared nervous, as if coerced into action by Nazi machinations of terror. “No one heard about ‘Severing Police’ anymore,” they decried, referring to those police officers once loyal to the Republic. And in this case, the large police presence allowed the Nazis to carry out their latest provocation of Erfurt’s workers with impunity, leaving working class activists feeling fully exposed for the first time to all of the powers of the state in the hands of their enemies.

According to the eyewitness report of one their editors, the Nazis assembled at the Wilhelmsplatz at 6:30PM in order to march toward the working class part of town in the north. Because this was known, the eyewitness report explained, numerous groups of people, overwhelmingly Nazi opponents, gathered in the streets, which the Nazis had announced as their march route. One after another, the individual “Storms” of the SA and the Hitler Youth gathered. In the editors’ estimation, the local SA did not even reach six hundred men in strength. But two to three hundred SA men were transported from surrounding areas including nearby Arnstadt, Weissensee and Gebesee, as well as from even more distant places, aboard several trucks, mostly provided by the Erfurt Garden Company. Many looked like farm boys, who appeared to have been suited up for the first time in uniforms and even with these “rural offerings” the Nazis only set exactly 820 men in motion, including their Hitler Youth units.
But they entered like the Prussians, according to the eyewitness. The Stormtrooper leaders yelled like former sergeants. They marched straight ahead toward the north. At first, there were no clashes, but when they arrived at the area of the North Park, the situation became threatening. At the bridge to the Karlstrasse more than a thousand workers had gathered ahead of time and greeted the Nazi procession with mocking and enraged yells. The police, who were deployed with several personnel carriers, then cleared the area and the workers withdrew to the side streets.

The behavior of the police appeared inexplicable to the editors of the Tribüne, but also indicated a possible degree of Nazi coercion. For some unknown reason, the editors could not understand, the police chief had permitted the Nazis to turn from the Storcmühlenweg and pass along the Nordstrasse toward the Papiermühlenweg, in order to pass by the working class locale, the Erholung, where the first clash with the SA occurred. Police officers were repeatedly dispatched against the masses of working class activists and they carried out “cleansing actions,” especially at the Johannesplatz. Many innocent bystanders received blows with rubber truncheons, but the eyewitness added that some of the police officers leading the actions appeared rather nervous in executing their orders.

The mood of the working class people became more and more excited, according to the eyewitness, and the sense of outrage increased, when whole “Storms” of Nazis were finally deployed in support of the police. They set upon the masses of working class activists and bystanders with unfastened shoulder straps. One of the Nazis, the eyewitness pointed out, was the former local Communist activist Max Berger, which seemed to reinforce the sense of Communist betrayal. Clashes intensified in the
Magdeburgerstrasse and the Johannesstrasse. Near the Harmonie locale many members of the “Iron Front” stood waiting. The SA attacked with balled fists held high and calls of freedom, all the while scattering printed fliers into the crowd. A criminal police detective arrested a Reichsbanner comrade for simply expressing his opinion, although he had in no way committed a violent act. By contrast, the editors pointed out, nothing happened when passersby informed a police officer that an SA man was hitting people with a steel rod. When they told another officer that the SA men were unfastening their shoulder straps, he simply replied, “Look somewhere else!”

The most serious clashes occurred in the Frankestrasse and Schlachthofstrasse and again, the eyewitness noted, a few police officers acted nervously during this action. An SA man was seriously injured in the head and brought to the police station. Two Communists were also injured in the head from stones thrown so that the bloodied had to be taken away. Another Communist was purportedly stabbed with a knife by a Nazi in the Udestedter Strasse. A young man was arrested, who had a bag full of stones and another young man was arrested in the Roonstrasse, who also had stones in his possession, but no one could determine who threw the stones.

From here, the Nazi march proceeded without clashes as they entered the “better” quarters of town. There, the eyewitness noted, one could also observe more of those women who were crazy for Hitler. Indeed, one of these so called mothers from a “better” house went so wild with joy that her “innocent children” continued screaming “Heil Hitler!” as the Nazis marched by.

