THE HISTORY *of a* MISALLIANCE

NAZIS & NOBLES

STEPHAN MALINOWSKI

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Translated by

JON ANDREWS

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In memory of my parents
And to Paula and Elias

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Contents

	Introduction	1
1.	Defining 'Nobility'	15
2.	The Apocalypse and Beyond	69
3.	The Nobility Reloaded	129
4.	Nazis and Nobles: Conflicts	208
5.	Nazis and Nobles: Affinities	267
	Conclusion	329
	Notes	343
	Bibliography	403
	Names Index	449
	Subject Index	457

Introduction

The nobility are masters of self-portrayal. They possess the unrivalled ability to present stylized impressions of themselves in images and legends and find storytellers who will transmit, and continually reinvent, their tales throughout the ages. In 2008, the American director Bryan Singer—a figure who had recently re-entered the limelight with his blockbuster *Superman Returns*—erected a cinematic monument to one of the best-known representatives of twentieth-century German nobility. In the closing scene of the film *Valkyrie*, Singer and his leading man Tom Cruise resurrected a controversial version of the Resistance fighter Count Stauffenberg's execution by firing squad. According to the legend, the marksmen had to open fire twice during the night of 20 July 1944 to gun down the highly educated, charismatic driving force behind the failed rebellion against the National Socialist regime.

In Singer's version of the tale, the scene that played out in the courtyard of the nerve centre of military power in Berlin becomes one of the most striking images connected with the conservative opposition to National Socialist rule. At the moment the first command was given to fire—or so the story goes—Stauffenberg's adjutant Werner von Haeften made a dramatic gesture, throwing himself in front of his leader and intercepting the bullets with his body. Before Stauffenberg was cut down by the second salvo, he is said to have stood straight-backed and shouted, 'Long live the secret Germany!' The victims' corpses were summarily buried in a Berlin cemetery before being unearthed and incinerated shortly afterwards on Heinrich Himmler's orders, their ashes taken to the south of the city and scattered to the wind.[1]

This scene appears to be a densely symbolic manifestation of the nobility's irreconcilability with National Socialism. On one hand there is the Nazi killing machine embodied by Fritz Fromm—the middle-class general who

spinelessly betrayed the uprising and ordered the conspirators' execution—and by Heinrich Himmler, the prophet of a 'new nobility' and the Führer of the SS who was consumed by anxious hatred as he hounded the rebels and their families and annihilated their remains. On the other hand are the victims of this murderous apparatus, the Resistance members who exhibited the nobility's guiding principle of *Haltung* ('bearing') in its purest form. These individuals' laudable mission is encapsulated by Stauffenberg's climactic last words that pay tribute to the man he called *Meister*, the poet and self-declared aristocrat Stefan George. It was George who had conjured up the vision of the 'secret Germany', a hidden realm that would be accessible only to a privileged few. Ever since the 1920s, this evocative concept had been a watchword for the dream of forging a clandestine alliance between the wise, the noble, and the good.

Legends often contain a core of historical truth, and the fundamental disparity between the Nazis and the nobility is not just portrayed in the plotlines of evocative Hollywood films. Indeed, at least at first glance, it seems that National Socialism and the nobility's centuries-old traditions were worlds apart and that shifting their loyalty from the Imperial Kaiser to the National Socialist Führer would be the last thing to attract the aristocracy. As a result of this impression, the research for this book began from a position of bewilderment. How could a group that placed such great store by tradition, perseverance, leadership experience, and a whole arsenal of positive values join forces—both socially and ideologically—with the twentieth-century radical Right? How could the nobility—a group with a subtle system of titles and an ancient conviction in their own superiority—suddenly bow down to a malevolent regime? And finally, how could the aristocratic belief in their inborn ability to rule allow itself to become subsumed by the lower-middle-class ideology of the racially defined *Volksgemeinschaft*—the egalitarian 'national community' that the Nazis promised to create throughout the Third Reich?

In noble jargon, the term '*mésalliance*' refers to a scandalous marriage between an aristocrat and a person of inferior standing that can cause those involved to lose their inheritance or be stripped of their rank. At least in the aristocratic imagination, such misalliances have been associated with calamity throughout history. This conviction appears in a whole raft of different quarters, ranging from the epic medieval Nibelungen saga and George Bernard Shaw's play *Misalliance* right through to Edward VIII's marriage with an American divorcée in 1936. Despite this negative reputation, however,

nobles enter into misalliances for two reasons: emotional attachment and personal gain. Both of these factors played a role when the majority of the German nobility forged the misalliance with the National Socialist movement that will be examined throughout the pages of this book.

The term 'misalliance' was first used in this context in 1965 by the Anglo-German sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf, whose influential analysis of German society echoed political theorist Hannah Arendt's earlier discussion of the alliances that can emerge between the 'elite' and the 'mob'.[2] The present book will use three main lines of inquiry to argue that the misalliance between the Nazis and the nobility was the unstable result of a gradual, uneasy process of rapprochement between two fundamentally different worlds with thoroughly dissimilar social and ideological origins. Firstly, it will examine how the powerful noble minority followed a downward trajectory of deterioration and self-destruction in the aftermath of the First World War. Secondly, it will show how the nobility's social decline and the collapse of their traditional lifestyles led to political radicalization. And thirdly, it will demonstrate how this radicalization pushed the twentieth-century nobility into becoming far more dynamic and less reactionary than one might expect. Indeed, the majority of the aristocracy did not defend traditional conservative values after 1918, but increasingly turned their gaze towards the freshly reimagined ranks of the political right.

Comprehending the extent of the destruction and violence that racked the societies of the defeated powers after the war officially came to a close in November 1918 is not an easy feat from the perspective of countries like Britain, France, and the United States that have a far more stable heritage. In fact, the old elites in the vanquished nations were shattered by defeat, revolution, and counter-revolution in a manner that had no analogue in states where the conflict came to a satisfactory end.[3] In Germany, the old nobility were among the groups that bore the brunt of this ruinous post-war trend. Although they were too damaged to retain the eminent positions they had held before 1914, however, the aristocracy were still too influential to disappear from the arenas of power altogether. Indeed, they remained one of the most significant players in the Weimar Republic itself. Ultimately, this combination of weakness and strength was a key contributing factor in the paradoxical alliance that sprang up between various noble groups and the National Socialist movement in the aftermath of the war.

The notion that the nobility played a significant role in various negative turning points in German history is not merely a defamatory idea dreamt

up by Marxist and liberal historians. A number of particularly powerful individual aristocrats were instrumental in facilitating some of the most catastrophic developments that took place after 1918. For example, Hitler could not have achieved power on 30 January 1933 without input from the 'Cabinet of Barons'—an anti-democratic, noble-majority government that was created by Franz von Papen in June 1932 and provides a symbol of the authority the aristocracy clung to during the last days of the Weimar Republic. The same can be said of the little clusters of noble influence that gathered together in clubs, city mansions, and rural estates across the country and worked with the eighty-five-year-old Reich President Paul von Hindenburg—the almost cartoonish epitome of a Prussian nobleman who was formed and transformed by military tradition—to bypass the Republic's institutions and deliver the state to National Socialist control. A final example of the fragile yet profitable alliance between the Nazis and the old elites is Hitler's first cabinet of three National Socialist and nine conservative ministers who worked with Hindenburg to ease the transition to the Third Reich.

Over the last seventy years, historians have penned entire libraries about the multifarious factors that facilitated the rise of Hitler's regime. Countless special studies have examined the contributions that were made by a whole range of individual groups, including peasants, women, political parties, military officers, the middle class, students, shopkeepers, bankers, historians, teachers, and the working class. Astonishingly, however, no more than a handful of empirical works have dealt with the nobility's involvement in the Weimar Republic and the role they played in the advent of National Socialist rule.[4] Indeed, for the most part, analyses of the key protagonists who were active between the catastrophic conflict of 1914 and the Third Reich's downfall in 1945 have left the aristocracy out of their deliberations almost entirely. Strangely, this almost total lack of research into the history of the post-war German nobility exists in spite of the widely held conviction that they were instrumental in torpedoing and sinking the Weimar Republic in the early 1930s. Published in 2003, the original edition of the present book[5] tried to address this imbalance by providing the very first attempt to write a comprehensive cultural and political history of the German nobility between 1870 and 1945. Although it remains the only complete overview of the subject to this day, new work has since considerably extended the available base of knowledge.[6] The present English translation is a new version of this earlier German text that has been edited to half its length, rewritten in

many places, and altered to accommodate the findings of the body of literature that has emerged since 2003.

Some critics of the original German version of this book claimed that it painted an unduly gloomy picture of the twentieth-century German nobility and oversimplified the vast range of worldviews that were held by individual aristocrats. The misalliance between the Nazis and the nobility was certainly not a foregone conclusion, but a paradoxical, conflict-ridden rapprochement that gradually took place between two antithetical groups. There was never a single, homogeneous 'nobility', but a heterogeneous collection of noble individuals and groups that lived and acted in a wealth of different ways. Nobles were split along a number of significant fault lines that separated aristocrats of different ages, genders, religious denominations, geographic origins, and levels of wealth and ran between various noble groups, through noble families, and even criss-crossed the winding paths that individual aristocrats chose to take through life. This heterogeneity is also reflected in the vast spectrum of ideological archetypes that can be identified among the nobility's ranks, which ranged from upstanding conservatives, fanatical National Socialists, and coolly calculating war profiteers right through to the heroic members of the Resistance who are justifiably still admired by millions.

In order to understand the internal dynamics that existed within the nobility, it is necessary to distinguish between various aristocratic subgroups that differed in their regional location, their religious confession, and their rank within the nobility's subtle hierarchies. Two particular distinctions—namely, the contrasts between Prussian and Bavarian noble groups and between wealthy aristocrats and their more impoverished peers—are especially relevant for answering key questions about the period examined in this book. Three terms will be used throughout the following pages to reflect some of the massive social differences within the German aristocracy. Firstly, the richest and most socially stable sections of the old, landowning nobility will be referred to as the '*grands seigneurs*'. This group consisted of the 'high nobility' (*Hochadel*) and members of the most affluent branches of the lower aristocratic clans. Secondly, the label 'minor nobility' (*Kleinadel*) will be given to the vast majority of families from the lower aristocracy. Along with the *grands seigneurs*, these nobles formed the social nucleus of the old aristocracy as a whole. This group tended to own enough land to allow their immediate heirs to live lives befitting their status, but not enough to provide a secure existence for their second and subsequent daughters

and sons. Finally, the bottom rungs of the nobility's social hierarchy were occupied by a continually expanding group that will be referred to as the 'proletarian aristocracy'. This title—a translation of the historical term *Adelsproletariat*—will be used for the lowliest echelons of the ruined nobility who had lost their social moorings in traditional noble spheres but had not yet relinquished their claim to membership of the aristocracy. Such individuals typically lived in cramped apartments in larger cities or in the side wings of simple manor houses in the countryside.

Unlike most of the older literature on the subject, this book argues that the reactionary aristocrats who remained in positions of power after 1918 were not predominantly responsible for the disastrous consequences that the nobility unleashed on their country and themselves in the aftermath of the First World War. Instead, it will attempt to demonstrate that it was the destabilization and dissolution of aristocratic lifestyles after 1918 that caused the most harm. Indeed, although it is possible to identify National Socialists among every single aristocratic group, the driving force that ultimately destroyed the nobility's traditions and guiding principles from within emerged from the weakest sections of their ranks. As such, writing about the rise of Nazism is not an exercise in denouncing individuals, but rather a matter of describing conditions that affected entire swathes of society. In the context of the German nobility, this requires one to delineate the specific circumstances that led them either to side with the Nazis or to mount opposition to the National Socialist cause. As a result, this book outlines the major strands of ideological and political thought that dominated within a range of different aristocratic groups. Throughout the following analysis, it is worth remembering that the nobility—like all other sections of German society—cannot be divided into two neat camps with fanatical Nazis on one side and staunch resistance fighters on the other. As always, a broad grey area of arrangement and compromise existed between these extremes.

Despite the criticism of the original German version of this book, no one has yet made a plausible argument for a more 'positive' picture. Indeed, although the empirical studies published since 2003 have considerably expanded the knowledge on the subject,[7] the fundamental framework of my original narrative has been confirmed. For instance, recent research has demonstrated that the high nobility and the Third Reich's new 'high society'[8] were aligned even more closely with the National Socialists than my initial assumptions had allowed.[9] Moreover, newer studies have vindicated the view that the southern, Catholic aristocracy were a culturally and politically

idiosyncratic group that kept themselves at a considerably greater distance from the Nazis than the rest.[10] This can be explained by the fact that the Catholic nobility in general—and Catholic aristocrats from Bavaria in particular—still possessed three things their Prussian counterparts had lost after 1918: namely, their wealth, their Pope, and their king. Fresh inquiries have also examined other significant matters that featured in the original book, including the nobility's rejection of the Kaiser, the intense post-war debates about the creation of a 'new aristocracy',[11] and the precise role that landownership and the noble family associations played in attempts to reorganize the nobility on a theoretical and a practical level after 1918.[12] In addition, historians have conducted further investigations into the aristocratic members of the Resistance,[13] the role of noblewomen, the phenomenon of the impoverished nobility, the aristocrats who joined such individual Nazi organizations as the SA and the SS, and the small minority of noble 'mavericks' who turned towards the political left.[14] Studies of the grey area between collaboration and resistance have also shone light on a number of fascinating aristocrats about whom little was previously known. Such overlooked individuals include the figures in the Vice-Chancellor's office who established the first, systematic, conservative resistance to National Socialism in 1933 and were eliminated during the murderous Night of the Long Knives on 30 June 1934.[15] Finally, investigations have also raised awareness of the relationship between declining noble fortunes and successful aristocratic transitions to the new status quo that emerged after the Second World War. Although no one has yet demonstrated why the nobility suddenly managed to adapt to the rules of democracy after 1945 when they had stubbornly refused to do so after 1918, the question has, at least, now been posed.[16]

Defining the term 'nobility' is no easy task. In fact, it is a notoriously elusive word that seems to dissolve the harder one tries to pin it down. Even expert historians cannot reach a consensus on what the label actually means.[17] This difficulty is exacerbated when dealing with societies—like Germany after the First World War—where the aristocracy no longer enjoyed a legally protected status. In an effort to solve this conundrum, part of the most recent historical literature has tried to define the twentieth-century nobility as something of an 'imagined community'. This idea, which is based on the postmodernist impulse to dispute all forms of rigid categorization, certainly has its merits when it comes to the history of the aristocracy. For example, it allows historians to get to grips with the imaginary aspects of noble culture that were dreamt up by nobles and non-nobles alike.

