

FACTIONALISM IN THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST
GERMAN WORKERS' PARTY, 1925-26: THE
MYTH AND REALITY OF THE
"NORTHERN FACTION"

FEW aspects of the history of the German Nazi party have received such scant scholarly attention as the nature of its factional¹ conflicts. Although references to intraparty conflicts may be found in most accounts dealing with the movement, no attempt has yet been made to make factional conflicts the subject of a thorough academic research.

Admittedly, factionalism was only of marginal significance in the history of the Nazi movement and this may well account for the lagging academic interest in the subject. In striking contrast to Socialist and Communist movements where factional conflicts have raised dramatic issues, frequently to the point of splitting these movements, and have been of lasting significance, the history of Nazi factionalism was neither so dramatic nor so enduring in its effects. The several Nazi factions passed out of existence without seriously affecting the course of party history. Factionalism did not split the movement, did not give rise to competing sets of leaders, did not seriously compromise Hitler's leadership and authority at any time, did not raise important questions of theory and, with the exception of 1934, did not result in mass purges.

But the failure of the Nazi factions can hardly justify the lack of academic interest in the subject. Indeed, it is exactly the impotence of the Nazi factions which should have raised some fundamental questions about the nature of factionalism in the movement. How, after all, can this failure be ex-

¹ The term "faction" is used here as a group of individuals joined together to further some particular goal in opposition to other groups belonging to the same association. "Faction" implies a certain degree of permanence resting on some organizational basis which tends to lend it a degree of independence and power as well. Finally, "faction" also tends to involve some basic issue, thereby calling into question the purpose of the group as a whole. This definition serves to distinguish factional conflicts from other kinds of intragroup disagreements which are personal in character and involve issues of no more consequence than the status of a particular individual in the association.

plained in view of the considerable organizational strength and able leaders that these factions possessed? The Working Association of North and West (the Northern Faction) in 1925-26, the *Kampfverlag* circle in 1926-30, and the Stormtroops (SA) until 1934 represented the most dynamic and powerful segments of the movement, yet when Hitler turned against them they dissolved without a trace. Why did these factions capitulate to Hitler so easily? Why did they not give rise to splinter movements? Why were the leaders of these factions, apparently so popular and powerful, abandoned by their followers at the crucial moment? Why were there no mass purges and why were Hitler's authority and leadership never in serious jeopardy? Why, in short, was the factional experience in the Nazi party so radically different from the factional conflicts in the Socialist and Communist parties?

Answers to these questions presuppose an extensive comparative study, a requirement which cannot be satisfied in an article. The present essay is merely the first step in this direction and constitutes only a part of a more comprehensive study of factionalism. The purpose of this article is partly historical, partly conceptual and comparative. In the first sense, it attempts to fill a neglected aspect of historical research. The character and nature of the Northern Faction has long been the subject of facile and superficial generalizations which have obscured most of the peculiarities of Nazi factionalism. This has been partly due to the lack of available primary source materials on the internal aspects of the Nazi movement in the post-1925 period. The American Historical Association's Berlin Document Center microfilm project has made such material available in this country and has made this study possible.

The second objective of this essay is to suggest hypotheses concerning the pattern of factional behavior in the Nazi party on the basis of this research² in the hope that these might yield useful analytical tools for comparative studies. In particular, this essay will suggest a direct relationship between the pattern of intragroup conflicts and the nature of legitimacy operative in the group. The charismatic principle

² Although the *Kampfverlag* was the creation of the Northern Faction and also served to perpetuate some of the ideas and aspirations of the northern leaders of 1925-26, it constituted a separate experience in the history of the movement and will be, therefore, excluded from this analysis.

of legitimacy appears to have had a direct influence on the nature of factionalism in the Nazi party, while the ideological nature of legitimacy in Socialist and Communist movements seems to have influenced the character of factional conflicts in those movements. If this hypothesis is valid, a study of factional conflicts might be a promising back-door approach to a comparative study of political movements.

I

The year 1924 marks the passing of a distinct phase of National Socialism. Prior to that date the movement was regional, largely restricted to Bavaria and to the southern part of Germany. Its political orientation was strongly identified with the nationalism of the forces of the Right and the military. Its propaganda and organizational activities were predicated on the idea of a *putsch*.³

TABLE 14
THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS, 1923-25

Districts	Number of Local Party Organizations	
	1923	1925
A. Southern Districts:		
Bayerische Ostmark	75	57
Oberbayern	22	16
Württemberg-Hohenzollern	37	20
Schwaben	32	16
Mainfranken	24	13
Franken	22	18
B. Northern Districts:		
Düsseldorf	10	20
Essen	3	9
Berlin	1	9
Kurhessen	5	15
Mecklenburg	0	14
Osthannover	0	11
Pommern	3	10
Sachsen	27	88
Südhanover	8	40
Thüringen	14	46

³ The obsolescence of *putschist* tactics had already been pointed out by Feder in August 1923. In his letter to Hitler of August 10, he urged Hitler to pay greater attention to organizational matters. "The times of the *condottieri* have passed," he warned. Oron James Hale, "Gottfried Feder Calls Hitler to Order. An Unpublished Letter on Nazi Party Affairs," *Journal of Modern History*, XXX (1958), 359.

⁴ Wolfgang Schaefer, *NSDAP. Entwicklung und Struktur der Staatspartei des dritten Reiches* (Hannover and Frankfurt/M., 1957), 11.

Beginning with 1924 a considerable shift of emphasis took place in each of these concerns of the party. As a result of Gregor Strasser's organizational talents and his alliances with the *völkisch* groups of North Germany, National Socialism made considerable headway in the north after 1924, as Table 1 (above) illustrates.