From the eyewitness report, both working class and Nazi activists had displayed fearlessness in their clashes with each other, which was the desired emotional display
cultivated by their opposing emotional economies. Yet the report itself revealed the fear of working class leaders that they were now powerless to respond against the Nazis, who could rely on the police to control working class opposition and ignore Nazi assaults, something which had not happened in the past in Erfurt, and perhaps even the fanatical expressions of support from ordinary Germans like the last image of the woman and her children screaming “Heil Hitler” in apparent joy.

The nervousness that the eyewitness attributed to the some of the police, however, is a bit more problematic since the details of their emotional expressions are unknown beyond the fact that they were forced into action between angry mobs of working class activists and Nazis intent on provoking violent working class responses. The nervousness of the police in this case was at the very least the result of Nazis provoking workers and the policemen’s sense of responsibility to prevent violent clashes, but the move away from impartiality in police procedure toward outright police support of Nazi actions suggests that some police felt uncomfortable in their new roles, knowing the expectations that working class activists, some of whom they probably knew personally, placed on them to uphold the laws fairly and conscious of repercussions from pro-Nazi officers and Nazi activists for not following their orders.

The Nazi assault on working class activism in Erfurt at the beginning of July 1932 therefore foreshadowed the national government’s dismissal of Social Democratic leaders on July 20 in Prussia, the so-called Preussenschlag, which national government leaders had initiated based on the pretext of clashes between Communists and Nazis in Altona-Hamburg and marked a key turning point in local working class emotional economies. The Nazi assault on working class activism in Erfurt was organized from the ground up
and received the support of local police authorities who had either been installed by Nazi efforts in transforming the government of Thuringia or coerced into supporting Nazi aims of persecuting working class opponents. The symbolic capstone of all these efforts to assert Nazi politics in Erfurt was Hitler’s very first visit to the city on July 26, 1932, which included a march of 5000 Stormtroopers through the old inner city and culminated in a large rally in the town’s new stadium that attracted 60,000 people to hear Hitler proclaim, “the largest movement that Germany has ever experienced.”\textsuperscript{513} The editors of the \textit{Tribüne}, however, put the consequences of this political sea change in other terms: local Nazi activists could now attack working class activists with impunity and those working class activists who resisted were beginning to “wander to the dungeon.”\textsuperscript{514}

Finally, for local Jewish newspaper editors, the unfolding of Nazi power signaled “Nazi Terror without End” in the summer of 1932.\textsuperscript{515} According to their reports, antisemitic acts of terror, threats and insults were increasingly becoming unbearable.\textsuperscript{516} There was evidence arriving from some towns like Brieg, that some non-Jewish citizens were spreading frightening rumors, claiming that Jewish citizens were storing arms and ammunition in the synagogue to fulfill another long circulating rumor that Jews intended to kill non-Jewish Germans.\textsuperscript{517} Yet from all over the \textit{Reich}, reports continued to come in that verified just the opposite: non-Jewish Germans were increasingly harassing Jewish Germans, painting their homes red in the city of Plauen to identify them as part and parcel of the Marxist enemy, bombing the synagogue and Karstadt department store in Kiel, inciting antisemitic violence in Leipzig, carrying out grenade attacks against Jewish

\textsuperscript{513} Compare Raßloff, 393-394.
\textsuperscript{514} “39 Monate Gefängnis für fünf Arbeiter,” \textit{Tribüne}, August 30, 1932, first supplement.
\textsuperscript{515} “Nazi Terror ohne Ende,” \textit{Wochenblatt}, August 12, 1932, 312.
\textsuperscript{516} “Rund um die antisemitische Woche,” \textit{Wochenblatt}, July 29, 1932, 301.
\textsuperscript{517} Ibid., 301.
homes in Breslau and numerous other cities in Upper Silesia and East Prussia and overrunning Jewish merchants in the market of Danzig.\(^{518}\) Only in the reports coming in from places like Königsberg, did any sense of calm and order seem to prevail. There had been acts of antisemitic violence there too, but the large physical presence of police on every major street corner along with extra mounted patrols and well organized, angry working class activists appeared to deter any uniformed Nazis from revealing themselves in the city’s public spaces. Striking fear into Nazi activists was therefore still possible, given the right constellation of impartial police and working class, pro-republican resistance, but in much of Germany, it appeared as if the Nazis now had the upper hand against the police, working class activists and Jewish citizens.