The concept of the 'imagined community', however, also underestimates tangible hierarchies and traditions that the aristocracy had forged over hundreds of years. Indeed, although one might produce some insights by placing such terms as 'nobility' and 'middle class' in quotation marks and treating them as mere fantasies, the idea of conceptualizing 'nobility' as a state of mind that was invented by individuals who merely 'felt noble' overlooks a number of concrete social and political realities that were many centuries in the making.[18] For one thing, there was absolutely nothing imaginary about the aristocracy's castles, country houses, major estates, hunting rituals, marriage customs, and the leading positions they held in the military, in the civil service, and in the diplomatic corps. It is not possible to claim that the most eminent noble families' relationships with the land or the generations-old soldierly traditions espoused by the Prussian military clans[19] were fabrications. In fact, such phenomena can and have been quantified, and their existence is every bit as verifiable as the walls of the noble palaces that still stand.

The account presented in this book is based on the premise that there was—and still is—a nobility whose core social and cultural identity can be successfully described. If one were asked to capture this identity in just three words, one might suggest defining the nobility as 'family', 'landownership', and 'leadership'. To this trio of terms, one could add another aspect that was encapsulated in the historian Heinz Reif's pithy statement that the aristocracy are 'the most decisive and most dogged representative of the principle of social inequality. Fairness, in its noble form, meant: treat unequals unequally.'[20]

Around two weeks before they made their famous attempt on Hitler's life, Count Claus von Stauffenberg, together with his brother Berthold and the Germanist Rudolf Fahrner, wrote a manifesto known as the *Oath* that was intended to be read by the inner circle of the Resistance movement. It was hoped that the document would curb the more democratic tendencies within the uprising and serve as something of a message for posterity. One section of the *Oath* reads as follows: 'We want a New Order that makes all Germans supporters of the state and guarantees them law and justice, but we scorn the lie of equality and bow before the hierarchies established by nature.'[21] Every aristocratic family in the land would have approved of at least the second part of this message, which provided a lyrical synopsis of the anti-revolutionary credo that the nobility had espoused ever since the French Revolution. Indeed, after the First World War, it was precisely this widespread lack of faith in the principles of egalitarianism that drove the

aristocracy to join forces with the middle-class-dominated political movement known as the 'New Right' in an attempt to reinstate what the sociologist Stefan Breuer has termed the 'orders of inequality'. In this book, the term 'New Right' is used to describe the collection of radical, right-wing groups that emerged during the era of the German Empire and ultimately prompted large numbers of nobles to turn their backs on traditional conservatism and shift their allegiance to the National Socialist cause.[22] The term has also been selected to stand in direct opposition to the oxymoronic formula 'conservative revolution' that has been a firm—but rather misleading—fixture of academic texts ever since it was popularized by the right-wing publicist Armin Mohler in 1949.

'For things to remain the same, everything must change.' This famous line from *The Leopard*—a celebrated novel by the Sicilian Prince of Lampedusa—suggests the ethos that inspired the German nobility and the New Right to attempt to ensure the continuation of social and political inequality after 1918. It was a project that fundamentally altered the course of post-war noble history and significantly transformed the meaning of many noble concepts. In the process, the aristocracy adapted their self-portrayals to the prevailing conditions of the day.[23] An example can be seen in the way that many noble families' centuries-old relationship with the land took on new meaning in an industrial society, becoming associated with ostentatious rejection of the middle-class cult of education and urban life. The same also applies to the aristocracy's ancient belief in their own innate, blood-borne superiority which became imbued with a racist, anti-Semitic significance in the years between the fall of the German Empire and the rise of Hitler's Third Reich.

Despite all this evidence of change, it would be wrong to give the impression that the aristocracy had to reframe everything about themselves to find their place in post-war society. Indeed, although the Prussian nobility's military clans were troubled by such new developments as mechanized mass armies and professional warfare, the long-standing advantages of their status did not simply vanish overnight. Furthermore, even though the aristocracy's traditions of leadership had little in common with the Führer-obsessed discourses that erupted after 1918, anyone who chose to reject the central tenets of the political left and grew weary of 'modernity' could not help but stumble upon the aristocracy sooner or later and be enticed by the concepts of inequality they represented. For example, although many aristocrats' claims to live lives of 'austerity' after the First World War were little more

than affectations, their dismissal of the money-obsessed sections of the middle class proved highly attractive to right-wing, middle-class intellectuals.

In the same way that there is no such thing as a homogeneous 'middle class' or a uniform 'working class', it is impossible to speak of a unified 'aristocracy' with clearly delimited borders. Despite this lack of precision, however, it is perfectly acceptable to discuss the 'working class' or talk about 'middle-class culture' in broader terms. It therefore stands to reason that it must also be possible to make general statements about an exceedingly small group of around 80,000 aristocrats who made up no more than 0.1 per cent–0.2 per cent of the German population as a whole. Some of the most innovative studies of the cultural history of the German middle class have used the term *Bürgerlichkeit* ('middle-classness') in their analysis of the mindsets, lifestyles, and self-perceptions of the group. Following in the same vein, this book will use the (rather translation-resistant) term *Adeligkeit* ('nobleness') to refer to the collection of ideals, lifestyles, and social, cultural, and political guiding principles that remained influential among large sections of the aristocracy in the aftermath of the First World War.[24] In fact, the very first chapter will introduce five aspects of *Adeligkeit*—namely: family and time; nature and rural life; a focus on physical attributes; the nobility's contempt for 'desk jockeys' and middle-class wealth; and the aristocracy's vocation as leaders—that had a significant influence on the noble habitus[25] during the first half of the twentieth century. In so doing, it will set the stage for the subsequent chapters by sketching out the political and ideological foundations that informed the paths taken by many aristocrats after 1918.

The most recent research into the history of the German nobility has justifiably criticized, corrected, and added various important nuances to the five areas of *Adeligkeit* that were discussed in the original version of this book. Overall, however, this new body of literature has confirmed—rather than refuted—the earlier narrative's ideas.[26] Moreover, although numerous authors have identified exceptions to its observations and stressed that the boundaries of identity were perhaps more fluid than was suggested at first, their findings do not negate the existence of the nobility's social nucleus any more than the presence of unemployed people invalidates fundamental discussions about the working class. It goes without saying that the concept of *Adeligkeit* cannot hope to encompass all kinds of aristocrats and the countless value systems, countries, and epochs they have inhabited throughout the ages. Instead, it merely aims to give an approximate idea of the guiding principles that were significant for the aristocracy's social nucleus between

the late nineteenth century and the fall of Hitler's Third Reich. The term also has the benefit of being both precise enough to encompass all the vagaries of noble self-perception and broad enough to allow the boundaries that separated different noble groups to be described from both a social-historical and a cultural-historical perspective.

The following account is divided up into five separate chapters.

According to the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, 'Two nobles who meet each other for the first time should be able, after exchanging just a few remarks, to recognize themselves as members of the same extended family.'[27] Chapter 1 investigates the possible content of these 'few remarks' by exploring aristocratic self-perceptions and outlining aspects of noble cultural identity (*Adeligkeit*) that played a significant role in their history after the First World War. Although it is true that the nobility were far from a homogeneous group, they tended to share a number of attributes that immediately opened up common ground between peers. Aristocrats often regarded themselves as natural-born leaders, for example, and most noble families were keen to emphasize their long lineages and show pride in tracing their family trees over hundreds of years. After 1918, many aristocrats adopted a pronounced cult of austerity that made a virtue of their financial limitations and underlined their disdain for modern, middle-class culture that was seemingly embodied by bankers, merchants, academics, intellectuals, and—most conspicuously—Jews. Nobles frequently also portrayed themselves as innate hunters, farmers, and warriors who enjoyed a close relationship with nature and the land, even if they had long left their rural lifestyles behind. Although this might seem rather ludicrous, it fuelled a hatred of modern 'uprootedness' and disorientation that underpinned some powerful political and philosophical discourses of the age. These discourses pitted the ideal of a modest Prussian country squire whose 'roots' had been anchored in the local earth for centuries against the image of the wandering Jew, the socialist without a fatherland, and the drifting intellectual bereft of social connections.

Fortunately for the nobility, their disdain for democratic culture, their contempt for the bourgeois 'chattering classes', their veneration of decisive, 'manly' decision-making, and their remarkable blend of established traditions and novel forms of self-portrayal all proved surprisingly appealing to many sections of German society following the First World War. Indeed, after 1918, the nation was swept with enthusiasm for *Führers* and the cult of *Führertum*—a breed of 'leaders' and a form of 'leadership' that were arguably

the most important terms in the lexicon of the pre-Hitler political right and enjoyed a far more mythical resonance than their English synonyms can ever convey. It just so happened that the Führers the German people were looking for required precisely the same qualities that the aristocracy had long claimed to possess.

Chapter 2 investigates how the German Revolution of 1918 affected the nobility, and how the nobility tried to fight back by forging new alliances with counter-revolutionary movements. It also examines Wilhelm II's inglorious flight to the Netherlands and the exodus of all the other German monarchs at the end of the First World War. These events triggered the almost total demise of Prussian monarchism and unleashed a bitter sense of regret that the Kaiser had not chosen to die a hero's death on the battlefield. They also help to explain why the Nazis were no longer confronted with a viable conservative opposition when they seized power in 1933. The chapter also discusses the significant rift that emerged between wealthy and impoverished noble groups and caused the most socially downtrodden sections of the aristocracy to jump on the bandwagon of extreme anti-Semitism and entertain fantasies about breeding 'superior' races of men. Indeed, although the rich, southern *grands seigneurs* largely stayed on the sidelines of politics and focused on defending their own interests, large numbers of the relatively impecunious Prussian minor nobility began aligning themselves with extreme right-wing associations and concepts in the post-war world.

Chapter 3 describes the space the nobility occupied in the right-wing milieus that existed in the turbulent Weimar Republic. It also discusses the various efforts that were made to reinvent the nobility and reorganize aristocrats into an anti-democratic elite that could spearhead the fight against the state. This latter project took shape when two originally divergent groups—namely, the middle-class-dominated, right-wing intelligentsia who were searching for a new elite and the old nobility who were suddenly open to finding new accomplices—came together as a result of their shared appreciation for aristocratic, anti-democratic, and charismatic forms of leadership and realized they were useful allies. The more astute sections of the German nobility increasingly began distancing themselves from the failures of the old regime. Over time, they also started forging alliances with the main proponents of right-wing ideologies who broadcast their ideas in a vocabulary that was similar to the traditional aristocratic idiom. In 1927, one such figure, Edgar Julius Jung—a former front-line officer, a *Freikorps* leader, a right-wing terrorist, a lawyer, a writer, and an eventual victim of the Night

of the Long Knives—published a comprehensive bible of anti-democratic thought whose title, *The Rule of the Inferior*, perfectly encapsulated the right-wing intelligentsia's view of the Weimar Republic. Happily for the nobility, Jung's book showed great reverence for a range of ostensibly aristocratic values, including tradition, rootedness, simplicity, manliness, resilience, determination, and strength.

Both the downfall and radicalization of the nobility were exemplified by two societies which stood out among the growth of new organizations after 1918: the German Noble Society (DAG), which mainly represented the more impoverished minor nobility, and the German Gentlemen's Club (DHK), which catered to a wealthier set of individuals. These institutions followed two very different paths. The DHK hoped to unite a collection of noble and middle-class Führers who could one day bring the Republic to its knees. By 1932, this plan had picked up enough momentum to pose a serious threat to the foundations of Germany's fledgling democracy. In contrast, the DAG aimed to redefine the nobility as pure-bred Führers who would one day rule over the masses. This less successful bid to replace the traditional cult of blue blood with a new doctrine of pure blood was a very risky strategy for the aristocracy. It automatically made any tall, blonde son of a Swedish peasant superior to the short, dark-haired offspring of a Bavarian count.

Chapter 4 explores the extent of the nobility's collaboration with the National Socialist movement and the various obstacles that hampered cooperation between the two groups. In the early years of the post-war period, it was far from a foregone conclusion that the openly elitist aristocracy would be able to stomach an alliance with National Socialism—a populist movement with lower-middle-class, peasant, and working-class roots that promised to form an egalitarian, racially defined 'national community' of 'Aryans' known as the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This was especially true of the southern, Catholic aristocracy, who remained particularly sceptical of the Nazis' brave new world as a result of their Christian faith and traditions, their disdain for ordinary people, and their continued loyalty to the Bavarian crown. In the same way, the nobility's claims to be uniquely superior from birth proved extremely unpalatable to the priests and disciples of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Chapter 4 also considers a handful of so-called noble 'mavericks' who broke the mould by becoming renegades, republicans, and socialists. The chapter closes with a discussion of the nobility's role during two events—the Night of the Long Knives of June 1934 and the doomed

coup d'état of 20 July 1944—which stand as the most significant clashes between Germany's conservatives and the National Socialist regime.

Chapter 5 discusses the key affinities that formed bridges between the German nobility and the National Socialist movement. Above all, the two groups were united by the aversions they shared. Both the aristocracy and the National Socialists abhorred the Revolution, the Republic, communists, socialists, democrats, modern art, department stores, nightclubs, the wealthy middle class, urban lifestyles, democracy's culture of discussion and compromise, and, last but not least, the Jews—the symbolic glue that bound all their common dislikes together. The Nazis also wooed aristocrats by furnishing them with new avenues of professional advancement. For example, radical purges that swept through the police officer corps, the diplomatic corps, and the highest levels of the civil service cleared the way for aristocrats to return to their traditional strongholds of employment. Hundreds of noblemen also showed they could turn a blind eye to the SA's brutal, ostentatiously proletarian habitus and ignore fears that the SS would supplant them as the Third Reich's new elite by joining the leadership ranks of both organizations. Furthermore, the Nazis' military ambitions and gigantic rearmament programmes seemed to answer the nobility's prayers by opening up unexpected career opportunities in the armed forces and promising to rehabilitate the army as an institution. Finally, in the wake of Germany's expansionist successes from 1939, the National Socialists even managed to reignite old aristocratic fantasies of acquiring new estates in a freshly conquered empire. As a result of all these developments, a noble renaissance seemed within reach and was enthusiastically welcomed by large parts of the northern and Prussian nobilities alike.