The decline in the number of local party organizations in the south was due to the problems inherent in Hitler's determination to organize a new party out of the remnants of the old. The functioning local party organizations were informed early in March 1925 that as of that moment old membership cards became invalid and new applications for membership had to be submitted to the Munich headquarters.⁵ This created grave problems for the local party leaders who found it difficult to make the old party members understand why they should be paying new initiation fees.⁶ The other factor that created difficulties on the local level was Hitler's demand that local party organizations rupture their ties with all *völkisch* groups and that no party member should be allowed to maintain simultaneous membership in any *völkisch* association.⁷ This was a bitter pill to swallow for many local party leaders who had traditionally identified the Nazi party with the *völkisch* idea. Many of the local leaders refused to make the break and declined to subordinate themselves unconditionally to Hitler's personal leadership in the early months of 1925. As a consequence of these factors, several local party organizations seceded or were dissolved during these early months, especially in the southern areas where most of the Nazi party organizations existed prior to 1925.⁸ In the north most of the local organizations

⁵ See party business manager Philip Bouhler's correspondence with local party leaders in: Washington, D. C., The National Archives, *Captured German Documents Filmed at Berlin* (Microfilming Program at the Berlin Document Center, American Historical Association), Microcopy No. T-580, Reels 20-26 (cited hereafter as *Berlin Document Center*).

⁶ The party correspondence provides ample evidence for this. See, for instance, the letter of the district leader of Lueneburg-Stade to Bouhler, May 15, 1925. *Ibid.*, Reel 21.

⁷ See Hitler's "Aufruf an die alten Parteigenossen der NSDAP," and "Grundsätzliche Richtlinien für die Wiederbegründung der NSDAP," in *Völkischer Beobachter*, February 26, 1925.

⁸ Hitler's tactics toward the dissident local party leaders varied according

were being built from the bottom up; hence that area was not correspondingly affected by these problems.

Fortunately for Hitler, because of the organizational weakness of the *völkisch* movement most of the dissident Nazi leaders were forced to realize in the following months or years that they had no future outside the Hitler party. Soon they were to bow to Hitler's point of view, one by one capitulating unconditionally to his demands.⁹ Thus the decline of the local party organizations in the south was only a temporary phenomenon; by 1928 they had overcome their setback of 1925:

TABLE 2¹⁰
THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS, 1925-28

Districts	Number of Local Party Organizations	
	1925	1928
A. Southern Districts:		
Baden	31	62
Bayerische Ostmark	57	115
Franken	18	36
Oberbayern	16	32
B. Northern Districts:		
Düsseldorf	20	21
Essen	9	11
Berlin	9	28

It is important to note that while these shifts were impressive on paper, they did not represent any corresponding shifts in the real balance of party power in the south and the north. Although the northern districts underwent a period of relative stagnation in terms of membership in the latter part of the nineteen-twenties, for some time after 1925 they still remained the most promising part of the movement.¹¹ Their

to the local circumstances. Some he dismissed outright by dissolving their local organizations; in other instances he merged several local organizations and thereby forced the dissident leaders to bow to the will of the majority of their followers. See, for example, the Württemberg case in the Bavarian police reports, Stanford, Hoover Library, *Documents from The NSDAP Main Archives*, Reel 70, Folder 1515 (cited hereafter as Hoover Microfilm collection); and the Cologne district reports in *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 21.

⁹ See Professor Mergenthaler's capitulation to Hitler in June 1927. *Hoover Microfilm Collection*, Reel 70, Folder 1515.

¹⁰ Schaefer, 12.

¹¹ Kurt G. W. Ludecke, *I Knew Hitler* (London, 1938), 341.

promise lay in their attempts to identify themselves with the working classes, while the southern districts still tended to cling for the most part to the bourgeois, anti-socialist, racist idea of National Socialism.¹² Munich remained the business and spiritual stronghold of the movement, but there was little question that the dynamic part of the organization lay in the north.

The socialistic, working-class orientation of the movement in the north after 1925 cannot be conclusively supported by the available statistical data.¹³ However, ample evidence to this effect can be gathered from the available party correspondence from the year 1925-26, which appears to be persuasive. In their frequent (almost daily) reports to headquarters, the local party leaders of the north tended to stress the importance of associating their movement with the Left in order to attract members of the working classes.¹⁴ Thus, the local leader of the city of Luebeck stressed the importance of "going to the workers." "If we can get only fifty Social Democrats," he asserted, "we are better off and are more secure than if we had a battalion of the Tannenberg League with seven officers and sixty men." In conclusion he

¹² Ideologically, National Socialism in Bavaria remained basically a lower-middle-class affair closely allied with the forces of the Right. The typical concerns of Bavarian local party meetings in the nineteen-twenties were the Jews, international capital, and religion. See Joseph Goebbels' remark in Rudolf Semmler, *Goebbels—The Man Next to Hitler* (London, 1947), 56-57; Hitler's *Secret Conversations, 1941-1944* (New York, 1953), 67; Police Reports on the meetings of the Ansbach local organization, *Hoover Microfilm Collection*, Reel 5, Folder 134.

¹³ Only fragmentary lists of members are available. The Berlin Document Center files contain initial membership lists for only seven districts comprising a total of about two hundred members. Roughly about one third of them can be classified as workers; the rest were members of the "middle-classes," students, and professionals. Their average age in 1925 was twenty-nine years. See *Berlin Document Center*, Reels 20-26.

¹⁴ In some districts this had been achieved to such an extent that the Nazis were regarded as standing shoulder to shoulder with the Communists on economic matters. Report from Danzig, March 20, 1926, *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 20. In other districts the leaders warned against identification with the Right. Report from Hamburg, November 11, 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 21; Report from East-Hannover, January 29, 1926, *ibid.*, Reel 21. The Berlin Nazis called themselves "Hitlerproleten," or Hitler's proletariat, thus indicating their socialistic, lower-class origins and ideology. Reinhold Muchow's report from Berlin, August 1926, *Hoover Microfilm Collection*, Reel 5, Folder 133.

affirmed that "Playing soldiers won't help here."¹⁵ District leader Josef Klant of Hamburg reported to headquarters: "We have won fifty workers, which pleases us more than fifty doctors."¹⁶ Reports from Danzig,¹⁷ Halle,¹⁸ East-Hannover,¹⁹ South-Hannover,²⁰ Elbe-Havel district,²¹ Anhalt-Desau,²² Mecklenburg,²³ and Schleswig-Holstein²⁴ contained similar sentiments and listed with great pride and self-satisfaction the party's successes in industrial districts. Many of these districts suggested the formation of National Socialist trade unions in order to attract the manual workers.²⁵

Thus the Socialist element became a prominent part of Nazi appeals in the north after 1924. Social justice, nationalization of the economy, "bread community," and other socialistic tenets were prominent in the speeches of Gregor Strasser.²⁶ That these principles were not ends in themselves but means to the establishment of an organic national community was of crucial significance, but a distinction too subtle to be noticed by those to whom the speeches were addressed. What was important for Strasser's audiences was the expression of and emphasis on these principles; for what ends they were to be used was of secondary importance.