Chapter Summary.

The Nazis strategically decided to pursue legal means to power and cultivate electoral support for their politics, even distancing the party and its leaders from the violent actions of its grassroots activists in order to maintain the façade of their respectability and legality. Yet invoking the fears of ordinary Germans played a key role, both in imagining the enemies of the nation and attracting Germans to Nazism by translating those fears into a sense of Nazi boldness and therefore hope that the Nazis could not only defend the nation, but reunify it, strengthen it, rejuvenate it, even heal it, and save it, thus assuaging the fears of ordinary Germans and justifying the elimination of any threats to the nation. More so than local patrician leaders, Nazi activists more openly characterized the threats that faced the German nation in more racial terms and interestingly, imagined the possibility that the German nation would either rise or fall

\(^{518}\) “Nazi Terror ohne Ende,” *Wochenblatt*, August 12, 1932, 312.
with the Nazi movement, thus laying in a sense, the groundwork for a catastrophic vision of nationalism.

The Nazi list of enemies drew upon earlier figures of the Marxist threat and combinations with the “Jew,” but Nazi activists also went after Spießer, i.e., undesirable middle class traits, again drawing on earlier radical rightwing criticisms of the passive, law-abiding citizen, in order to articulate the fearless, aggressive and even violent if necessary notion of the German citizen committed to fate of the nation. The Nazis therefore heightened expectations for how middle class citizens, particularly men, should respond to the threats that Nazi activists invoked, manage their feelings and prepare themselves to transgress established German values.

In the case of Erfurt, middle class media generally helped facilitate the emotional translations of Nazi politics. They sustained the sense of national peril, invoking the threat of radical working class politics, and they drew attention to Nazi activities, reinforcing the intentions of Nazi activists to instill feelings of hope, excitement for Hitler’s leadership and the capacity of Nazi activities to instill fear in their common opponents. Some local middle class editors expressed their sense of skepticism in regards to the return of the Nazi movement, even offering sobering accounts about Nazi activities, but they tended to turn a blind eye away from Nazi transgressions and acts of terror and urge their readers to accept the radical forms of Nazi politics as necessary in order to suppress, if not eliminate their political opponents.

The success of inter-party opposition to Nazi rule by decree and its threat to Nazi interests in Thuringia made nationalist dissent the immediate target of Nazi techniques of terror, including not only physical assaults on targeted nationalist dissenters, but also the
invocations of fears about national treachery and disunity, as well as more ordinary concerns like the chances for future economic opportunity, that raised the expectations for ordinary Germans to conform to the Nazi vision of the nation and thereby suppressed much of the local nationalist sources of dissent to further Nazi aims.

The nerves of local policemen are one of the interesting findings in this research on the effects of Nazi politics. Among their various decrees during their control of Thuringia’s state government, the Nazis made the purge of key state policemen and the placement of pro-Nazi activists in their places an important goal that enabled local Nazi cells to coerce non-compliant officers who remained and thereby attack their opponents with increasing impunity in the last year of the republic. The loss of local police protection therefore exposed the most vulnerable groups to further Nazi violence, including working class activists, especially the most radical among them, i.e., the Communists, Jewish citizens and groups even harder to glimpse in the historical record but most likely present in significant numbers, e.g., other minorities, Poles, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals and Jehovah’s Witnesses.
Chapter 8
Conclusions

I originally set out in this dissertation project to render fear more visible in the historical records and then gain understanding into the effects of fear in the everyday lives of ordinary people in the Weimar Republic. Fear is by no means the only emotion that merits consideration for historical study, but the history of fear in any case is also neither one dimensional or static, and contains a whole host of hidden anxieties and fears, as well as pride and joy. This project has therefore cast a wide net for the signs of fear and related discursive records, sources of cultural influence, traces of subjectivity, physiological indications, verbal expressions, behaviors, agencies, performances, social realities, collective experiences and politics, both local and national, in order to explain the phenomena of fear and their effects on ordinary people’s lives and politics.