I

Defining 'Nobility'

The Mastery of Time

> Through everything, through religiousness, conduct, kindness to ordinary people, through questions of taste, right down to subtleties of speech, dress, eating habits, it had to become clear that we, the 'nobility', the Arnims, were different from the rest of humanity.
>
> —Count Dankwart von Arnim[1]

> The devil, the nobility, and the Jesuits only exist so long as one believes in them.
>
> —Heinrich Heine[2]

Back in 1999, I met with an eighty-five-year-old count in the hope of gaining access to his family archives. What I received instead was a lesson in the nobility's unique definition of 'family'. The count—a former professional military officer, an erstwhile diplomat, and a member of a prominent family from the north German *Uradel* (ancient nobility)—had recently repurchased his ancestral properties in Mecklenburg that had been confiscated by the Soviets in 1945. I enquired whether a member of his family planned to farm the land. This the count rejected with clipped, military brevity. I then asked why, if that were the case, he had acquired the territories at all. This, in contrast, elicited a rather poetic response. 'Listen, young man', he said, 'my family has owned this estate since 1320. If a descendant were to look back in the year 2200 and ask me "Why did you not take the opportunity to procure these properties for us when it was possible back in the 1990s?", how would I answer my relative then?'

Here, sitting in a café in central Berlin, was a man who could travel 600 years backwards and 200 years forwards in time and visualize himself in

a perpetual dialogue with past and future generations. Translated into the hard-nosed language of middle-class economics, one might conclude that he had merely spotted an excellent business opportunity, made a real estate investment, and dreamt up a good story to go along with it. Nevertheless, the 'imagined community' of the nobility—the remarkable connection they claim to share with long-deceased relatives and distant future relatives yet unborn—is far more than just some peculiar aristocratic affectation. This mode of self-perception has influenced the nobility's thought and action for centuries.

The aristocracy's uncommon relationship with time is the first of a number of reasons why their definition of 'family' differs from that of all other groups in society. Indeed, their temporal understanding of familial ties is marked by a vastness that greatly transcends middle-class notions of time and space. The nobility have, for instance, the singular ability to trace their ancestors back not just two or three, but five or ten generations, and sometimes even several centuries into the past. An example of this ability was provided by Werner von Alvensleben in 1931 when he set about refuting an allegation circulated by envious members of the NSDAP that he had 'Jewish blood' running through his veins. In so doing, he made it known that he could follow an unbroken ancestral line back to 1000 AD and, after a gap of seventy years, even delve as far as the year 800.[3] Such an ability to 'know' one's forebears from the distant reaches of time and regard them as members of one's own family is of great significance for aristocratic identity. In fact, the nobility unfailingly regard 'family' as a community of past, living, and future generations. When Franz von Papen spoke of privileges granted to 'us', for instance, he was referring not to his grandfathers, but to family members from the thirteenth century.[4] Similarly, the 'we' used by aristocratic authors can relate to relatives that others would be hard-pressed to refer to at all. Another example appears in the autobiography of Count Ottfried von Finckenstein, a man who provided a rich evocation of the mystical, epoch-spanning bond shared by all those who have gazed upon the old *Ordensburg* (a fortress of the Teutonic Order that was owned by Finckenstein's family) and 'seen [it] standing in the silent light of the moon, . . . who once have inhaled the deep breath of six centuries'.[5] As can be inferred from Finckenstein's words, this broad definition of aristocratic family ties acquires its force from an actual, historical depth that even 'good' middle-class families cannot hope to attain. In 1926, for instance, the Bülow family association reminded relatives that 'the year "1229" always stands at the top of our family newsletter' for good reason: 'it is intended as a stern

reminder to every member of our lineage: almost 700 years of documented Bülow history are looking down on you! Be worthy of it!'[6]

One metaphor often used by nobles to describe this preternatural connection between people from different eras is the image of the 'chain'. The individual links in this chain are all directly or indirectly bound together and—no matter their position within the succession—are all dependent on one another. Indeed, as noble genealogical jargon would have it, the entire chain 'breaks' the moment a family's 'male line dies out'. In 1931, this image was encapsulated in a speech delivered by a Bavarian baron: 'You stand, my child, in a long line', he declared, 'you are the link in a chain that holds you and to which you must add.'[7] From an aristocratic perspective, being a link in such a chain also means having the ability to understand and, in a metaphysical way, relive and share in the individual lives of its other members. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in the writings of the *Landrat* (county commissioner) Joachim von Winterfeldt. In Winterfeldt's poetic words, a wander through his family-owned forests—places where he knows every sizeable tree—becomes a stroll in the company of long-deceased members of his family. 'When walking through holms lined with birches and oaks, past lofty alders, and across patches of managed woodland', he writes, 'my forebears accompany me at every turn. I live wholly in the past, and not just in my own. I feel like a link in a long chain that breaks with me as I have, alas, been denied a son.'[8]

This highly symbolic sense of proximity to one's ancestors—a relationship that seems more akin to some strains of nature worship than the middle-class cult of the individual[9]—is presented to the outside world in impressive style via a diverse spectrum of family trees, picture galleries, family archives, coats of arms, family tombs, family histories, and old castles and fortresses filled with suits of armour, swords, and a host of everyday items. Even when they are copied by the middle class, these aristocratic 'media of memory' do not entirely lose their noble stamp: non-nobles deliberately imitate them to appear aristocratic, so their noble origins are never quite forgotten. The nobility have spent hundreds of years developing this paraphernalia that highlights their special status and the continuity of their rank. They enjoy privileged seats in church, for example, or sit in the same spots and eat with the same cutlery as their forefathers in the dining rooms of military cadet academies.[10] Centuries-old manor houses, castles, and natural landscapes shaped by family forebears also serve as uniquely noble *lieux de mémoire* (realms of memory).[11] Describing his family's imposing castle in the

Mark Brandenburg region of northeastern Germany, Count Dankwart von Arnim wrote about the 'force of family history that emanates from all the walls, pictures, and people'.[12] Towering, moss-covered fortifications are not the only objects that can perform a powerful commemorative role, however. In fact, unassuming items also act as vital loci of memory whose permanence the nobility have tried to preserve by, for instance, establishing 'fee tail' trusts (*Fideikommisse*) that grant sole inheritance to a family's eldest son. All such articles—a silver spoon gifted to an ancestor by Immanuel Kant and 'rescued from the Russians' in 1945; a tobacco tin presented to a great-grandfather by Tsar Alexander I; the oil portraits bequeathed to Count Dönhoff by Frederick the Great—are more than mere artefacts to be stored in 'untouchable glass cases'.[13] Indeed, they are emblems of a timeless aristocratic greatness that is based on the unique noble ability to bind the past, the present, and the future together as one.[14]

A striking example of the symbolic inclusion of past generations within the immediate family is presented in a play that was performed for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the accession of one Prince Christian Ernst zu Stolberg-Wernigerode in 1921. Entitled *From Christian Ernst to Christian Ernst. Through Two Centuries in Five Scenes*, the play—which was staged in Christian's castle and directed by his son, the hereditary prince—begins and ends with dialogues involving two heads of the family who lived several generations apart. During these two scenes, the pair has a discussion with a character named 'Time' who gives each the chance to be transported into the world of his respective namesake. Time puts both in a temporary trance-like state, allowing them to examine each other's trials and tribulations and use them as a source of inspiration for their own present day. Tenderly stroking the current prince's head while he sleeps, Time reminds him of the unsullied splendour of the family's coat of arms and the eternal values that both relatives have defended and nurtured to uphold the glory of their family. In his speech, Time declares that, by 'drawing upon ancient epochs', the deep, strong roots of the 'family tree' will perpetually bring forth new reserves of strength that will never be dulled by the ravages of the ages and will invariably remain applicable to present and future struggles alike.[15] A similar temporal scale can also be seen in the unmistakable irony with which Prince Alois zu Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rosenberg schooled American denazification officers about the breadth of traditional aristocratic concepts in 1946. Asked when he had acquired his property—a question designed to

unearth the wrongful 'ayranization' of Jewish possessions after 1933—the Bavarian prince replied 'between circa 1495 and 1805'.[16]

A second distinctive characteristic of the noble notion of 'family' is the extraordinary size of the circle of individuals they regard as their own flesh and blood. The example of the Bülow family association—a body that circulated its newsletter to more than 600 family members in the 1930s[17]—is not simply exceptional in terms of its scale, but also illustrates the differences between noble and middle-class ideals when it comes to familial and organizational ties. Whereas the middle class place a strong emphasis on the immediate family and the voluntary association of autonomous individuals, the aristocracy view all the members of a noble family as 'bearers' of the family name. Indeed, the widespread aristocratic terms *Vetter* and *Cousine* (German expressions of male and female kinship roughly translated as 'cousin' in the broader, Shakespearean sense of the word) can refer to distant family relationships and individuals who have never met. The practical significance of this expansive understanding of the word 'family' becomes clear upon examining the phenomenon of the noble 'family associations' in more detail. These institutions, which originated first and foremost among the nobility from East Elbia (the traditional Prussian territory to the east of the river Elbe), were not concerned with holding such units as the immediate family and the closest relatives together. Rather, their function—which lives on to this day—was to help nurture the actual and symbolic cohesion of members of the entire family 'line', remember their dead, and transmit their values on to living descendants and others yet unborn.[18]

The purpose and significance of the family associations[19] went far beyond this facilitative, nurturing, educational role, however. Indeed, in order to achieve their stated aim of promoting the 'unification of the family spirit and . . . the members of the lineage', the organizations were also endowed with regulatory powers. This entailed such prosaic duties as obliging members to report relevant biographical developments to the 'family council',[20] deciding who could remain in the family, and excluding those 'unworthy' individuals who could not. The associations also published family newsletters filled with anecdotes about individual members and the history of the family, organized family gatherings (events that still attract hundreds of people today), and orchestrated private financial funds that disbursed grants to students, for example, or gave support to unmarried daughters and impoverished widows. Particularly within the more prosperous clans, this

latter form of intra-familial wealth distribution could see considerable sums changing hands.

Aristocrats also worked to maintain the cohesion of the overall 'family' of the nobility as a whole. This was particularly vital wherever the aristocracy's notion of familial ties transcended the boundaries of middle-class understanding. Countless trivial nuances of etiquette reflected the nobility's idea that they, despite all their internal divisions, were a single, united 'family'. Take, for example, the widespread (and otherwise highly impolite) habit among Bavarian noblemen of referring to their (male) peers with the informal German pronoun *du* ('you'), regardless of whether they had ever previously laid eyes on one another. This ethos of aristocratic solidarity helps explain why wealthy nobles living in as-yet-untouched aristocratic worlds would often patiently provide support to ruined, politically radicalized members of the minor nobility. From their point of view, even 'cousins' who no longer possessed any semblance of aristocracy still remained members of the wider noble 'family'. Protecting them was declared a 'sacrifice' that, at least symbolically, benefited the nobility as a whole. As one commentator declared, such duties were carried out because 'the reputation of the family demands it.'[21]

With hindsight, this adherence to a narrow set of self-serving social and cultural codes might smack of a pre-modern clan mentality. As far as the minor nobility were concerned, however, there were tangible, logical benefits to pursuing such a strategy that lingered on into the twentieth century.[22] Aristocratic networks continued to facilitate careers, for example, and the significance of private safety nets grew considerably after a range of traditional state protection mechanisms collapsed in 1918. Moreover, the majority of the nobility—individuals who were neither personally nor professionally prepared to adapt to the new status quo with any degree of flexibility—discovered countercultures and social niches within their own aristocratic networks. Although such havens no longer provided any protection against social decline, they frequently saved individuals from destitution.[23]

A third distinguishing feature of the aristocratic concept of 'family' is how it allows the excellence of individual members to be put forward as evidence of the capabilities of the nobility as a whole. This idiosyncratic—but highly beneficial—aristocratic prerogative to be judged always by their most outstanding (rather than their most ordinary) representatives was described by the sociologist Georg Simmel as a bias that is forged by the

nobility and continually reinforced by the efforts of non-noble observers.[24] In a tactic that to some extent anticipated the modern discipline of public relations, aristocrats have long represented their families in such a way that pushes their most illustrious kinsmen to the fore. Indeed, the nobility are expert manipulators of visibility and masters of selective memory.[25] This can be illustrated by revealing that the acquaintance the aristocracy share with their own forebears often proves, on closer inspection, to be nothing but a myth. In the 1920s, for example, an anti-Semitic project to establish a registry of the nobility happened to discover that fewer than half of all aristocratic families were able to produce documentary evidence of an uninterrupted lineage of thirty-two ancestors (i.e. a family line reaching just five generations into the past).[26] This had little impact on how the members of the nobility represented themselves, however. Indeed, it had always proved easier and more effective to memorialize one's above-average forefathers than to demonstrate a flawless knowledge of one's heritage. In any case, portraits of exceptional family members—composed from noble memory, cleared of all blemishes, and set in lavish frames—were the only ones ever presented to the outside world as proof of their living relatives' own value.