The post-1924 tendencies in the north introduced significant changes in the organizational base of the movement as

¹⁵ Report from Luebeck, December 14, 1925, *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 23.

¹⁶ Report from Hamburg, March 24, 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 20.

¹⁷ Reports of October 6, 1925, January 15, 1926, *ibid.*, Reel 20.

¹⁸ Report of October 11, 1926, *ibid.*, Reel 20.

¹⁹ Otto Telschow to Goebbels, October 23, 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 21.

²⁰ Report of May 15, 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 21.

²¹ Reports of December 18, 1925, December 27, 1925, February 1926, *ibid.*, Reel 22.

²² Report of November 3, 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 22.

²³ Reports of April 8, 1925, June 18, 1925, December 14, 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 23.

²⁴ Reports of March 1, 1925, May 5, 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 25.

²⁵ The party headquarters was besieged by local organizations for directions on the subject of trade unions, but their pleas remained unanswered. "The trade union question is under consideration and is to be decided shortly," was Bouhler's usual reply. See Reports from Elbe-Havel district, February 1926, *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 22; from Danzig, January 15, 1926, Reel 20; Anhalt-Desau, November 3, 1925, Reel 22; and Bouhler's replies on succeeding dates.

²⁶ See the collection of Gregor Strasser's speeches in his books: *Freiheit und Brot* (Berlin, n.d.); *Hammer und Schwert* (Berlin, n.d.); *Kampf um Deutschland, Reden und Aufsätze eines National-sozialisten* (Munich, 1932).

well. The keystones of the northern part of the movement were the local organizations which sprang up on the initiative of local citizens and were financed from membership dues and private contributions.²⁷ The network of local organizations put the movement on a more secure foundation and was important during the period of relative economic prosperity and international peace of the late nineteen-twenties. These local cells became indispensable nuclei around which the great masses of new party members could be organized after 1929.

These changes were by no means contrary to the ideas that Hitler had developed while in prison. Indeed, they implemented those concepts of the party as laid down in *Mein Kampf*: the necessity of a mass base, dissociation from the right-wing bourgeois forces, and systematic party organization based on the principle of absolute leadership.²⁸ What produced the differences between the northerners and Hitler were not issues of substance but the principle of absolute leadership and issues of tactics.

II

Upon his release from prison in 1924, Hitler set out to forge a strongly disciplined party out of the loose association of local organizations which was all that remained of the old party.²⁹ By the end of that year there was no effective central leadership in Munich, and the local organizations, having been left to their own devices for so long, were beginning to develop independent attitudes.

Many entered into close relationships with other groups,

²⁷ Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came Into Power* (New York, 1938), 78-81; Albert Krebs, *Tendenzen und Gestalten der NSDAP* (Stuttgart, 1959), 41. Not only did the local organizations not receive any help from Munich, but they were required to send to Munich a substantial portion of their hard-earned funds.

²⁸ During his imprisonment and in the years immediately following his release from Landsberg, Hitler was bitterly opposed to the bourgeoisie. He blamed the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois spirit for the failure of the November *putsch*. This contempt comes forth with particular intensity in the pages of *Mein Kampf* and was also evident in his speeches of this period. See Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York, 1939), 59, 225, 567, 612; *Hoover Microfilm Collection*, Reel 70, Folder 1515.

²⁹ On the character of the Nazi party in 1924, see Munich Police Report, *Hoover Microfilm Collection*, Reel 68, Folder 1497A.

völkisch or socialist (depending on the local circumstances), without bothering to keep Munich informed about their activities. Meanwhile, a corresponding confusion reigned in Munich. Hermann Esser, Gottfried Feder, Alfred Rosenberg, Philip Bouhler, and Franz X. Schwarz were in Munich but had hardly more in common than their physical proximity. Gregor Strasser spent most of his time in Berlin or traveling around North Germany trying to organize Nazism in the north. Ernst Röhm was involved with his *Frontbann* activities and seemed to care little about the problems of the "politicians."

In the first issue of the new *Völkischer Beobachter* (February 26, 1925) Hitler published his "Fundamental Directives" for the new party, and on the next day he convened his first party meeting at Munich. On this public occasion he appealed to all Nazis to bury their personal differences³⁰ and to unite behind him for the sake of the movement. According to one observer, the result verged on the ridiculous: "Singly and in pairs, men who had been bitter enemies mounted the platform and shook hands, some of them unable to restrain the tear which Hitler's magic voice had worked up. In groups they vowed their forgiveness of each other and swore undying loyalty to the Fuehrer."³¹

The unity of February 1925 remained confined to the leadership of the party for several months to come.³² It took Hitler and Bouhler several months to bring the great majority of the independent-minded local leaders into line and impose on them unitary party discipline. The party of 1925 was anything but disciplined and well organized. Conflict-

³⁰ Hitler's motto throughout the "years of fighting" was "let bygones be bygones." As he stated in the first issue of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the first and overriding task of the leader was to achieve unity in the party.

³¹ Ludecke, 258. See also Munich Police Reports, *Hoover Microfilm Collection*, Reel 69, Folder 1509 and Reel 87, Folder 1835. Three important party personalities were absent from this meeting, but two of them responded favorably to Hitler's appeal for unity. Gregor Strasser and Rosenberg accepted the new party principles, but Röhm refused to accede to Hitler's wish to subordinate the *Frontbann* to the party. He resigned from his offices two months later.

³² The unity was more apparent than real even on the highest levels. The mortal enemies of 1924 were friends in 1925 only on public occasions and in the presence of Hitler. Personality conflicts and rivalries continued, but since they did not affect Hitler's leadership they were allowed to persist.

ing sets of local leaders competed for recognition in numerous districts, and it was sometimes difficult for those sitting in Munich to know which faction would turn out to be more trustworthy in the future.³³ By the end of the year, however, most of the local leaders had achieved official recognition and the centralizing authority of Munich was beginning to be effectively exerted on the local levels.