One of the theoretical assumptions underlying the approach of this study suggests that people can in fact not only express fear in a myriad of ways from complete inaction to flight or fight-type responses, but also translate their fears and anxieties into other emotional displays of anger, fearlessness and courage among others. That said, there are still distinctly different emotions involved in the everyday life and politics of the Weimar Republic and the history of any of these emotions, including fear, have older, broader histories not necessarily defined by modern nation states and nationalism and more universally shared than accepted across the boundaries of national political cultures. Even these superficial comparisons, however, require closer comparative study that I would like to address in my future work.
Questions still linger about how to pierce widely held assumptions about collective understandings of Nazi terror, how much the case of modern Germany reflects a unique or universal history of fear and how to apply this historical knowledge of fear to other historical cases or contemporary events. On the one hand, the recent research on how terror operated in the context of Nazi dictatorship and genocide has led to a wealth of new information in other case studies about colonial projects, fascist dictatorships, and totalitarian regimes, and how practices of terror not only operated through different ideologies, state institutions and their agents, but also through the actions of ordinary people and everyday life, and even forced more sobering reflections about western democracies and the potentials for persecution and violence common to all peoples.

From this viewpoint, the phenomena of fear begin to appear more and more similar regardless of different cases. Admittedly, this is due in part to the application of approaches derived from the study of modern Germany, and requires further interdisciplinary reflection for a more in-depth comparative study. Yet there are striking parallels in the phenomena of fear in other nation states with different cultural sources and political practices. On the other hand, there are also salient differences or shades of distinction in the nature of national polities, local communities and the commitment to civic values in the face of fear that also require more consideration.

There was, for instance, a widespread sense of optimism and hope in the future of the new German nation, but there was also a dark side to progress that produced anxieties and fears about social and economic changes that could be found elsewhere in Europe and North America. Nowhere, perhaps, were there so many different insecurities over national identity as in Germany, the “late nation” of Europe, but the fragility of political
identities and the sense of belonging produced sources of anxiety and fear in other places too. Ordinary fears of things like death, disease, homelessness, family, unemployment, rising prices, social status, crime, profiteering and religious damnation or salvation were common elsewhere; so too were the ideal visions for how men and women should manage their feelings and overcome them if necessary.

If anything, it appears unusual that some local activists increasingly pointed out the rather vaguely defined but growing presence of enemies in their midst around the turn of the century in Germany, urging more and more ordinary people, regardless of their gender, to act more vigilantly in defense of their homes and nation and pass these ideals on to the next generation in the anticipation of future attacks. Yet in other places too there were discussions and debates about hardening young people, particularly young men, against the fears and pains of life and preparing them to face the threats to their nations with fearless displays of courage. Women, too, had been asked to do their part in their families and in public activities in face of threats to the nation and would do so again. Radical working class activism and anarchism were also common threats elsewhere too. Even the emergence of notions of eliminatory forms of politics and violence does not appear so unique in the case of modern Germany when compared with the antisemitic furor over the Dreyfus Affair in France, the escalation of violence in the colonial experience or the increasing frequency with which antisemitic violence transgressed the usually symbolic boundaries of pogroms in Russia, Eastern and Central Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, as Helmut Walser Smith has suggested. There were several potential sources for increasingly lethal forms of eliminatory violence at the turn the Twentieth Century.
The events of the First World War, however, mark a crucial turning point in German emotional economies and the changing local contexts of fear. The combination of defeat, growing economic crisis and intensifying ideological conflicts made Germany’s case and a few other national and imperial cases unusual in comparison with those nations and empires proclaimed victorious. For all countries and peoples involved, war brought death and destruction in very visceral ways, but for the collapsing nations and empires of old Europe, the war precipitated the breakdown of the collective emotional economy of Imperial Germany. The threat of revolution and counterrevolution brought about the first transgressions of ethical and moral values in relationship to fellow citizens and made the suspension of those values feel logical in the face of perceived realities of fear. Again, the moral and ethical consequences of invoking fear in politics is by no means inevitable, but the assault on German civic values and social relationships and its eventual culmination in the “catastrophic nationalism” of the Nazi regime still make the case of modern German an exceptional case to be heeded but also compared.