A prime example of this selective phenomenon arose in 1931 when a south German baron offered a glimpse of his family's past experience of leadership to prove that the old nobility were 'in the best of health' and still fit to rule. According to the baron's records, 250 of his namesakes had served as officers since the establishment of standing armies. Of these men, twenty-five had reached the rank of general and eighty had 'fallen on the field of honour'.[27] However admirable this might be, it must be remembered that actual instances of successful noble leadership often go hand in hand with distorted impressions of the truth. Indeed, the sight of twenty-five generals in a single dynasty looks even more impressive if this careful selection of exceptional forebears can successfully stifle inquiries into the rest of the family line. As can be inferred from Count Dankwart von Arnim's quotation that appeared at the start of the chapter, this singling out of great individuals in an act of selective memory aims to have a twofold effect: firstly, it hopes to put one's own clan in a positive light, and, secondly, it aspires to lend these outstanding figures' personal brilliance to the family of the nobility as a whole. All such efforts are richly rewarded. In fact, the more successfully an individual's splendour can be brought to the fore, the greater the entire nobility's prestige will be. As a result, the project of filtering out the many and highlighting the few is treated as a collective venture that is

carried out by separate families and results in the accumulation of symbolic capital by the aristocracy as a whole. Countless examples of this joint project of self-aggrandizement can be identified throughout the German nobility. Wealthy dynasties commissioned hagiographical portraits of individuals, for instance, while rebels, failures, and renegades were hidden, ostracized, excluded, or 'sent to America', all at great expense.[28]

The choice of which people to bring to the fore is not the only variable that the aristocracy have adapted to the *zeitgeist* and the prevailing political climate. In fact, the image portrayed of each individual is also subject to change. In his impressive study of the multiple 'biographies' written about Friedrich August Ludwig von der Marwitz, for instance, the historian Ewald Frie provides fascinating insights into how the course of memory has been shifted by the influence of the nobility's family associations.[29] By selectively granting access to family archives and entrusting portraits to (predominantly middle-class) authors engaged on an ad hoc basis, these institutions were able to make von der Marwitz shine forth as an upstanding campaigner against despotism, as a leading light of conservatism, or as a pioneer of the National Socialist state as circumstances required. This unsurpassed, masterful aristocratic ability to furnish society's collective memory with an unfailingly apposite selection of flexible anecdotes, symbols, and images from an inexhaustible supply remains intact to this day. Moreover, almost none of the nobility's biographies is fixed. In fact, they are liberally adapted to match the requirements of the epochs for which they are produced. Ultimately, the 'glory' of the family name is the only thing that remains unchanged.

Placing such an emphasis on handpicked personalities also serves an additional purpose: those family members who are ingeniously highlighted by strategies of selective memory and perception resemble bellwethers whose deeds are perpetually upheld as ideals within each individual clan. This had particularly far-reaching consequences in the great political debates after 1918 whenever any of these conspicuous, promoted figures altered their political trajectory and caused others to follow in their footsteps.

In 1908, Georg Simmel noted that noble and non-noble observers alike tended to grant the nobility a privileged status that they either publicly or privately admired.[30] This trend was in no way halted in 1918. In fact, two decades after the appearance of Simmel's text, Edgar Julius Jung, one of the foremost representatives of the New Right, articulated the same insight in an expression of mocking contempt for democratic ideals. 'The external forms of true feudalism', he wrote,

> still pervade the fantasies of civilized people . . . . Satirical magazines can expose the ridiculous count—though already how much more ridiculous are the upper-middle classes by the time they reach their third generation?—to the superior scorn of the masses as often as they like. Nevertheless, the European nobility are still highly valued in the American marriage market today; the aristocrat remains the only pauper tolerated in large, rich houses. More counts and barons still play the hero's role in the serialized novels of liberal periodicals than actually exist in the [Almanach de] Gotha [a directory of the European nobility]. Even the socialist maidservant still curtsies in inexpungible admiration before the fictional countess.[31]

However biting Jung's words might be, his assessment was not misjudged. Indeed, in contrast to what has been claimed of the French nobility in the Ancien Régime, the German aristocracy's status as gatekeepers of interpretation—figures with the power to shape how people viewed the past, the present, and the years to come—had in no way become 'tangled up' in nostalgic imagery or rendered unable to fashion a vision for the future after 1918.[32] On the contrary, they maintained an enduring interpretative power that was sustained not least by a group of middle-class 'elite theorists' (social scientists who focused on explaining the power of elites) and 'barefoot prophets' (a rather unusual brand of lone intellectuals devoid of university connections or the safety net of a middle-class existence) that had already grown to significant proportions during the era of the German Empire. After 1918, these right-wing intellectuals' voices loaded the term 'nobility' with new meanings and thus contributed to the building of communicative bridges between the minor nobility, the middle class, and the right-wing intelligentsia. As a result, the aristocracy's hoard of images and motifs—a stockpile that had actually remained stable for hundreds of years—now began to undergo changes at the hands of non-noble individuals who seized upon their great potential for flexibility and started to add to them and adopt them as their own.

Rootedness

Even after 1918, land ownership remained the most significant bedrock of aristocratic power and the area in which noble ideals could be rehearsed, consolidated, and adapted to the demands of the age. Indeed, from an economic, social, cultural, and ideological point of view, the possession of land was still the most important point of reference for the German nobility as a

whole. As a consequence, it was protected with extreme determination by landowning and landless representatives from all sections of the aristocracy alike. Manor houses, castles, and holdings of forests and land increasingly came to represent the most significant safety nets for economically stricken family members[33] and serve as the chief loci for the aristocratic cultural model. Noble residences gained particular importance after the demise of the imperial courts and the collapse of the male bonds in the military and bureaucratic professions. Moreover, major aristocratic estates—premises that noble families defended to the hilt and, in the nineteenth century, protected with the robust armour of property entailment[34]—actually remained the strongholds that both the nobility and their opponents had always considered them to be. Indeed, landed estates rose to become families' financial powerhouses and the headquarters for conceptualizing and planning the counter-revolution after 1918. In fact, over time, the significance they held as places of political education, as armouries, and as military training camps[35] clearly began to outstrip their former role as the settings of romantic still lifes and melancholic retreat.

The aristocratic connection to the land also—or even especially—lingered in the noble imagination where the properties themselves had been lost. Indeed, as one nobleman stated, it was ultimately 'hard to think of a single [noble] family that did not, at least in historical terms, [have] relationships with the native German soil and thus [have] an interest in the same'.[36] During the process of forging the aristocratic habitus—the complex set of interiorized rules that dictated how each aristocrat should behave, move, speak, and think—the entire nobility followed a principle that Oldwig von Uechtritz had vividly described on behalf of the landless aristocracy back in 1890. 'The landowning nobleman', he declared,

> is the original stock of the aristocracy, a group that stands and falls with him. It is from him that family members living in the cities predominantly have to receive the thoughts, tendencies, and concepts the nobleman must inhabit if he wants to remain true to himself and retain his character.[37]

There is no doubt that the perception of landownership as the backbone of aristocratic power was strengthened rather than weakened in the debates regarding contemporary *Führertum*—a modern, charismatic model of direct, militaristic, anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian leadership—that emerged after 1918. In 1926, for instance, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin penned a statement that would have found support among noble and family associations from

all parts of the country. 'The aristocracy', he declared, 'must preserve their status in one domain with the utmost care, namely on the land. The roots of their power lie, and will always lie, in large territorial holdings. Leadership on the land must never be lost.'[38] In a speech he delivered to the Westphalian Noble Society in 1922, Franz von Papen cautioned that precisely this had, 'to a large extent', already come to pass. 'But to retain and regain this leadership . . .', he continued, 'seems to me to be the imperative of our time . . . . Land ownership is the bedrock of our rank, of our entitlement to rule.'[39] Linguistic nuances were all that separated this appeal from its *völkisch* counterpart. Indeed, as one *völkisch* commentator noted, 'the ruling stratum of the German people [should] be a nobility that has not [descended] into homeless nomadism, but that [is] rooted to the earth.'[40]

Both in reality and the realm of fantasy, the aristocracy's connection to the land remained the most important resource of noble leadership and the base from which they orchestrated their aggressive dissociation from city life and the urban middle-class attitude towards the natural world. In stark contrast to the nobility's more familiar relationship with flora and fauna, urban middle-class citizens invariably approached nature as outsiders and remained strangers to it at all times. An example of this can be detected in the phenomenon of the middle-class walk in the park. Despite being a fixture of middle-class existence, this (weekend) walk remains nothing more than a foray into a domesticated—and sometimes even artificially created—slice of the living environment.[41] In fact, the leisurely middle-class *passeggiata* ('stroll') fundamentally treats such locations as spaces to exist in, rather than places of any substance or interest in their own right. In the context of the German capital, for example, the tamed parkland of the *Tiergarten* (a green lung in central Berlin) merely provides a stage for middle-class self-representation, a venue in which individuals can see and be seen.[42] The differences between the two classes' outlooks on nature also become particularly striking when one examines the country estates that were in vogue among a growing set of the wealthy middle class around the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, the nobility realized that the traditions and functions of their own rural existence were worlds apart from the codes of bourgeois 'weekend nomadism' rehearsed at their newly purchased properties[43] and treated the latter with great contempt as a result.

In contrast to the urban middle class, proximity to nature was a lived reality of the landowning nobility's own daily existence. From an early age, aristocratic children were schooled in rural ways as part of an education that

had no equivalent in the middle-class cultural model. This training primarily came from their fathers who, as landowners, forest rangers, and hunters, could pass on their knowledge of crop rotations and teach their offspring how to recognize birds from their cry, go about the 'noble art of hunting', and handle horses with aplomb.[44] Even aristocrats living urban lives who—in their careers as civil servants or military officers, for example—had long 'grown away from' the proverbial 'native soil' often maintained close contact with the world of the landed nobility by reforging links with their fathers', brothers', and fathers-in-law's estates, or with hunting parties on the estates of their friends. Indeed, the ideal of a simple, hard, but honest life on the land, far removed from the 'materialism' of the metropolis, represented a significant source of aristocratic identity for urban dwellers and residents of the countryside alike. Declarations to this effect abound in noble accounts. For example, Rudolf-Christoph von Gersdorff—a professional Prussian military officer who declared life 'at a desk' to be intolerable—described his love of nature as the cornerstone of his 'adventuresome soldier's life'. One aristocratic university professor described hunting as a unique 'ecstasy' that stirred his blood. Similarly, a pacifist of the nobility and a figure from the old aristocracy who worked as a manager at the Krupp steel company both called hunting their 'single great passion'; an admiral rejoiced over being granted permission by the Kaiser to shoot a stag; and a retired general extolled the 'life-giving power of the clod of native earth'.[45] Even the most prominent intellectual members of the nobility professed to whiling away tedious lessons at school with transcendent dreams about nature. Such reveries apparently valued a walk in the woods more highly than the 'Giaconda [the *Mona Lisa*] in the Louvre' and glorified the particular beauty of the 'partridges' (*Rebhuhnvolk*) and all the animals on their farms back home.[46] In a rather less elegant articulation of the same idea, the landowner Oldenburg-Januschau—a man with a 'thundering temperament'—declared that 'the number of piglets a sow has in Januschau interests me more than the most ingenious speech by Parliamentary Representative Richter [a liberal politician renowned for his oratorical prowess].'[47]

In the aristocratic imagination, the land and the natural world provided an escape from 'stultifying indoor air' and supplied the settings for the most formative of experiences.[48] Just like Marcel Proust's famous madeleine moment from his novel *In Search of Lost Time*, these incidents were often stored as sensory reminiscences. Dankwart von Arnim, for example, associated the scent of horse sweat, polished leather, and elderflowers with

'summer and happiness'. Tisa von der Schulenburg connected falling leaves in autumnal gardens with the 'aroma of the Tiergarten' from her childhood days in Berlin. For her part, Countess Marion Dönhoff described the sound of rustling trees in her native East Prussia as 'indelibly embedded in the memory forever'.[49]

The land and the natural world furnished aristocratic authors with vital memories that were linked to their own childhoods, the high points of their adult lives, and important moments of reflection and introspection at the end of their days. They also set the stage for the nobility's connection with the dead, a phenomenon of unrivalled significance among members of their class. Indeed, aristocratic memoirs are replete with meaningful locations: the spot where one shot one's 'first stag'; the family woodland one ran through as a boy; 600-year-old, moss-covered castle ruins; the avenue of oaks established by one's forebears; the fir trees one planted as a child; and the grave of one's father or 'favourite horse' that rested in the shade of old oak trees with a view of the forest and the fields of the family estate. To the aristocratic mind, all such places represent a 'rootedness' in the traditions of the past, present, and future generations of one's own kith and kin.[50] In the context of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic, these images can also be interpreted as censures against modern 'nomadism' and exhortations to fellow aristocrats not to abandon their traditional lifestyles and 'ancestral' domains.