As a consequence of cleverly designed policies, the Party Central Office in Munich under the effective direction of its business manager, Philip Bouhler, successfully extended its supervision and control over the minute details of local and district party organizations.³⁴ The exclusive right of Munich to issue membership cards enabled the Central Office to keep accurate accounts of party membership in each district. Since the number of members determined the financial obligations of the local organizations to Munich, this knowledge enabled Bouhler to exercise strict control over local party finances. Local party organizations were required to collect one Reichsmark for each new member and one half a Reichsmark each month thereafter. The initiation fees as well as a quarter of the monthly membership dues were to be forwarded by the local organizations to the district offices whenever these were in existence; in other instances these funds were to be forwarded directly to Munich. The district party leaders were required also to forward to Munich the initiation fees and one tenth of the monthly membership dues. In addition, all extra contributions which local and district party leaders may have received from private individuals or groups were to be sent *in toto* to Munich.³⁵

It is easy to appreciate why many local party leaders began to resent the progressive imposition of such central controls and supervision. The delays involved in the issuance of

³³ Conflicts were particularly evident in Berlin during the summer of 1926, *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 19; Halle during the summer of 1925 through the summer of 1926, *ibid.*, Reel 20; Hamburg in the spring of 1926, *ibid.*, Reel 21; Rhineland-South in the spring of 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 22; and in East Prussia in the spring of 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 24.

³⁴ During 1925 and 1926 many local organizations were directly subordinated to Munich pending the establishment of district organizations. Considerable confusion existed in organizational nomenclature at this time.

³⁵ See these requirements as stated in Bouhler's letter to district leader Walter Ernst in Halle, September 25, 1925, *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 20.

membership cards exasperated local leaders who found themselves besieged by individual applicants demanding their cards upon having paid their fees. Such local difficulties did not seem to have impressed the people in Munich who adamantly insisted on the scrupulous examination of each application regardless of the delay involved.

However, the delay was only the lesser part of the problem from the local point of view. The real source of irritation was the financial obligation imposed by Munich on the district and local party organizations. Regardless of local circumstances, Bouhler demanded one Reichsmark for each new applicant and ten Pfennig each month for every registered member. The arguments of local party leaders that many of their members were unemployed workers, students, old people, or disabled veterans who did not have the money to pay failed to impress Bouhler. He answered these complaints by monotonously repeating the official regulations and reminding the local leaders that their situation was not unique but shared by most of the other local organizations. In order to extract the money due to Munich, Bouhler frequently went so far as to refuse issuance of new membership cards for the local districts and to deny them speakers until financial affairs had been straightened out. This was of great importance for the local leaders who were dependent on Munich for literate speakers. The big prize, of course, was Hitler, and this was duly recognized by Bouhler who declared on one occasion that Hitler would not visit districts which owed money to Munich.³⁶

Some exasperated local leaders, Joseph Goebbels and Karl Kaufmann among them,³⁷ issued their own membership cards in open defiance of party regulations. When called to account by Bouhler, they defiantly admitted their action. They accused Bouhler of having no idea of local party affairs, and declared with amazing audacity that they had yet to see the contributions of the Munich headquarters to the develop-

³⁶ Bouhler to the Nuremberg local, July 26, 1926, *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 20.

³⁷ District leaders Bernhard Rust (Hannover), Hermann Fobke (Göttingen), Prof. D. Schultz (Hessen-Nassau-North), and Hinrich Lohse (Schleswig-Holstein) proposed in a joint letter to Bouhler (April 15, 1925) that membership cards be issued by district leaders in order to save time and paperwork and to escape the problem of undue centralization. *Ibid.*, Reel 21.

ment of the movement. They argued for the impossibility of requiring old Nazis to pay another initiation fee, especially when many of them had spent time in prison for having been Nazis. Similarly, it was impossible to collect dues from the unemployed.³⁸

Such sentiments were more typical than unusual and were rooted in the attitudes of the man-in-the-field toward the members of the general staff. There was widespread feeling among local leaders that while they were carrying the lion's share of the work, the headquarters got the lion's share of the dues. There were dissatisfactions with the efficiency of the Munich office as well as with the occasionally conflicting directives coming from Munich.³⁹

Such dissatisfactions on the local level were aggravated in the north by the quite perceptible differences in ideological orientation between the north and the Munich leadership.⁴⁰ As a result, by the summer of 1925 some northern leaders wanted to assume the ideological offensive against the "reactionary-bureaucratic" elements in the party.⁴¹ By late November discussions had reached the point where Gregor Strasser and Goebbels set out to draft a new party program which they planned to present for adoption at a conference of northern party leaders scheduled to meet in January 1926.

III

Much has been made of this program and of the Hannover conference of January 25, 1926.⁴² It has been alleged that

³⁸ Correspondence, Rhineland-North district, October 22, 1925, *ibid.*, Reel 22.

³⁹ Ernst (Halle district) to Hess, September 18, 1925: ". . . there seem to be two orders, one from you and one from the party office. Which should be followed?" *Ibid.*, Reel 20.

⁴⁰ The presidential elections of March-April 1925 exhibited these ideological differences when, after much vacillation, Hitler decided to support Hindenburg on the second ballot. Hitler's action associated the party with the monarchist, conservative-*völkisch* groups of Graefe and constituted a serious embarrassment for the northerners who were aligned with Ludendorff's Tannenberg League—a *völkisch*, anti-capitalistic organization. See the *Völkischer Beobachter* of March 14, March 21, and April 10, 1925, and Ludecke, 264. Weigand von Miltenberg (pseud.), *Adolf Hitler—Wilhelm III* (Berlin, 1931), 64; Otto Strasser, *Hitler und Ich* (Konstanz, 1948), 81.

⁴¹ Helmut Heiber (ed.), *Das Tagebuch von Joseph Goebbels, 1925/26* (Stuttgart, n.d.), 21.

⁴² There were two conferences in Hannover. One was held in November

this movement was secessionist, primarily ideologically oriented, and directed against Hitler's leadership.⁴³ However, the party correspondence of the period tends to refute such interpretations, as do contemporary diaries and documents. Available primary sources show persuasively that the northern districts never developed into a "separate party,"⁴⁴ but worked under very effective control throughout the period. Contemporary documents also reveal that the ideological division between north and south was not as sharp as it has usually been portrayed.⁴⁵ It can also be shown that while several of these leaders resented the firm hand of Bouhler, nothing was further from their minds than to challenge Hitler's leadership. Hitler remained the only concrete point of unity in the heterogeneous movement. He was above the conflicts, and he was regarded "as something mystical, unreal."⁴⁶

On January 25, 1926, the Hannover conference was convened. At this important meeting twenty-four northern party leaders were present representing seven northern party districts. The conference resolved to organize the "Working Association of the North and West," elected its officers, approved its propaganda organ, and adopted the draft program. The unanimity of the conference was broken only by Gottfried Feder and Robert Ley.⁴⁷

1925, the other in January 1926. The confusion about the date of "the" Hannover conference is discussed by Heiber, 56.