By the time the Nazis seized power in early 1933, local Jewish and non-Jewish relations had deteriorated to the point that many German communities were not only politically but also racially defined by the fear of antisemitic violence instilled through otherwise ordinary experiences of everyday life. The effects of this fear were also more varied than simple inactivity or shock. Both Jewish and non-Jewish Germans actively translated their fears into different displays of emotion, ethical and moral values and behavior, which, on the one hand, supported the defense of republican government, civil society and interracial relationships, but on the other, drove the assault on civil society and the racial delineation of central German communities in the late Weimar Republic.
Moreover, nationalists who dissented or even whole communities who resisted Nazi politics faced the threat of social, economic and even physically violent reprisals for breaking the ranks of the national front that local Nazi and *Stahlhelm* activists defended in the last years of free elections in the Weimar Republic.

Jehovah’s Witnesses like Johannes Schindler could still expect police protection when they wanted to proselytize in public spaces in neighboring states and cities like Magdeburg in Saxony-Anhalt, but in Erfurt and other towns and cities in Thuringia, the police protection of civilians effectively ended in the summer of 1932, even before the end of the Social Democrat-led government in Prussia in late July, which translated into an advantage for local Nazi activists, who could then act with a significantly greater degree of immunity from police prosecution, and at the same time, the disadvantage of their opponents, mainly local Communist and Social Democratic activists who continued to call as many of their supporters to the streets in the desperate hopes of motivating them to acts of courage and opposition to the coming of the Nazi regime.

When Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933, Kurt Wallach (b. in 1926 in Magdeburg) recalls that his father, a locally known “Nazi-basher,” came home and said they were leaving immediately because he believed that he would be killed. So the family left Magdeburg the next morning and moved to Scheveningen, Holland, a suburb of the Hague. His father left a fortune in Germany, Kurt explains. He just turned the key to the store and that was it, adding that their family voluntarily went from great wealth to near poverty.

For Jack Minc (b. 1926 in Gotha) everything “suddenly changed with Hitler in 1933.” The old teachers were dismissed and replaced with new teachers who taught the
new ideology. When the teacher entered, they had to salute (here Jack gives the Nazis greeting), and say the prayer for the Führer, “Schütze Herr mit starker Hand unser Volk und Vaterland” (“Lord, protect our Volk and fatherland with a strong hand”). The teacher would stand in front of Jack during this opening exercise, hit him and say, “You know you are not allowed to stand.”

There were new German songs and a new German geography to learn from his teacher with new figures to fear. The teacher talked of Czechoslovakia like “a dagger that could be used as a springboard to attack Germany,” and called the Jews traitors for stabbing Germany in the back and making Germany lose the First World War and all its imperial possessions. The teacher encouraged the whole class to blame Jack and punished the whole class until the children said, “The Jew did it.”

In early 1933, probably March, as she recalls, Eva Florheim’s father received a message from the police chief who lived below her family in the same building in Erfurt. The police chief had sent a note up with the maid, explaining that he had received an order for the arrest of Eva’s father. The man risked his life, Eva explains, since the maid could have discovered the message and possibly turned them in. Recalling the same experience as her sister Eva, Hanna Shay (b. in 1926 in Erfurt) adds that their father had been notoriously active against the Nazis. The note informed them that the police chief would not execute the order until the next day. Consequently, Eva’s father packed his suitcase, left that night and never came back to Erfurt. Instead, he went on to France and England to find a new place for the family to settle. Meanwhile, the maids packed the rest of the family’s necessary belongings all night and they left the next day for Switzerland. Eva remembers feeling excited to go to Switzerland since she knew the
story of Heidi. Hanna, however, adds that they only stayed in Switzerland for a couple of weeks and then returned to Erfurt, recalling that everything “seemed normal.”