The contrast between the aristocracy's proximity to nature and the middle-class romanticism of the natural environment becomes particularly striking when one examines the key role the nobility ascribed to horses, dogs, and hunting. Despite being intended as a form of polemical mockery, the common middle-class representation of the aristocracy as an 'Indian [Native American] tribe'[51] (*Indianerstamm*)—i.e. a pre-modern, pre-industrial society that remained close to nature and at a far remove from the trappings of modern industrialized life—was based on aristocratic characteristics that were by no means unappealing. One of these attractive peculiarities was the nobility's relationship with their steeds, a connection that fills the pages of aristocratic memoirs. Horses are described as being the most intense passion of young girls and old men alike. A number of autobiographies dedicated far more space to adventures with horses than to rare passages about their authors' wives, many of whom appear as shadowy—and occasionally nameless—figures.[52] One high-ranking civil servant saw it as self-evident that horses should be treasured like people; some nobles went so far as to

consider them 'the greatest pleasure that God has devised for man'. Various accounts also suggest that the animal's importance as a status symbol even outstripped its practical function as a mode of transport, a valuable asset, and the indispensable tool of both the cavalryman and the horseback hunter.[53]

Nobles sized one another up based on their riding style, their aptitude as horsemen, and their carriages and steeds. Dankwart von Arnim described how an appraising look into the stables and carriages of a family one was visiting revealed more about the prosperity and style of the owners than their castle facade. In addition to a knowledge of cigarettes and French cognac, an ability to handle horses with effortless ease could, even as late as the 1920s, also facilitate one's entrance into the diplomatic service, a profession in which the aristocracy remained over-represented to a significant degree.[54]

No matter whether they were the sons of kings, the daughters of officers, or the offspring of estate owners, young nobles learnt to deal with horses from an early age. This was an indispensable education: estates were inspected on horseback, the lord of the manor addressed his staff from his steed, and horses separated riders from walkers on hunts and distinguished the aristocrats in the cavalry from the soldiers in artillery units. Even young, working-class women could hardly resist admiring mounted officers in their finery as they rode through a garrison town. Horse racing tracks and *Union Clubs*—exclusive establishments largely frequented by officers and noblemen in the capital city—served as social hubs for 'gentlemen riders' (i.e. amateur jockeys) and fashionable aristocrats alike. In one account, a nobleman who served as a leader in the *Freikorps* (an anti-revolutionary volunteer corps) kissed his horse tenderly as he took it in his arms. In another, the deposed Kaiser Wilhelm II sat on a saddle while at his desk during his exile in the Netherlands. Even aristocratic children recognized that sitting high up on a horse created a power imbalance that could be expressed in purely symbolic dominance or in the use of physical force. When playing at war games, for example, the noble son of one landowner—the only child sitting astride a pony—drove off the 'army' led by the master distiller's boy.[55] Countless reminiscences of this kind describe horses as the essential props for staging the same brand of aristocratic superiority that Oldenburg-Januschau felt was lacking during the 1920 putsch orchestrated by Kapp, a middle-class reactionary. 'Take riding lessons!' he is said to have shouted to the leader of the attempted coup: 'Anyone who wants to seize Berlin must come through the Brandenburg Gate on horseback!'[56]

Hunting was a second aspect of aristocratic life that provided the nobility with another—equally vital—arena of symbolic inclusion and exclusion.[57] Johann-Albrecht von Rantzau's opinion that one could 'hardly have an exaggerated view of the significance hunting has always had in the lives . . . of the entire European aristocracy'[58] is confirmed time and again in autobiographical accounts.[59] Although hunting had long ceased to be an exclusively aristocratic activity by the period under examination here, the middle-class social climbers who tried their hand at the sport nevertheless had to stray onto the nobility's home turf in more ways than one. Indeed, upper-class hunts were events at which middle-class guests were forced to try and speak the aristocrats' own verbal and semiotic idioms. At least as far as noble commentators were concerned, they failed miserably in the attempt.

Hunting's fixed, formal rules allowed kings, princes, and untitled members of the landed nobility to overcome intra-aristocratic and national divisions. In so doing, it also helped them institute a kind of discrete, international alliance of hunting aristocrats that served as a noble counterpart to the multinational labour groups forged by the working class. Even noblewomen who were adept with a firearm could find a firmly established place in this informal, unspoken association that provided a vital space for personal and political communication.[60] The claim that all hunters—like soldiers facing death—became 'equals before the quarry' is misleading, however, and actually stands one of the most significant social functions of the pastime on its head. It is undeniably true that hunting parties allowed people to overcome their differences and provided individuals with opportunities to make and maintain contacts, no matter whether their name was Wilhelm II or Hermann Göring. Nevertheless, hunts were held in hierarchical 'meets' that were as effective at bringing insiders together as they were at keeping newcomers out of the fold. Such subtle crimes as holding a shotgun incorrectly, treating hunting dogs awkwardly, displaying an unsuitable riding style, or simply betraying an inability to 'express [oneself] in a huntsmanlike manner in every respect' were enough to bar someone entry to the hunting nobility's 'inner circle'. Anyone who went 'into the woods' in the wrong clothes or took an umbrella with them instead of a rifle also opened themselves up to ridicule. Retribution was swift. Indeed, an unspoken glance shared between two people in the know was all it took to condemn parvenus, who had not mastered the hunting code of conduct forged by the aristocracy themselves, as mere 'shooters'—individuals who gunned down prestigious quantities of game without any sense of a true hunter's discrimination.

The importance of mastering hunting's rhetorical and physical conventions was underscored in the memoirs of Count Dankwart von Arnim. 'Minor infringements of these unwritten rules, factual or even just verbal errors…', he wrote,

> immediately led to a judgement that, although hardly articulated among us brothers, was definitive. Tiny things, ridiculous things: if someone spoke of a 'beautiful' rather than a 'strong' stag, if someone approached a horse clumsily in the stable, if someone was too friendly or too distant with the staff, all this and an endless number of nuances further confirmed the segregation and the sense of a special status that was not accessible to all.[61]

The rigour of such condemnation was, however, only maintained up to a point. When such a prestigious figure as Kaiser Wilhelm II acted like a 'shooter'—by dispatching 3,892 animals over the space of ten hunts, for example, or using two shotguns to bring down 800 hares or 925 pheasants that were driven towards him in a single session—it was unquestionably judged as an aberration of style, but nevertheless accepted with a furrowed brow.[62] In such cases, *quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi* ('the gods may do what cattle may not') seems to have been the tacit order of the day.

Hunting also encapsulated the aristocracy's sense of hierarchy and dominion over the natural world. The vanquished quarry—lined up, stuffed, and hung prestigiously on the wall—was perhaps the clearest illustration of the nobility's mastery over their surroundings, a domination that stood in contrast to all the reverence and submissiveness the middle class professed to experiencing when faced with mother nature. Both in actual fact and in their own inflated opinion of themselves, aristocratic hunters also enjoyed an 'organic' existence in, and relationship with, the natural environment. This self-proclaimed connection was rarely portrayed more vividly than in their descriptions of hunting itself. Indeed, the nobility did not have to wait for the writings of such intellectuals as Ernst Jünger and Martin Heidegger in the 1920s to teach them that a 'walk in the woods' could serve as a symbolic gesture of aristocratic withdrawal from society at large.[63] Nevertheless, in 1929, José Ortega y Gasset added a powerful metaphor to the stock of hunting symbolism that splendidly summed up the ideological significance of the hunting ritual in the 1900s. 'And that', he declared,

> is why [the nobility] hunt. When they are fed up with the irksome present day, when they are tired of 'being wholly part of the 20th-century', then they take a

shotgun, whistle for their dog, head into the woods, and spend a couple of hours or a couple of days indulging in the pleasure of 'being a Stone Age man'.[64]

During the twentieth century, aristocratic hunters incorporated this archaic instant extolled by Ortega into their entire habitus. They cultivated it, used it as a status symbol, and fed innumerable variations of it into the tide of anti-modernist discourses that were unleashed by right-wing intellectuals in the 1920s and that praised the (ordered, traditional, harmonious) countryside and vilified the trappings of (chaotic, decadent, toxic) modern urban living. This was another example of how ancient cultural practices were turned into fresh symbols after 1918 in a way that endowed the nobility with a new significance. Although highlighting the down-to-earth, anti-urban, warrior-like aspects of hunting and describing it as a 'character-building passion'[65] may have sounded rather Neolithic, it nevertheless struck an underlying archaic, vitalist chord that was enthusiastically adopted, copied, and modified in a variety of quarters, ranging from Nietzsche's nihilism and the Futurism of the Italian fascists to the German New Right and even the middle class. This novel, anti-modernist interpretation of an ancient ritual also elevated the nobility to a prominent position in the eyes of the reimagined right—a group that had not yet found its voice, but that worshipped the rural 'soil' and reviled the urban 'asphalt' wherever they were found.

As the aristocracy distanced themselves from big cities in general and the German capital—dubbed the 'New Babylon'[66]—in particular, both the reality and fantasy of their connection to the land and their hatred of the metropolis started becoming inextricably linked. This development, which became more and more pronounced after the turn of the twentieth century, reached a markedly emphatic moment in the writings of Wilhelm II, whose autobiography claimed that he had invariably felt like a 'prisoner' in the capital city, a place he described as a 'metropolis with its sea of stone, far from nature'. Although aristocratic memoirs frequently described the 'old Berlin' as a town of untrammelled opportunity, of glittering court festivities, of career-advancing contacts, and of 'a merry life' for young officers,[67] it became clear in the nineteenth century that the 'new Berlin' was increasingly being perceived as the nexus of all the trends that posed a risk to the nobility and their privileged world. In 1954, even such a cosmopolitan figure as Prince Karl Anton Rohan was led to speak in disparaging terms of the 'asphalt people', the 'asphalt culture', the 'uprooted nomads', and the 'world of asphalt' that could be found in the metropolis. In so doing, he modified

a leitmotif that the New Right had already been using with ever greater frequency since the latter days of the German Empire. In a similar example from 1931, the Westphalian Baron von Lüninck employed near-identical terminology when he called for leadership of the nation to be wrested from the grasp of the 'uprooted asphalt politicians' and handed to people 'who are rooted in the soil'.[68] Even towns of modest proportions began to be portrayed as 'sea[s] of stone', as 'something narrow, dead and artificial' in comparison to the endangered idyll of the countryside.[69]

These views cannot be dismissed as the quixotic resentments of an isolated band of reactionary failures. Indeed, the contemporary political and ideological relevance of such opinions can clearly be seen if one compares the nobility's anti-urban attitude with the influential analyses of 'asphalt culture' that were emerging from the middle-class intelligentsia at that time.[70] For example, the minor nobility's old notion that the metropolis sucked 'the marrow out of the bones' of the countryside[71] was highly compatible with the flood of *völkisch* publications decrying the city as a 'race grave'[72]—a boneyard where Aryan vigour and purity were becoming diluted with foreign blood. Moreover, reports written by *völkisch* authors about the 'effete and spoiled followers of fashion living in the big cities'—individuals who 'dwell [in] sky-high rented buildings where they seldom get to see a little patch of sky, breathe stuffy air, and have little physical exercise'[73]—were composed in a language that would have been understood on every aristocratic rural estate. Praising the countryside as the tranquil antithesis to the horrors of the decadent metropolis also chimed with the great debates that leading middle-class German economists held before the First World War to assess the potential of instituting an agrarian state as an alternative to an industrial society. Furthermore, the emotionally charged writings of the academically trained, *völkisch* figures of the emerging 'discipline' of the 'racial sciences' (*Rassenkunde*) regarded large cities as 'corn mills in which human families are ground up and worn down'[74]—a pseudo-scientific opinion that offered numerous points in common with the landed aristocracy.

This brand of anti-urban imagery—a great deal of which seems to have been produced by the minor, landowning nobility—was even repeated by aristocratic authors who had spent long periods of their lives in large towns. For example, one Baron Magnus von Braun styled himself as a countryman despite being a city-dwelling member of the Weimer Republic's powerful Berlin elite. 'My wife and I', he wrote,

> both originate from the countryside. We loved horse stables and cattle stalls, we loved the sprouting of the seeds and the scent of the forest. We had seen enough of the drifting chaff driven away by the wind in the big cities. We wanted to take root in our native soil once more and leave our children a piece of sacred earth they could cultivate, just as our forebears on both sides had done for hundreds of years.[75]

Over time, Berlin increasingly became viewed as the topographical concentration of all the things the nobility detested about the 'new era'. These targets of aristocratic criticism included modern art and cultural movements; the increasingly self-assured 'masses' of industrial labourers; and the showy wealth of what aristocrats dubbed *Klirrziegen*—literally 'clinking goats', the aristocratic term for middle-class women who festooned themselves with opulent jewellery.[76] It was also home to the reviled nouveau riche families of the financial and industrial middle class; the baffling, yet palpable, might of the international stock markets; and, last but not least: the perennially vilified Jews.[77]

The growing contrast between the good 'old Berlin' and the bad 'new' one—a 'paradise of Hebrewdom' that had hosted the revolution and allowed a fresh 'caste' of 'newly rich plebeians' to establish their 'mob rule' unchallenged at the 'garish red tables' in nightclubs on the Kurfürstendamm—reinvigorated resentments that had already begun in the latter days of the German Empire.[78] During the 1920s, aristocratic depictions of the capital were dominated by an open hatred of the city, a place where *Tauenztien-Girls* (loose, thrill-seeking, modern-dressing young women who haunted the Tauenztienstraße shopping street) and *Hopswut* (a frenzied 'dancing fever') could be diagnosed as omnipresent symptoms of a 'lack of dignity' and the 'idiotic sickness of the age'. These images were even confirmed by those aristocrats who had been actively engaged in the turbulent currents of the capital city after the First World War. Such individuals spoke of the town's 'excess'; of 'sex'; of a 'champagne-fuelled mood'; of 'gaudy women'; of financial scandals; of taxi-driving officers; of 'rascals' who 'cheerfully swam around in the vortex of post-revolutionary Berlin'; of grandmothers who competed with their granddaughters for the favour of the remaining men; and of the 'racketeers and money-grubbers' who consumed 'streams of bubbly' on the 'swollen, red, upholstered furniture' favoured by the vulgar ranks of newly wealthy metropolitans.[79]

This wholly negative, ideologically deformed impression of Berlin that emerged after 1918 chimed in with a real phenomenon that had established

itself over a longer period of time: namely, the nobility's retreat from the 'city of nouveau riche parvenus and posers' that took place around the turn of the century.[80] The type of 'amphibious' existence[81] split between the town and the countryside that the English, French, and Italian nobility were known for cultivating[82] had always been relatively rare among the German aristocracy, and the few nobles who followed such a routine progressively abandoned the practice in greater and greater numbers during the early 1900s.[83] Even families from the high nobility whose wealth remained undiminished started selling off their palaces in town and staying in hotels or rented apartments during the short social season. Although the aristocracy's decision to withdraw (not always, it must be said, voluntarily) from the 'Moloch' metropolis offered some benefits—it helped the landed aristocracy avoid competing with the burgeoning culture of luxurious villas and lavish lifestyles among the wealthy urban middle class, for example[84]—it cannot be described as an unequivocal success. For one thing, it sullied the aristocracy's own view of themselves. Indeed, the *völkisch* interpretation of the nobility's renunciation of the city—the idea that the 'Nordic *Mensch*', which was not cut out for modern metropolitan civilization, had ceded the urban space to the Jewish 'race' 'without a fight'[85]—was even disseminated by those aristocrats who had succeeded in maintaining their position in post-war Berlin. Moreover, the nobility's anti-Semitic, resentful disengagement from the metropolis deprived them of an important point of contact with twentieth-century society and denied the amalgamation of aristocratic and middle-class elites the logical nexus that the capital had, for a short while, represented. This move away from the centre of power and influence was further compounded by another factor that had become ever more pronounced since the latter days of the German Empire: the aristocracy's increasingly hostile attitude to education.