⁴³ Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (London, 1959), 120 ff.; Walter Goerlitz and Herbert A. Quint, *Adolf Hitler. Eine Biographie* (Stuttgart, 1952), 256 ff.; Konrad Heiden, *Der Fuehrer* (Boston, 1944), 286 ff.; Konrad Heiden, *A History of National Socialism* (New York, 1935), 113 ff.; and several books by Otto Strasser.

⁴⁴ Bullock, 121.

⁴⁵ Had the ideological division been as sharp as some writers maintain, there would hardly have been such demand on the part of northern leaders to have Esser, Rosenberg, Streicher, and other representatives of the "south" as speakers in their districts. Nor would the southern districts have been so anxious to have Gregor Strasser speak at their meetings. *Berlin Document Center*, Reels 19-26.

⁴⁶ According to Goebbels, it was in Hitler's presence that Strasser and he decided to draft a new program. Heiber, 43; Goerlitz and Quint, 253.

⁴⁷ Feder was the twenty-fifth member of the conference. He was an outsider who had been sent by Hitler to observe the proceedings. The accounts of this meeting are fragmentary. See Otto Strasser and Michael Stern, *Flight from Terror* (New York, 1943), 115 ff.; Heiber, 55-56; Miltenberg, 70; Heiden, *A History of National Socialism*, 287; Goerlitz and Quint, 257.

The conference elected Gregor Strasser as the leader of the Association. As its propaganda chief and editor of the *National Socialist Letters*, the conference elected Otto Strasser, while Goebbels was appointed editorial writer. The editorial offices and the press of the Association were to be known thereafter as the *Kampfverlag*, indicating the revolutionary sentiments of its founders.

The program of the Association stressed socialistic reforms in domestic politics and advocated a pro-Russian foreign policy. It proposed nationalization of heavy industry, distribution of unearned land holdings, and expropriation of royal properties. According to Otto Strasser, sentiments were expressed against the idea of the absolute authority of the leader. "We acknowledge no Pope who can claim infallibility," Bernhard Rust is reported to have exclaimed.⁴⁸ Such exclamations, however, assuming that they really were made, should not obscure the crucial fact that the conference was not directed against Hitler, but was organized to impress upon him the necessity of redefining the party program along socialistic lines. The conference did not repudiate Hitler's leadership, but sought to capture his charismatic symbol for their cause. That this may have been their mistake was argued by Otto Strasser at a later date:

Perhaps we should have acted at that moment, made Hitler *honorary* president and thus prevented him from doing any damage by depriving him of all effective power in the Party. We did nothing, because we thought we were much more powerful than he. This was our error and it must be recognized.⁴⁹

Strasser, however, distorted the circumstances of 1925. The reason that they did not depose Hitler was not because they overestimated their power but because they knew that without Hitler the party could not survive. They needed Hitler's name and authority. Besides, if they had wanted to get rid of Hitler, they should have done so in December or January before Hitler had re-established his authority. At that time Gregor Strasser decided for Hitler and with this decision the last chance was given up to continue without

⁴⁸ Strasser and Stern, 115-16.

⁴⁹ Otto Strasser, *L'aigle Prussien sur L'Allemagne* (Montreal and New York, 1941), 189.

him. The point is that they did not think of getting rid of him. On the contrary, they thought him to be on their side and they were sure that they would capture him for their positions, as Goebbels' diary makes clear.⁵⁰

The Hannover conference of January 1926 brought into the open the disagreements between the two camps. What made Hitler intervene and summon the Bamberg conference for February 14 was not the basic ideological disagreements which had existed for some time (and which were to continue to exist), but the direct challenge that the Hannover conference implied to the principle of absolute leadership.

IV

Many of the accounts published about the Bamberg conference can safely be classified as fiction. They have not only misrepresented the ascertainable facts concerning the conference, but have been predicated on the mistaken assumption that the Bamberg meeting was called to put an end to the Association which was organized against Hitler. A representative account may be quoted from one of the most authoritative studies on the history of Nazism:

On 14 February 1926, he [Hitler] summoned a conference in his turn, this time in the South German town of Bamberg. Hitler deliberately avoided a Sunday, when the North German leaders would have been free to attend in strength. As a result the Strasser wing of the Party was represented only by Gregor Strasser and Goebbels.⁵¹

In contrast to such accounts, the contemporary police report shows that the meeting was held on Sunday (February 14), and was attended by sixty to sixty-five party leaders. Several of these were from the north: Ernst Schlange (Berlin), Walter Ernst (Halle), Friedrich Hildebrandt (Mecklenburg), Glans (Hamburg), Bernhard Rust (Hannover), as well as

⁵⁰ "We shall put on a nice act in Bamberg and shall win over Hitler," wrote Goebbels in his diary on February 11, 1926. Heiber, 59. It now seems fairly certain that Goebbels never expressed the wish at that conference that Hitler should be expelled from the party, as reported by Strasser and Stern, 115-16. His diaries show unwavering support and loyalty to Hitler.

⁵¹ Bullock, 122-23. See also the accounts of Heiden, *A History of National Socialism*, 287-89; Rudolf Olden, *Hitler* (New York, 1936), 202-03; and Otto Strasser, *L'aigle Prussien*, 191-203; *Flight from Terror*, 121-23; *Hitler und Ich*, 88-91, 100-01.