Not even the terror that the Nazis instilled in their political opponents and racial targets was therefore constant. Yet within days of the first arrests of opposition leaders, local Nazi activists and other sympathetic authorities filled Thuringia’s Amts- and Landgerichtsgefängnisse to capacity and set up KZ Nohra, the first extra-judicial internment facility in all of Germany, at an airport about six kilometers from Weimar, guarded by former students of the local Heimatschule who served as deputy police. The number of prisoners reached two hundred by the middle of March 1933 at KZ Nohra, but the “wild camp” was dissolved within a few months, some of its prisoners released, others transferred to more permanent facilities elsewhere and bits and pieces of rumors of Nazi torture began to spread.

There were still reports of open acts of resistance in the region’s police and district attorney records, especially concerning the destruction of Nazi propaganda and property, even specially planted trees, but the political situation had clearly changed. Much of the fear of Nazi terror subsided as most Germans conformed to the Nazi regime, highlighted by local events such as the Day at Potsdam in March or the May Day celebration in 1933, both of which now culminated in mass spectacles and displays in the new sport stadium in the Steigerwald forest. Many people could probably sense a return to something akin to normality; they could even expect better times ahead, but many were now targeted, physically assaulted, publicly shamed, arrested, tortured or murdered in the Nazis’ final assault on what was left of German civil society. The veneer of normality must therefore have been rather thin and the visceral sense of fear and anxiety
right below the surface, but that is not what the recollections of ordinary Germans reveals.

The fear of Nazi violence subsided for most Germans and only continued to affect those individuals and groups that the Nazis openly targeted. It was not until the advent of the war, Robert Gellately argues, that Nazi rule again became more invasive, arbitrary and murderous. Yet even then, Germans continued to consent until the very end when “German-on-German terror became the order of the day.”

Other research, most notably from the personal memories of terror gathered through the oral history interviews conducted by Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, reinforces the view that Nazi terror was not universal in its application after 1933. Nazi terror immediately affected and continued to affect mostly Communist activists, Social Democratic leaders, independent labor leaders, Jewish German citizens and Jehovah’s Witnesses, but its effects on most Germans immediately declined after the initial “mini-wave” of terror in 1933. Nazi terror was therefore not necessary to control the majority of Germans because these groups could more effectively be persuaded by other means, particularly by fulfilling Nazi campaign promises to suppress the Communist threat, create jobs, combat crime, deal with deadbeat dads, rejuvenate a strong nation and purify it. The results of this dissertation research suggests that the Nazis also needed to fulfill the emotional expectations of hope, pride and joy that middle class and nationalist activists had translated from collective feelings of anxiety and fear.

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But the research in this dissertation project also indicates the need to rethink even this current understanding of how fear operated in Nazi forms of terror. Based on the archival evidence examined above, scholars can no longer simply start with 1933. They can no longer stop short of looking further than Nazi electoral strategies in the latter years of the Weimar Republic and they must pay closer attention to what Nazi activists and their nationalist allies achieved in the towns and cities of Thuringia after Hitler’s release from prison in 1925 by practices meant to instill fear as well as persuade.

This is no means to say that the fear of Nazi terror was inevitable. There had been waves of fear before in Germany, in which various groups had instilled different fears and anxieties, hopes, pride and joys in both their adherents and opponents, even resorting to open acts of violence as well as spectacular displays of unity and courage. Some ordinary people also rose up to defend their notions of civic values and social relationships, calling for moderation, law and order, cooperative forms of politics and the protection of innocent people, in some cases even risking their own lives for these beliefs and the lives of others, well into the Nazi regime.

Yet the rightwing assault on civic values, social relationships and politics in the name of a twisted notion of civic courage continued in the later years of the Weimar Republic and into the Nazi regime, culminating in the systematic arrests of Jewish men in November 1938, followed by their beatings, indiscriminate murder and general terror against their families, all with the intention of finally rendering the exclusion of neighboring people from their homes and private spaces, and purifying German communities in the process. The full reality of this fear, however, was distinctly different
from the one that was still unthinkable for most, that is, the systematic elimination of people racially defined.
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