Character and Warriorhood

> Tuzzi's maxim was that one must express oneself sparingly and that puns, even though one could not entirely do without them in witty conversation, should never be too good, for that was bourgeois.
>
> —Robert Musil[86]

Knowledge and education never held the same significance for the aristocratic strategy of staying 'on top' as they did for middle-class dreams of

advancement. This basic fact explains the substantial disparity that existed between how the nobility and the middle class experienced learning, expertise, and intellectualism both in reality and in their own, stylized accounts. Examining this contrast alongside a range of aristocratic resentments will help shed light on why the minor nobility began to distance themselves from civil society in an increasingly marked way after the First World War.

The middle-class pedagogical ideal of unfettered personal development was far less focused on the overall trajectory of their class than the nobility's collective educational model, which hoped to shape all aristocrats 'in the same likeness' by following a clearly defined pedagogical path.[87] Instead of concentrating on the individual and their particular talents, the nobility focused on imbuing their charges with unified patterns of typical aristocratic behaviour. The primary objective of this inculcation was to communicate conventions of thought and action that were deemed befitting of people of their rank. Over time, as it became increasingly apparent that the middle class were invading the aristocracy's customary professional spheres, it became even more important to consolidate these uniting codes that could unify the nobility from within and set them apart from the rest of society.

The nobility preserved the vast majority of their traditional educational models right through into the twentieth century. Children were still raised by governesses and tutors, for example, before being sent to a select group of grammar schools, cadet corps, page schools, and (boarding) schools in the countryside—places of learning far removed from their intellectual, metropolitan, middle-class counterparts in large German cities—at a relatively late stage in their development. Families also maintained various educational strategies that created a clear distinction between the intended paths for boys and girls[88] and between the careers expected of firstborn sons and their younger brothers. In order to follow the 'indispensable educational curriculum' and forge 'a mind agreeable to the nobility',[89] aristocrats concentrated on just a few subjects (law, agriculture, forestry) at a handful of universities and underwent a range of key rituals that distinguished them from the rest of the nation.

Contrary to what one might expect, this rather narrow focus on a specific set of pedagogical goals did not necessarily lead to educational limitations in the aristocracy's ranks. It is true that sections of the nobility had long displayed a certain reluctance to adapt to the assessment tests the middle class had established at grammar schools and seats of higher learning and laid down as prerequisites for success in some key areas of modern life.[90]

Nevertheless, many nobles performed well in such exams.[91] Moreover, although the phantom of the uneducated, anti-intellectual *Junker* did actually exist (and was particularly prevalent among the old Prussian minor nobility), this stereotype was not representative of 'the aristocracy' as a whole. Indeed, it is very easy to find numerous individual and collective[92] examples of aristocrats enjoying high levels of educational and cultural success. Some nobles even emphasized such attainments as part of their public image.[93] In 1908, for example, an attempt to document the intellectual attainments of the contemporary nobility was able to point to forty-six aristocrats who had tried their luck as authors and managed to gain more or less widespread acclaim for their endeavours.[94] Outside the Prussian minor nobility, the overall standard of culture and education in the 'better' families, in the diplomatic 'dynasties', and within the high aristocracy[95] was also likely to have been very high. As a consequence, the wholesale allegation that the nobility were generally deficient in areas of culture and the intellect displayed less wit than the 'Junkerish' group of individuals at which it was aimed.

In spite of the evidence to the contrary, however, this popular notion that the nobility were intellectually deficient was one of the politically motivated caricatures that attained immortality during the era of the German Empire, not least thanks to the magnificent cartoons published in *Simplicissimus*, an influential satirical magazine. Ultimately, it is also undeniable that this aristocratic cliché was based on a quartet of four very real trends.[96] First among these trends was the consideration that, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the average level of learning among the nobility sank noticeably in comparison with that of their erudite middle-class rivals. This came as something of a surprise: back in the 1700s, it was still taken very much as read that the nobility belonged to the 'cultured section of society'. Over time, however, this view was severely shaken by the increasingly intense competition that emerged from the educated middle class. Second, to quote the words of Count Otto zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, it must not be forgotten that 'from south to north, from west to east, there existed a cultural divide'.[97] Indeed, it was hardly an accident that educated middle-class criticism of the nobility was fuelled by clichés based on militaristic lieutenants from northerly East Elbia rather than sophisticated princes from the south of the country. Third, it is true that all levels of the aristocracy clearly—and, in most cases, strongly—rejected all modern cultural movements, phenomena they viewed as symptoms of decline. When asked to explain the ban on a naturalistic play at Berlin's Lessing Theater in

1890, for example, the city's Police Chief Baron Bernhard von Richthofen merely replied 'die janze Richtung passt uns nicht' ('we oppose the entire trend')[98]—a laconic remark delivered in a thick Berlin accent that would go on to achieve an almost legendary status. In a similar vein, the fourth and final trend saw many aristocrats renouncing what they viewed as the excessive displays of education and culture that were routinely cultivated by the middle class.

This latter tendency was particularly visible among the German nobility. Unlike their middle-class counterparts, aristocrats rarely attempted to emphasize their own educational achievements in contemporary sources or in autobiographical depictions penned at a later date. Indeed, noble accounts of noble lives are generally underpinned by an affected distaste for education that formed one of the key differences separating the aristocratic cultural model from that of the middle class. The size of the gulf that existed between these two worlds can be detected in a passage by Joachim von Winterfeldt that describes a blood relation who belonged to the academic elite. In his role as the chairman of his family association, Winterfeldt made a concerted effort to reach out to those members whose 'manifold destinies' had 'alienated' them from the 'cousinhood' that otherwise predominantly consisted of 'officers, civil servants, and landowners'. His account of a meeting with Paul von Winterfeldt, a university professor in Berlin, provides an instructive demonstration of the rift that had emerged between the lifestyles of the landed aristocracy and their family members who had opted to tread the path of bourgeois professionalization. Winterfeldt's narrative recounts how he was greeted by a bearded medievalist who opened his front door wearing a long, black academic gown. Confined between the bookshelves of a 'miserable' city apartment reminiscent of Faust's own study, the text describes the myopic scholar as 'relentlessly expending his physical force' to complete the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, a gargantuan collection of medieval primary sources. Although the author of this portrait was a cultivated landowner and county commissioner who was dedicated to learning and cut a rather exceptionally erudite figure in his Mark Brandenburg homeland, and although his report did extol the glory and honour of academic endeavours, it also emphatically highlighted just how wholeheartedly his relative had been wrested from 'his old kith and kin, his clan' by the demands of his career.[99]

As elsewhere, the middle class in Germany viewed the accumulation of learning and knowledge as their ultimate goal and lent it far greater

weight than other important areas of everyday life.[100] Recent research into the middle class has meticulously mapped out the group's strong emphasis on education and the sophisticated techniques they used to memorize, reproduce, and communicate learning to their children. Producing offspring who were brought on by their parents until they became unstoppable readers, piano players, quotation-spouters, and linguists of the highest order was a dream that was pursued and actually attained in countless middle-class homes.[101] Indeed, this image of glittering achievement emerged forcefully from the pages of middle-class memoirs. The same cannot be said of accounts written by authors of the aristocracy, however. One aristocratic anecdote about a landowner who gained the nickname 'The Bookworm' just for being a regular reader of the *Jägerzeitung* hunting magazine[102] suffices to show the relatively low value the nobility ascribed to learning.

This aristocratic rejection of the middle-class cult of education began with their descriptions of schooling, where tales of (at best) mediocre academic achievement appeared more frequently and more strikingly than in the reminiscences of their middle-class fellow citizens. Long passages about dreams of hunting and nature during unspeakably tedious lessons in 'stuffy air' are typical of the genre. Interestingly, the nobility's contempt for learning and its mediators also included a markedly indifferent attitude towards the authority and the grades distributed by the domesticated, bookish teachers themselves.[103] Indeed, the childlike 'wildness' that both male and female aristocrats so often highlighted in their self-portrayals[104] was not infrequently aimed at the teaching staff—a group who, remarkably, also served as figures of fun for their pupils' own parents. Although it would be difficult to describe such mischief as a peculiarly aristocratic tendency, accounts of a certain parental approval of childhood acts of rebellion are nevertheless striking. In fact, they can even be viewed as part of the ideal aristocratic character or disposition, an unfettered attitude that valued the swift, clear decisions of an advancing front-line officer over the excessively cultivated, pedantic musings of the educated middle class. By showing disobedience towards the commoners who served as their in-house teachers, governesses, servants, maids, private tutors, and directors of studies,[105] young aristocrats effectively turned the generational hierarchy upside-down and demonstrated their conviction that the class-based imbalance of power between the noble child and the non-noble adult should remain conspicuous at all times.

At least from an aristocratic point of view, the grammar school was also seen as the setting of a rivalry between the nobility and the middle class, a place where the minority of noble pupils had to stand their ground against the resentment of their lower-middle-class teachers and the jealousy of their upper-middle-class classmates. Aristocratic schoolchildren—who bore such titles as *Grafenkind* ('child of a count'), *Komteß* ('unmarried, young countess'), *Prinzling* ('little prince'), and *Junker* ('young nobleman')—evidently often regarded themselves as exceptions to the general rule. A whole spectrum of accounts describe school as a place where the nobility were increasingly confronted with anti-aristocratic attitudes. These include stories of mild ridicule aimed at the aristocratic 'squires' who copied from 'woodworkers' children', tales of a horde of secondary school students who beat up their classmates from the high nobility, and reports of a communist teacher who declared aristocratic pupils to be the offspring of those 'pigs' who were responsible for the murder of the Marxist theorist and communist party leader Rosa Luxemburg.[106]

This dismissive portrayal of education certainly did not come to an end when aristocrats left their schooldays behind them. Although the school leavers' exam and higher education had long featured in the career plans of a large number of aristocratic sons, the nobility rarely described universities as lofty seats of learning. Indeed, noble memoirs were far more likely to portray universities as nests of 'organized idleness and drinking' than pedagogical institutions.[107] Aristocratic accounts of student days are dominated not by the lecture hall, but by the 'fencing chamber' at famous 'duelling fraternities'—places of dull masculine ritual where sword-wielding, heavy-drinking students could demonstrate a mix of physical talent, courage, strength of character, *esprit de corps*, and a willingness to make sacrifices. Even though some middle-class writers described higher education in similar terms,[108] it is hard to deny that the cultural capital accumulated by studying at university was far more important to middle-class students than their aristocratic counterparts. In many cases, any intellectual prowess the nobility did possess was suppressed in reminiscences and painted over by an emphasis on physical and military attributes. Otto von Bismarck's legendary abilities with a rapier and a drinking glass are a well-known case in point.[109] The example of Bernhard von der Marwitz provides similarly vivid proof of how the noble mastery of the art of memory could posthumously transform a cultivated aristocrat into a soldierly man of steel. This refined young man—a figure who had delved deeply into the work of the lyric poet Rainer Maria

Rilke and had ties with the art world's avant-garde[110]—lost his life on the Western Front in 1918. Thirteen years later, Marwitz's slender head was shown disappearing under an outsized steel helmet on the cover of an edition of his letters[111] that was published with political intent. Overall, the book distorted the author's character, oeuvre, and image to fit the model of soldierly life and the Goethe quotation—'Die and become' (*Stirb und Werde*)—that was selected as its title.[112]

The prime example of noble contempt for educational values appeared in the memoirs of Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau, an officer and landowner who referred to his desk as 'my enemy' and began his autobiography with a sideswipe at the 'ink-spilling epoch' in which he lived.[113] The epitome of an anti-intellectual aristocrat, Oldenburg-Januschau was a highly charismatic embodiment of the proverbial breed of man who—to cite a line from a play by the future SS leader Hanns Johst—might well declare 'I release the safety catch on my Browning [shotgun] as soon as I hear the word "culture"!'[114] Later adapted by Hermann Göring, this pugnacious quotation encapsulated a type of figure that had a long history in the minor nobility and enjoyed a highly active circle of admirers among the New Right. Time and again, this breed of individual—an archetype that was particularly prevalent among the lower landed and military nobility—characterized intellectual, middle-class metropolitans (the 'emancipation-addicted, barbarized human spirit reared by the chatter of the cities') as their enemies. Such a foe, they also believed, could be crushed at any given moment by the 'arsenal still equipped with respectable weapons' that the 'landed nobility' kept in readiness in 'their castles'.[115] Even though this brand of bellicose, hubristic worldview echoed through every officers' mess and was really more of a soldierly than an exclusively aristocratic phenomenon, it remained a typical pattern of thought among the minor nobility. Moreover, this anti-intellectual stance was also glorified in similar terms by prominent officers and landowners alike. For example, Paul von Hindenburg declared that 'even now the brave deed still stands above the affectations of intellect. Presence of mind and strength of character remain more valuable in the military marketplace than subtleties of cerebral learning.'[116] For his part, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin stated in 1926 that, although it was certainly important for the nobility to broaden their intellectual horizons ('the career of a Führer demands that . . . the intellectual battle be waged with weapons from one's own forge'), 'limits' had to be imposed upon the 'pursuit of intellectuality' wherever it came 'at the expense of the well-rounded personality,

the strength of one's roots and the ability to act with vigour'.[117] Two things should be said about these warrior-like declarations at this point. Firstly, their anti-intellectual stance was not born of empty bravado. In fact, the number of aristocrats involved in academic careers did remain low.[118] And, secondly, it should be noted that the attributes of decisive leaders, heroic figures, and men of action extolled in such statements were not located at too great a distance from similar-sounding rumblings issuing from the ranks of the middle-class New Right.[119]

Even this pervasive anti-intellectual trend was not universal among the nobility, however. For example, the Chief of the Prussian General Staff was wont to sign his correspondence 'Dr Count Schlieffen', a habit that continued an older tradition of cultivated General Staff officers who highlighted their erudition as part of their public image.[120] Prior to 1914, the pedagogical backgrounds of such figures as Reich Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg and General Staff Chief Helmuth von Moltke the Elder—a man who wrote novellas and could read seven languages—were also perfectly capable of matching up to the highest intellectual standards demanded of them. In fact, the Moltkes' private library at Schloss Klein-Oels in Silesia was one of the most impressive collections of books in all of Prussia. Like many families, the Moltkes also employed governesses to bring their children up speaking two or three languages. Other, similar tales of intellectual achievement fill the annals of noble history. In 1929, for instance, Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg's family delivered birthday speeches to the mother of the household in Latin.[121] Noble pupils who attended humanist grammar schools certainly learnt no less than their middle-class classmates. Moreover, Hitler's would-be assassin, Count von Stauffenberg, demonstrated the extremely high level of education that unquestionably existed among sections of the nobility by critiquing a new translation of Homer from the original Greek, for example, and discussing the epic poem *La Chanson du Roland* while recovering from serious injuries in hospital.[122]

Despite such exalted models of excellence, however, the underlying anti-intellectual trend among the aristocracy is clear. Indeed, even the well-read Moltke was not celebrated for his learning, but was referred to as 'The Great Silent One' among the General Staff. An anecdote about a particular toast Moltke made to Kaiser Wilhelm I has been handed down across the decades. Consisting of only seven words ('My Gentlemen, the Kaiser—hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!'), its brevity was said even to have impressed the laconic ranks of other aristocratic soldiers.