Gregor Strasser and Goebbels.⁵² It is not known how many other northern party leaders were present, since the police report does not include a complete list of the participants, but it is obvious that several of the most important leaders from the north were able to attend.⁵³

In the absence of documentary evidence, the rest of the speculation contained in Bullock's account cannot be challenged with equal certainty. It can be argued, however, that the site of the conference was not chosen in order to make the cost of travel prohibitive for northern leaders. Had this been Hitler's intention, the logical site of the conference would have been Munich, the party headquarters, which lies some 150 miles farther south. Indeed, it may be argued that it was in Hitler's interest to have as many northerners at the meeting as possible.⁵⁴ Hitler's purpose for calling the Bamberg conference was not to defeat the northern leaders, but to convince them of the necessity for party unity. He did not regard the northerners as his opponents but as subordinates who had to be brought back to the right track. Besides, it was not the purpose of Nazi party meetings to make decisions on the basis of majority rule. Thus, the number of northern leaders present was quite irrelevant to the outcome of the conference. To maintain that the reason for Hitler's "victory" at Bamberg was a packed conference reveals a basic misunderstanding not only of Hitler's relationship with the northern leaders, but also of the nature of decision-making in the Nazi party.

⁵² *Hoover Microfilm Collection*, Reel 33A, Folder 1788. The meeting on February 14 was secret; no party members other than leaders were allowed to attend. The next day there was a public meeting of six to seven hundred persons at which the agreements reached the previous day were publicly announced.

⁵³ It can be seen from the party correspondence that more leaders were invited from the north than were actually present. District leaders Fobke (South-Hannover-Braunschweig) and Viereck (Elbe-Havel) declined the invitation. *Berlin Document Center*, Fobke's letter to Hess, February 2, 1926, Reel 21; Viereck's letter to Bouhler, February 11, 1926, Reel 23. While most party leaders received invitations, some did not. Kaufmann (Rhineland-South) complained to Bouhler that he had not received an invitation, although to his knowledge everybody else had. Bouhler informed him that not all district leaders had been invited. *Ibid.*, Reel 22.

⁵⁴ "Bamberg was chosen as the site of the conference in order to enable those living far away to come." Bouhler's correspondence to Viereck, February 9, 1926, *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 22.

There are no known official records of the proceedings of the conference.⁵⁵ The account of the conference which appeared in the official party newspaper indicates clearly enough, however, the major points of Hitler's concern. According to the *Völkischer Beobachter* (February 25, 1926), Hitler addressed himself to three main topics. First, he rejected Strasser's idea of a Russian entente; that, according to Hitler, would have meant the bolshevization of Germany. Instead, he suggested that British and Italian alliances offered the most promising possibilities for Germany. The East he regarded as an area of colonization. Secondly, he rejected the northerners' position with respect to the expropriation of royal properties on the principle that "nothing should be given to them [princes] which does not belong to them," but also that nothing should be taken away from them which belongs to them. "We are for rights," he declared. "We know only Germans, not princes." Thirdly, he prohibited anyone from raising religious issues in the party because these "have no place in National Socialism."

This is the extent of the newspaper's report of the meeting. It ends with the following statement: "The rest of the meeting was taken up by programmatic discussions in which several people participated besides Hitler, especially Feder, Strasser, and Streicher. Complete agreement was achieved."

Otto Strasser's account goes beyond this report and states that the conference adopted the following resolutions: (1) abandonment of the Hannover program and reaffirmation of the Twenty-five Points; (2) dissolution of the Association and the establishment of a unified party organization; (3) nomination of all district leaders by Hitler; (4) creation of a party tribunal to regulate intraparty disputes with the power to expel members and to dissolve local organizations; the members of this tribunal were to be nominated by Hitler; and (5) establishment of the SA.⁵⁶

The outcome of the conference is generally referred to as a victory for Hitler. It is submitted here that this is a misinterpretation, since there existed no movement against

⁵⁵ "There is no agenda for the conference. Hitler wants to discuss a series of important questions." Bouhler's letter to Viereck, February 6, 1926, *Berlin Document Center*, Reel 22.

⁵⁶ Strasser, *L'aigle Prussien*, 193.

Hitler. At the conference Hitler refused to go along with the northern point of view, and this was a great blow to Strasser and Goebbels.⁵⁷ However, Hitler did not handle them as defeated enemies; although the Association had to be dissolved, its propaganda organ in Berlin was allowed to continue. Gregor Strasser was put in charge of party propaganda, and just a few months later Goebbels was named district leader in Brandenburg-Berlin.⁵⁸

The decisions of the conference proved to be conclusive. The Association of the North and West was immediately dissolved;⁵⁹ Gregor Strasser went to Munich to assume his new position while continuing his association with his brother in the *Kampfverlag*. If the Northern Association had been directed against Hitler, however, the decision of a "packed" conference would not have been accepted as a matter of course. In fact, there was not a single resignation or expulsion. Herbert Blank's argument that the district leaders and Gregor Strasser abided by Hitler's decision in early 1926 because they were financially dependent on their party offices is not convincing; four years later it may have been a more important factor.⁶⁰

V

The readiness with which Hitler's decisions were followed by the northern leaders, who only two weeks before had manifested such remarkable unity and strength of conviction in adopting their draft program and founding their Association, is not puzzling if one recognizes that their actions had not been directed against Hitler, but were predicated on his support. When Hitler pronounced the Hannover program

⁵⁷ See Goebbel's entry in his diary for February 15, 1926, in Heiber, 59-61.

⁵⁸ It is not true that Goebbels deserted Gregor Strasser at the conference, as was reported by Otto Strasser and repeated by others. It was not until several weeks later that Goebbels was offered and accepted the district leadership in Berlin. On March 26 he notes in his diary the receipt of Hitler's letter and the invitation to speak in Munich, which he eagerly accepted. Heiber, 68. On Otto Strasser's account see *Hitler und Ich*, 90; *Flight from Terror*, 122-23.

⁵⁹ The "Working Association of North and West" was dissolved when its Hannover program was repudiated by Hitler. But there is no evidence that any association ever existed in the strict organizational sense of the term. After all, only three weeks elapsed between Hannover and Bamberg.

⁶⁰ Miltenberg, 78-79.

wrong, the northerners, disappointed as they were, accepted his verdict. It is important to note, however, that Hitler did not attack the substance of the Hannover program. He did not try to enforce an ideological uniformity in the movement. Indeed, his factotum, Goebbels, whom he had sent to Berlin in late 1926, assumed a position there just as socialistic and anti-capitalistic as that of the other northern leaders. Ideological heterogeneity was a characteristic of the Nazi movement from its inception; it was of no concern to Hitler. There was no orthodoxy in Nazi ideology; the only orthodoxy was the totalitarian principle of absolute obedience to an absolute leader.

Hitler called the Bamberg conference to ward off possible threats to his leadership. The quasi-independent organization of the northern districts implicitly challenged the Nazi principle that the leader was the sole center of the movement. No other institution or body of persons was to have an all-encompassing competence. Questions affecting the movement as a whole pertained to the leader alone. Others were allowed only limited authority delegated by the leader; they could act only within the spheres of their limited competence.

The Hannover conference challenged this principle of party organization by assuming the right to decide questions pertinent to the movement as a whole. That the conference meant only to guide Hitler back to the "true path" was immaterial to the issue.

The second threat to Hitler's absolute leadership was the proposed party program adopted in Hannover. Again, it was not the substance of the program that was important, but the mere existence of it. A program is by definition incompatible with the idea of absolute leadership. Its principles tend to bind the leader to certain courses of action and may be used as standards by which to evaluate the actions of the leader. A program gives every member of the political party an opportunity (if not an obligation) to judge the actions of the leader and to call him to account. The leader becomes an executive and ceases to be a "philosopher"; his responsibility will be to implement the principles of the program rather than to formulate the principles themselves.

It is not certain to what extent the members of the Hanno-

ver conference were aware of these implications of their actions. Certainly, the idea of a democratic party organization was far removed from their minds. Their concern was simple and immediate. What they wanted was to set down the "true" principles, of Nazism, or, rather, those which promised the greatest political success. They did not think that these principles would be necessarily incompatible with the idea of absolute leadership which they understood only imperfectly. The participants in the Hannover conference did not mean to challenge Hitler's authority; they only meant to fight the people who surrounded Hitler in Munich. It was a conflict between the men-in-the-field, the local party leaders, and the courtiers of the party headquarters. The Hannoverians were not aware, as Hitler was, of the implications of their resolutions for the principles of charismatic authority. Had they been aware that they were challenging Hitler's authority, they hardly would have counted on his support in Bamberg.

However, the motivations of the northern leaders were immaterial from Hitler's point of view, for he realized immediately the implications of the draft program. At the Bamberg conference Hitler rejected the Hannover program; in May he declared the 1920 program as unalterable.⁶¹ This placed all discussion about the program out of order, and the party took another step toward the program's ultimate totalitarian ideological emptiness.

The aim of the founders of the Working Association of North and West from 1925 to 1926 was to liberate Hitler from his Munich surroundings, not to challenge his leadership of the movement. Their purpose was to impress upon Hitler the necessity of a programmatic approach based on socialistic principles if the movement were to meet with success in working-class circles. When they called the Hannover meeting to form the Association and to adopt the draft program, they appeared to be sincerely convinced that they were acting in good faith and in the best interests of the movement. They believed that their draft program incorporated the true principles of National Socialism, which had been corrupted by the Munich clique composed of Streicher, Esser,

⁶¹ Hans Vols, *Daten der Geschichte der NSDAP* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1934), 14.

Rosenberg, Amann, and others. They thought that Hitler had been misled by this group which had managed to isolate him from the outside world. The northerners wanted to establish contact with Hitler and tended to be confident that once Hitler learned of their position he also would accept it.

The most authentic evidence in support of these observations is Goebbels' diary for the years 1925 and 1926. This diary, which was never intended for publication, was discovered in its original form after the end of the war. The entries represent Goebbels' feelings and attitudes in those years and provide interesting insights into party affairs.

On August 21, 1925, Goebbels noted, "Hitler is surrounded by the wrong people." Goebbels went on to state that the organization which Strasser and he were working on in the north would provide a weapon against the stale bureaucrats in Munich. On September 11 he noted that Hitler appeared to be between the two camps (the north which believed that socialism had to be achieved first in order to provide a broad basis for nationalism, and the south which believed that the worker had to be won over to the "National Idea" directly), but that in principle he had already decided for the north. The continuing problem was Hitler's inaccessibility. "We have to get to Hitler," Goebbels wrote on October 19; and again, he noted on November 2, "perhaps it will be possible to have a longer discussion with Hitler."⁶²

Goebbels looked forward to the Bamberg meeting with great hopes and expectations. He thought that Feder would be defeated and Hitler would adopt their point of view.⁶³ Then came the blow; Hitler turned against them. "I feel as if I had been beaten," Goebbels wrote after the conference.

My heart aches. . . . A sad journey home. . . . I hardly say a word. A horrible night! Surely one of the greatest disappointments of my life. I do not believe Hitler without reservations any more. That is what is terrible: I have been deprived of my inner self. I am only half.⁶⁴

Goebbels idolized Hitler from the beginning, and to find himself in opposition to his leader was an unbearable burden

⁶² Heiber, 21-22, 27, 35, 39.

⁶³ "Wir werden in Bamberg die spröde Schöne sein und Hitler auf unser Terrain locken." *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

for him.⁶⁵ Hardly a week after the Bamberg meeting he wrote to Hitler protesting against Streicher's attacks upon him. He spent the next weeks in anxious waiting for Hitler's answer. On March 29 it finally arrived; Hitler invited him to speak in Munich. Goebbels spoke in Munich and at the end of the speech he was embraced by Hitler. "I am terribly happy," he noted.⁶⁶

Goebbels was one of the leaders of the northern group in 1925-26, the principal collaborator of Gregor Strasser, and the co-author of the draft program submitted at the Hannover conference. His recorded attitudes are certainly significant indications of the aims and purposes of the northerners in 1925-26. They never considered moving against Hitler, but hoped to the very end to gain his support.⁶⁷ Otto Strasser's biographer summed up the 1926 crisis correctly when he wrote:

They [the Strasser brothers] did not see the struggle in that light, they did not feel themselves to be working against Hitler. They only saw that Hitler was betraying the things he claimed to represent, the promise he had made, and sought to bring him back to them.⁶⁸

The factional experience of 1925-26 also demonstrates the pattern of Hitler's tactics. During 1925 he refused to take a stand in the dispute between the northern party leaders and the Munich office, to the great disappointment of Goebbels.⁶⁹ However, this tactic of neutrality tended to strengthen Hitler's position. As the issues sharpened, Hitler's arbitration became increasingly important for both sides. Consequently both had to depend on his mercy.