Overall, one's strength of 'character', an assured demeanour, and such purely physical qualities as 'resilience', 'adventurousness', and the celebrated *Gardemaß* (the lofty 'guardsman's stature' required of elite Prussian soldiers) counted for more among aristocratic groups with a rural or military bent than knowledge and education, which were frequently viewed as secondary virtues.[123] This pronounced noble distrust for the potentially damaging effects of education and intellectualism remained largely intact after the watershed of 1918. Indeed, portrayals of noble 'character' and swashbuckling 'deeds' were still being used by the minor nobility in general and members of the military clans in particular to distinguish themselves from the 'effete' products emanating from the bourgeois-dominated grammar school system until well into the twentieth century. 'How few fresh faces and vigorous figures are among them', stated one typical observer:

> most have an unhealthy colour in their cheeks, many already wear glasses, their posture is not straight, they are more or less bent over when they walk . . . . The Prussian country squire [*Landjunker*], on the other hand, whose academic knowledge is often rather weak, knows how to behave, understands how to handle the common soldier, is used to giving orders, and can withstand exertions well. A born horseman and hunter, he is in his element as a soldier and is familiar with social conventions from an early age.[124]

This ideal of the *Willensmensch*—a fanatical, decisive 'man of will'—was not exclusively used by the nobility to characterize the quintessential military officer, however.[125] In fact, the specific male archetype extolled in the above quotation is also described in similar words in some of the best-known visions for the future of the *völkisch* state. According to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, for instance, such a state would have to start from the assumption 'that a man who has little academic education but is physically healthy with a good, strong character, filled with decisiveness and willpower, is more valuable to the national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*] than a quick-witted weakling'.[126] The practical implementation of this educational model would later be enshrined in the Nazis' 'Junker Schools'—training facilities for future SS officers that were organized by the SS.[127]

As might be expected, some members of the aristocracy did not subscribe to the typical, anti-intellectual views of their class. Indeed, a handful of noblemen could be seen levelling criticism at the educational reticence of their peers. In 1895, for example, Ernst von Wolzogen predicted that the noble contempt for art and education would sign the old aristocracy's death warrant by forcing intellectuals to forge an alliance with the proletarian

'rabble'. 'Of course', he lamented, 'most of you have not read any poets since you left school. You were so busy drinking, playing cards and standardizing your customs and views that you found no time for such things.'[128] Despite being inspired by good intentions, this brand of admonishment had little lasting effect. To make matters worse, such efforts were also undermined by a not-insignificant number of middle-class intellectuals who advised the aristocracy against succumbing to the tentativeness of the keen learner and counselled them to put their faith in country air, tradition, and instinct instead. In 1926, for example, one publication read by the right-wing intelligentsia announced to the nobility that bourgeois dynasties could not last four generations before becoming over-refined and falling victim to decadence. Thanks to their assured instincts and solid racial makeup, however, the aristocracy were immune to such a fate.[129]

Despite such isolated instances of disagreement, the nobility and the New Right generally shared overlapping anti-intellectual convictions. Writing in 1927, for instance, one aristocratic naval officer declared that there were 'only three great German men whose words one has to heed... Luther, Frederick the Great and Bismarck—the peasant, the prince and the nobleman; they said everything Germans need to know.'[130] Even here there was a connection with the anti-intellectual sentiment of the right-wing intelligentsia. According to the poet Stefan George, for example, reading '50 books' was 'enough for an upstanding individual. Everything else is "education".'[131] Even university professors from old aristocratic families made mockery of democratic educational ideals. For example, one Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, a classical philologist and member of Berlin's academic crème de la crème, was unable to muster any enthusiasm for the increasing number of students from more diverse backgrounds who signed up to study in the 1920s. In his estimation, educating a wider section of the population would merely attract 'smart arses' who would, at best, become journalists or parliamentarians. 'These semi-educated types', he declared, 'shall become the leaders of the *ochlos* [the rabble].'[132]

Published in 1928, the last Kaiser's informative memoirs also contain similar views. Despite claiming to have immersed himself in the works of world literature with 'feverish ardour', Wilhelm II nevertheless strongly criticized the 'weaknesses' of the Prussian school system, which attracted feeble 'philologists' who were incapable of feeling any enthusiasm for the 'pan-German project'—the dream of building a mighty German Empire that would rule the continent and hold dominion over the seas. The Kaiser's

self-portrayal is also striking because of the glimpses it offers of the relentless drills that turned him—a physically handicapped prince—into a king. Indeed, Wilhelm II's recollections contain credible descriptions of the 'hard, sober fulfilment of duty' he underwent to 'strengthen his character through constant denial'. The adjectives he crams into the space of just a few sentences (hard, strict, sober, old Prussian, tearful, joyless, dry) join forces with a number of nouns (service, fear, ruthlessness, strength, pain, duty, denial, simplicity, Spartan, bread, exertion, perfection) to reveal the barren core at the heart of the Prussian nobility's educational ideal.[133]

Although the nobility's ostentatious contempt for education was significantly less pronounced among the Catholic aristocracy, even they were not entirely immune to anti-intellectual tendencies. Take Prince Alois zu Löwenstein, for example. A mediatized prince (*Standesherr*) and a devout Catholic who held a number of prominent offices, Löwenstein was about as far removed from the lifestyles and opinions of the Prussian military nobility as an aristocrat could be. Nevertheless, when searching for an in-house tutor for his sons in 1928, the prince first sought out the help of a friend, the Westphalian Count von Galen. 'What we are looking for', Löwenstein explained, 'is a gentleman in character, disposition and way of life, not just someone who knows not to eat from his knife. A man who can also teach the boys a chivalrous mentality . . . . The main concern is definitely not manners—the boys can learn them by and by—but that he thinks the same as the likes of us.' Count von Galen submitted a proposal to the prince that reveals a certain amount about noble educational notions. A Westphalian baron whose curriculum vitae did not include such niceties as academic qualifications was selected for closer consideration. Galen could only suppose that his candidate had been to grammar school and possessed some language skills. He could report with authority, however, that, despite being bald, his thirty-four-year-old protégé had a 'fresh, youthful outlook on life'. Moreover, it transpired that this impoverished baron, who had tried his hand at being an 'artist' in the United States after 1918, had been singled out thanks to his combat experience as a pilot and the 'dashing' escape attempt he had undertaken as a prisoner of war.[134] The consideration that the princes' sons were destined for the prestigious Feldkirch boarding school three years later indicates that high academic standards were still being upheld by wealthy noble clans. Nevertheless, the nature of Löwenstein's enquiry and the content of Galen's response also suggest that the part of

the old 'authentically aristocratic upbringing' that focused on 'strength of character', attitude, manners, and lifestyle remained at least as important as educational matters in these families' estimations. Indeed, as with other aristocratic circles, the Catholic aristocracy saw the nobility as a 'living culture' that one grew into 'effortlessly' and 'entirely naturally' by rubbing shoulders with 'outstanding individuals' in old noble castles.[135]

The peculiar idea that certain groups of people were equipped with inborn access to a stock of knowledge and could thus largely do without the pedagogy of the middle class was another opinion the old aristocracy shared with the New Right. An example of this can be seen in the writings of the author Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, a key figure among the right-wing intelligentsia whose most significant publication popularized the phrase *Das Dritte Reich* ('The Third Reich'). 'The Left', he wrote,

> has reason. The Right has wisdom....Masculinity is the essence of wisdom. It takes character not to succumb to self-delusion. The conservative man possesses this character as well as the physical prowess and moral determination to act in accordance with this character....He has the innate ability to pass judgement and to make deductions, to recognize reality....Conservatism is based on an understanding of human nature.[136]

Another example of the aristocracy's anti-intellectualism arose in 1931, when Baron Wilhelm von Reitzenstein gave a speech to his southern German peers in which he attempted to demonstrate the enduring capabilities of the old nobility. During his address, Reitzenstein declared that the old aristocracy's model of a 'hard' upbringing was still the finest educational strategy available and shouted a motto—'*character* is everything!'—to the noble youth of Bavaria which contained a tenet that was also to be found in the Prussian military clans.[137] This aristocratic veneration for 'character'—for clarity, simplicity, and unfailing, uncompromising decisiveness—also went hand in hand with a disdain for specialism and intellectualism, which many nobles believed caused one's character to atrophy. Such a worldview cast the curtailment of academic ambition as a virtue. Indeed, as Johann-Albrecht von Rantzau stated,

> it [is] not without reason that the nobleman has so often been called 'blinkered'. He deliberately blinkered himself by adhering to the ancient, traditional, atavistic ways of life of a warlike and hunterly society and attempting to forge ahead with an existence based on these, even in the conditions of the modern age.[138]

From a middle-class perspective, the accumulation of education had a fivefold logic. Firstly, it was a way to rehearse the middle-class cultural model—a paradigm that was based on the educational ideal. Secondly, it created a firm foundation for securing future careers. Thirdly, it supplied the middle class with the most important vehicle for advancement to the 'upper echelons' of society. Fourthly, it established a filter system for controlling the upward mobility of the lower orders. And finally, it granted the middle class a playing field where they could write the rules of the game instead of the nobility and perpetually gain the upper hand over their 'superiors' as a result.

Both in reality and in the middle-class imagination, the individual became 'something'—namely, a citizen accepted by other citizens—via accomplishment, education, and work.[139] This reliance on personal merit stood in stark contrast to the collective aristocratic claim '*to be something*'[140] (i.e. an elite appointed to rule or lead) right from the day they were born. Viewed in this light, the noble rejection of the middle-class power of knowledge also appears to be an attempt to defend the ideal of their '*Unzersplittertes Sein*'[141]—i.e. their unfragmented essence that was reflected in the holistic nature of their lives—against the specialization that had served both as the hallmark and enabler of middle-class 'progress' during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As far as the aristocracy's own view of themselves was concerned, the ability to design steel ships, perform pancreatic surgery, or interpret the German Civil Code may well have been sufficient occupations and vocations to fulfil a bourgeois existence,[142] but were at best handy additional talents for individuals of their station. Indeed, careers in some of the nobility's traditional professions, including agriculture and the military in particular, were possible regardless of whether one had been to university or not. In others, qualifications were required, but could only get one so far. In fact, for many occupations, mastering noble cultural codes was just as important as having university degrees. Even though aristocrats 'very often undeniably lag[ged] behind the tradition-less elements [i.e. non-noble students] in their examinations',[143] their networks of relatives and acquaintances still frequently provided effective assistance with advancement in the armed forces, in the civil service, and in the diplomatic corps.

Overall, the nobility's ritualized disregard for education created a protective barrier that shielded them from requiring the key qualifications demanded by the modern, predominantly urban 'power elites'—sections of society that held positions of considerable influence and included a vastly

disproportionate number of educated, middle-class Jews.[144] This defence mechanism was of particular importance for those aristocratic groups who held few, if any, such qualifications of their own. It also exhibited the same tactic that the nobility used to differentiate themselves from middle-class wealth.

Austerity

Since time immemorial, the image of a fairy-tale existence filled with riches, luxury, and the finer things in life has numbered among the many associations linked with the word 'nobility' in the popular imagination.[145] Promulgated in a variety of sources ranging from humanist criticism of the aristocracy to glossy reports in the European tabloid press, it is likely that these notions were formed over centuries, largely from observing the life-styles of the high nobility and the richest echelons of the landed aristocracy. Nevertheless, the caricature of the profligate nobleman neither captured how the aristocracy perceived themselves nor reflected the social realities that most sections of the German nobility experienced in their day-to-day lives. Indeed, as the years progressed, wealth and luxury became laden with more and more negative connotations within the nobility as a whole. This was even the case among those groups that still had such means at their disposal. Although this increasing aristocratic emphasis on anti-materialist attitudes was lent a certain sense of continuity by linking it to older noble traditions,[146] it can best be described as a dynamic process of development that began around the turn of the century and gathered even more speed after 1918.

During the era of the German Empire, members of the wealthy upper middle class who were not content with merely copying their aristocratic rivals started to compete with and conspicuously outdo the nobility's formal style in a new idiom of their own devising. The gigantic Villa Hügel, for example—an extremely modern, highly efficient 269-room residence built by the Krupp family of industrialists in the 1870s—put noble manor houses and city palaces in the shade. By the late nineteenth century, it had become increasingly difficult for the aristocracy to compete with the power and magnificence displayed by the richest middle-class clans.[147] Such displays of wealth seemed to have a destabilizing effect on the aristocracy's position. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, the old middle-class

formula of criticizing noble opulence was turned on its head as the nobility, foundering in an industrialized society, began to condemn the riches of their middle-class rivals.