Although Hitler was informed in November 1925 of the intention of the northern leaders to form an association at the Hannover meeting in January of the next year, he did not voice any displeasure. He easily could have prevented

⁶⁵ Goebbels' adoration of Hitler is evident throughout his entries. See 27, 33-34, 39, 40, 43, 65, 71.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 61, 68, 71.

⁶⁷ That they had no intention of deposing Hitler was illustrated vividly by their continued use of "Heil Hitler" in the 1925-26 period. Görlitz and Quint, 256.

⁶⁸ Douglas Reed, *Nemesis? The Story of Otto Strasser* (London, 1940), 80.

⁶⁹ Heiber, 27.

the meeting at that time, but he remained silent. He allowed the meeting because he did not consider the ideological arguments of Goebbels and Strasser to be threats to his authority. When, however, the second Hannover conference passed resolutions contradicting his policy on the expropriation issue, he immediately convened the Bamberg conference.

When he finally made his move at Bamberg, there was no question of a party split. His decision was accepted in the north without the resignation of a single northern leader. Under the circumstances there was no need to punish a single member of the Association. He promoted the leader of the Association, Gregor Strasser, and a few months later appointed Goebbels as district leader of Berlin-Brandenburg. Participation in the Association did not affect the careers of such prominent functionaries as Erich Koch, Karl Kaufmann, Bernhard Rust, Victor Lutze, and many other lesser figures. The actions of the charismatic leader were not those of a victor, but of a benevolent and forgiving arbiter.

VI

There remains to suggest some explanations for the factional experience of 1925-26. As the fundamental hypothesis the proposition is advanced here that the nature and characteristics of intragroup divisions are determined by the nature of legitimacy of the group. Legitimacy in totalitarian movements may be either ideological or charismatic; it is either dogma or person that justifies the existence of the group. The existential requirement of both ideology and leader in totalitarian movements should not obscure the important realization that behind any organization there exists an idea which legitimizes or justifies the existence of the group. This idea may be expressed in an ideology or it may adhere to a person and, accordingly, the group may be termed ideological or charismatic. In ideological movements the leaders will claim authority on the basis of the dogma, and will always represent themselves as its representatives and carriers. Thus, for instance, communist leaders have always been careful to give their power an ideological justification and not to appear more than instruments of the revealed faith.⁷⁰ In charismatic movements, on the other hand,

⁷⁰ Hence the "cult of personality" tends to be a continuing problem in

the leader claims authority because he incorporates the idea in his person. Thus, Hitler could identify the idea of National Socialism with his person instead of representing himself as an instrument of it. By definition, the leader and the idea were the same in Nazism; the idea was not something external and independent of the person of the leader, but was incarnated in the leader.

It is suggested here that the difference between ideological and charismatic legitimacy is of crucial importance for the pattern of factional behavior because legitimacy not only defines the cohesive force in the group but also represents the basis of intragroup conflict. That is, in an ideological movement it is the dogma which ultimately holds the group together and which lends authority to the leader. It is, however, also the dogma which can give rise to various interpretations which can in turn become the bases of factional conflicts. The dogma legitimizes the group, but it can also lend legitimacy to factions. Hence, in ideological movements factions will always base themselves on some interpretation of the ideology and will challenge the existing leadership on ideological grounds.

In charismatic movements, the identification of leader and dogma deprives the factions of an ideological base. Legitimacy inheres in the leader, hence an attack on the leader in a charismatic movement would be analogous to an attack on the dogma in an ideological movement. Yet the legitimizing idea of the movement can never be challenged, otherwise the dissenters would place themselves immediately outside the movement and as such would not compose factions which assume the framework of a group. In that case the conflict would be intergroup, not intragroup. For this reason, factions in ideological movements will always avoid attacks on dogma. In charismatic movements, for the same reasons, factions will always avoid attacks on the leader. In both cases the legitimizing idea will remain above factional strife, but while it will continue to bind the movement together, it can also provide the basis for intragroup conflict. This explains why Hitler managed to stay above the conflict in 1925 and 1926; why the factions, instead of challenging his authority, strove to gain his support. It was the personal nature of ideological movements since it contradicts ideological legitimacy.

legitimacy which forced both the northerners and the Munich group to claim to be the representatives of Hitler and his truest followers. This also explains why Hitler could so easily put an end to the Association of the North and West at Bamberg. By turning against them, he deprived them of their legitimacy. From then on they could not claim to be Hitler's representatives; they had no choice but to surrender since opposition to Hitler would have meant opposition to National Socialism.

Thus, the 1925-26 factional conflict, taking place on the secondary level of leadership, not only preserved and enhanced Hitler's authority and power, but also ensured the unity of the movement. Hitler was the ultimate arbiter to whom all factions appealed; he remained the only point of unity, the only force of cohesion in the ideologically and sociologically heterogeneous movement. That Hitler was an arbiter rather than a participant in the conflict was also reflected in the way in which he dealt with the members of the northern faction after the Bamberg meeting—not as a victor, but as the benevolent judge. He did not punish them, but continued to keep them in positions of authority and power. Indeed, there would have been no reason to punish men who, though misguided, acted in good faith.

Thus the unity of the movement was preserved; the leaders retained their positions of authority while the rank-and-file remained basically unaffected by the whole crisis. For the ordinary party member or follower there was no crisis of conscience; those who were loyal followers of the northern leaders never assumed any conflict between these leaders and Hitler. They followed the northern orientation because they thought that they were following Hitler. There was no reason for Hitler to doubt the loyalty of the rank-and-file, and there is no evidence that he did. The Bamberg conference did not necessitate mass purges; the rank-and-file membership was hardly affected by that leaders' conference.

Why, then, was the Bamberg conference necessary? Why did Hitler consider it imperative to intervene when there were no threats to his leadership? In the absence of relevant data, the answers to these questions will have to remain conjectural. It may be plausible to suggest that while Hitler realized the fundamental loyalty of the northerners to his

person, he may have felt instinctively that what the northerners attempted to do was ultimately incompatible with the nature of his movement. The attempt to define National Socialism programmatically would have challenged the charismatic nature of its legitimacy and *ipso facto* Hitler's absolute leadership. The ideology of a charismatic movement has to remain sufficiently vague so as not to become the basis of legitimacy. The attempt at Hannover to draw up a program was a step to make the movement an ideological one. This is what Hitler could not tolerate and that is what made the Bamberg conference necessary.

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