When it came to dealing with middle-class wealth on a cultural level, the aristocracy relied on subtle differences to set themselves apart from the perceived inferiority of the middle class. Such distinguishing features could be very subtle indeed. For example, one disparaging anecdote about a merchant from Hamburg who had made his money importing guano revolved around mockery of a single tiepin, a trifling trinket whose diminutive size illustrates the aristocracy's rapidly growing need for little symbolic victories in times of significant economic defeat. At the very first 'ostentatious dinner' he gave on his freshly acquired country estate, the wholesaler—a man whose family had recently been granted aristocratic status via a process of being 'knighted' or 'ennobled' that was looked down upon by the old nobility's more ancient ranks—was forced to listen under his own roof while his aristocratic guests hinted that his baronial title without the genuine pedigree of a 'rural disposition' was nothing but empty symbolism. An outsized pearl resplendent on the merchant's tie provided the tasteful nobility with an opportunity to distance themselves from their nouveau riche neighbour. Assuming an air of feigned amicability, a member of an old aristocratic family from Mecklenburg asked the ennobled businessman whether the pearl, like his fortune, was also the product of a bird's digestive tract: 'Tell me, my dear Ohlendorff', he asked, 'did the pelican deposit that there for you, too?'[148] Numerous disdainful accounts of this kind transformed their noble narrators' own declining fortunes into a virtue. Interestingly, this derogatory, anti-capitalist impulse seems to have trumped whatever other convictions their aristocratic bearers might otherwise have held. In fact, although Johann-Albrecht von Rantzau—the historian who transmitted the tiepin anecdote—was sympathetic to republicanism, he unmistakably harboured a desire to experience triumphs over the middle class, at least in terms of stories. Even the likes of Baron von Reibnitz, a former Social Democratic minister, expressed a similar, anti-upstart sentiment. 'Every now and then', he wrote, 'there was indeed a healthy reaction in courtly circles against the various [bourgeois] snobs of the male and female persuasion who crawled around the fringes of court society in order to force their way in.'[149]

Noble memoirs contain an astonishingly uniform set of overblown descriptions of a world in which luxury was rarely available and apparently never sought out. Such accounts bear the tell-tale traits of the ancient ideal

of aristocratic austerity. One description of a Pomeranian manor house included how a request for a cube of sugar in one's tea was sniffily regarded as a sign of decadence. In another tale, a former Prussian Minister of War reminisced, not without pride, about a 'certain poverty' that often caused him to forgo his evening meal as a young cavalry officer so that his horse would never want for oats.[150] Reich President Hindenburg had himself photographed next to a motto, *ora et labora* ('pray and work'), that was housed in a simple wooden frame. Ignoring the energetic protests of his valet, he also wore a tattered hat in a nod to the economic crisis of the age.[151] In a similar vein, Tisa von der Schulenburg—the prodigal daughter and notorious black sheep of an old, prestigious family who plunged herself into the maelstrom of Berlin's art scene after 1918—portrayed the riches and opulence of her Jewish husband's villa in the posh south-west of the capital as a scourge that was alien to her being.[152] In 1925, Prince Alexander von Hohenlohe, the son of a rich family from the southern German high nobility, described middle-class industrialists and bankers as 'modern sharks' whose 'brutal rapacity' was a prosaic version of the marauding knights of old that had been divested of all romanticism by the capitalist system.[153] For his part, Count Ottfried von Finckenstein—a man who attempted to lead a double life between the milieu of a major East Prussian landowner and a career as a banker and stockbroker—articulated the aristocracy's typical anti-capitalist attitude in a more mundane manner. 'It was never the Junkers' objective to make money.' he declared: 'Firstly, most of them were relatively poor and, secondly, as Frau von Thadden was wont to point out, an upstanding person just has money anyway.' Different attitudes to money also featured in the count's explanation of the great rift that existed between the nobility and the middle class—two groups which, he claimed, 'talked at cross purposes with one another in different idioms'. Finckenstein wrote, for instance, of the nobility's refusal to 'suffocate in the mediocrity of money-making' which was, he claimed, the mark of the middle class. That the count—a figure who had been active in the stock markets and worked in the United States—could describe this attitude of anti-capitalist rejection in such pathos-laden tones again suggests that, instead of dismissing it as an ideology that was invented after the fact, this noble stance should be understood as a guiding principle that actually had an impact among the aristocracy as a whole.[154] Indeed, many nobles maintained this kind of pre-industrial attitude even when it no longer corresponded with a world of banks, financial centres, stock exchanges, and modern technology.

The remarkable homogeneity of these noble accounts[155] also points to the existence of a fictive aristocratic alliance. Although not powerful enough fully to reconcile the socially exceedingly heterogeneous ideologies that were held by different noble groups, this tacit entente did actually succeed in bringing the aristocracy closer together. The potency of the anti-materialist symbols on which this bond was based lay in its ability to allow the nobility to glorify austerity *and* retain their 'God-given' wealth without apparent contradiction. Viewed from this perspective, 'dirty trouser legs' and 'the uncombed lock of hair on the forehead' were not seen as signs of negligence, but as expressions of a style interpreted as voluntary sacrifice, modesty, and 'incorruptibility'.[156] The history of the nobility is filled with examples of how this attitude manifested itself in everyday life. For instance, one mediatized prince reused envelopes several times and expressed his shame at having a new pair of boots in a lean economic climate. No less a figure than Crown Prince Wilhelm once warned his officers of the temptations of luxury while at the exclusive Union Club. Despite his great fortune, a Catholic count lived 'infinitely simply' and sometimes consumed no more than 'a bottle of mineral water' all day. Moreover, the children of one East Elbian family were served mutton covered in pheasant feathers for months as a punishment for having expressed their delight at a roast pheasant. These snapshots of frugality[157] also chime with accounts of castles and country houses whose inhabitants lived an almost Spartan existence in chilly, unheated, modestly furnished rooms behind their residences' imposing facades.[158] Such moderation was never relaxed, even on festive occasions: one sat at the table until no later than 9 p.m., never wished anyone *guten Appetit* ('bon appétit'), and never expressed praise for the food one was served. Guests' carriages were readied by 10:30 p.m. at the latest and left promptly when it was time to depart.[159]

This attitude can best be described as one of a 'culture of austerity'. After 1918, this culture, which had been a daily reality among the minor nobility for generations, played an increasingly important role in reinventing the entire aristocracy for the modern age. It was even invoked to great effect by well-to-do or wealthy nobles who paid mere lip service to the prevailing trend for aristocratic self-denial. Overall, there is no doubt that the flood of 'anti-materialist' invectives that poured forth from the aristocracy after 1900 can be interpreted as an indication of increasing weakness among their ranks. At the same time, however, it would be inadequate to dismiss this noble outpouring as a mere collection of convenient fantasies dreamt up by

a group of failures. In fact, although it was born of genuine need, the cult of austerity seems to have been a deliberate attempt on the nobility's part to become more appealing to aristocrats and non-nobles alike by staging a show of imagined strength that was ostensibly based on self-denial. This austerity cult, which became increasingly distorted into an ideology after 1918, also provided a way to unite the nobility from within and define the borders that separated them from the world outside. Indeed, over time, its exaggerated, uniquely noble blend of rural, knightly, Christian, and military motifs came to constitute a significant part of what it meant to be an aristocrat. Furthermore, this attitude provided the aristocracy with a new narrative that made them relevant to other groups who felt equal resentment towards the rich 'moneybags' in society.[160] As a consequence of all these factors, there is a good argument for taking these accounts seriously.

Theorists of the elite have emphasized that the ability to embrace asceticism is an important part of what makes an elite charismatic. In the words of the conservative philosopher Arnold Gehlen, 'a claim to have elite status must . . . always be legitimized by a level of asceticism or it will not succeed.' In 1952, Gehlen articulated the dream of an 'ascetic elite which excludes itself from the general competition for a life of luxury'.[161] During the interwar period, this notion existed as an indistinct ideal among broad swathes of the population. This represented a promising opportunity for many aristocrats. For one thing, the nobility really did have a special talent for romanticizing the austerity of their own lives and making it seem like a virtue. Nowhere is this more evident than among the ranks of the minor nobility, a group that worked particularly hard to turn material want into a veritable cult of austerity. Indeed, even when it was forced upon them by economic circumstances, the minor nobility wielded austerity as an effective weapon in the fight for influence and power. Reframing financial and cultural deprivation as an honourable way of life not only allowed them to avoid the self-abasement that often befalls those who act from a position of poverty or lack,[162] but also made them the perfect candidates to slake the anti-capitalist thirst in society and form the focus of the anti-materialist rhetoric espoused by the burgeoning National Socialist movement.

Points of connection between the aristocracy and the New Right in this ideological domain were many. It was extremely easy, for example, to frame the cult of austerity as an overture to the general population's 'anti-capitalist yearning'—a formula that Gregor Strasser would make famous on behalf of the left wing of the NSDAP in a speech he gave in 1932[163] and that proved

extremely popular on the lively market of worldviews that emerged after the First World War. Long before the National Socialists had reshaped this 'yearning' to suit their own ends, however, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, one of the most influential gurus of the New Right, had already turned his back on dandyism and embraced the Prussian cult of austerity. In so doing, this refined 'man of letters' became the prototype of the kind of right-wing intellectual who would later infuse the old nobility with a new significance. During the First World War, long before he propelled the term 'Third Reich' on to its great linguistic career in 1923, Moeller had praised 'bearing' and the manly, honest, austere 'Prussian style'[164] as gestures of obeisance to all things simple, disciplined, and soldierly.[165] Ultimately, this aesthetic brand of opposition to the middle class helped build bridges between the worldview of the minor nobility and the style of the New Right, a political phenomenon that was in the ascendency all over Europe.

One highly visible result of the cult of austerity was the detrimental impact it had on aristocrats' social lives. As one noble observer derisively remarked, during the 1920s 'the less well-off members of the German Noble Society [DAG]' were offered 'a tasty lunch for one mark'—a paltry sum—at a club known as the 'Kurmärkerklub' in the centre of Berlin. The Crown Prince and Princess and other Prussian princes and their wives made a conspicuous point of attending the Noble Society's meagre winter balls, events which were regarded as 'court ball substitutes' among the landed aristocracy.[166] Austerity also led the club to organize youth events which, in order to dispense with the usual orchestras and dress codes, were explicitly advertised as evenings 'without dancing'.[167] The minor nobility used such stripped-back social occasions as another opportunity to turn symptoms of material deficiency into 'anti-materialist' virtues. For instance, the *Adelsblatt*—the DAG's periodical that was predominantly read by members of the minor, 'impoverished' nobility—urged women to go out in a 'simple evening gown' and 'without [a] hat'.[168] This kind of tactic enjoyed varying degrees of success.

Another effect of the cult of austerity was the accentuated divisions it set up within the aristocracy by establishing ideologically charged boundaries between the frugal, self-sacrificing existence of the minor nobility and the luxurious lifestyles of the *grands seigneurs* (a level of splendour that, in any case, lay well beyond the minor nobility's grasp). An especially conspicuous example of the contrast between these two groups was presented by the Prussian military clans under whose influence the aristocracy's culture of

austerity ultimately degenerated into a cult. This particular breed of family upheld a long-standing tradition of anti-materialism and soldierly sacrifice. Indeed, the oft-cited German 'lieutenants who, with low pay and little chance of advancement, require nothing more than their birth right, held by their families for many generations, to let themselves be shot dead en masse as soon as a war broke out'[169] were not merely a part of such clans' mythologizing self-portrayals, but also represented a blood-soaked reality of their everyday lives. In fact, many of their number had known no alternative to an officer's career for generations. As a result, framing personal sacrifice as their *raison d'être* had a certain logic for these militaristic individuals.[170]

This cult of heroic sacrifice was a widespread phenomenon throughout the German aristocracy. Indeed, the nobility ploughed enormous reserves of time and effort into the cult of valour and sacrifice and the practice of heralding their fallen sons as soldiers (a process that sometimes required a certain amount of posthumous artistic licence). These public images were predominantly formed by the *Helden-Gedenkmappen*, commemorative portfolios of heroes that were created in memory of fallen aristocrats after the First and the Second World War.[171] After 1918, such publications, which were even produced by the southern German nobility,[172] served to document the aristocracy's extraordinary, undiminished readiness to make sacrifices. For instance, the 1921 edition of the *Helden-Gedenkmappe* described how 'entire noble families' had echoed the 'sagas of old' by storming ahead against crushing superior strength until they sank to the ground, 'mown down by the Reaper's scythe', their 'ashen lips rattling with a death wail in damnation of unpunished murder'.[173] The necessity and value of such testimonials increased in equal measure after 1933, when dying on the front line became an effective way to demonstrate a family's value to the now openly militaristic state. Shortly after the reinstatement of universal conscription in 1935, for example, the Bülow family association reminded the new ruling powers that they had 'sacrificed 34 of our best' during the First World War.[174]

Such noble representations of self-denial, selflessness, and the willingness to make sacrifices also tie in with another important element of the aristocratic culture of austerity: namely, the 'toughness' of one's physicality and character and how they were portrayed to the outside world. Enduring pain, demonstrating physical resilience, and entirely avoiding the utterance of complaint were all components of the noble ideal known as one's 'bearing' (*Haltung*). Noblemen's reports of such qualities at cadet academies, in the student corps, in the trenches, and in other shapers of masculinity[175] were

matched by astonishingly similar narratives from the memoirs of aristocratic women.[176] In many cases, it seems as though a wish to counter the bourgeois cult of sensitivity and 'emotionalization' was a major driving force behind this variety of account.[177] Indeed, struggle and sacrifice were frequently portrayed as watchwords in contrast to the luxury and opulence enjoyed by the middle class and—often—even by the high nobility themselves. In 1935, Baroness Charlotte von Hadeln penned an anecdote that provides a pithy illustration of the defiant pride behind these guiding principles. 'When she arrived in Potsdam from England as a young princess', she wrote, 'the Empress Frederick [Queen Victoria's eldest child] is said to have asked: "Tell me, what is there in the Mark Brandenburg? Sand—potatoes—pine trees" ', to which came the answer ' "and *heroes*, Your Royal Highness!" '.[178] Another story contrasted the aristocratic officer and landowner Albrecht von Graefe with Matthias Erzberger, a southern democratic republican who signed the German capitulation in November 1918. In the tale, Erzberger—a 'corpulent' figure whose 'self-satisfied speech about finances' and 'feminine, softly gesticulating hands' disgusted aristocrats in equal measure—entered the following, rhyming phrase in a hotel guestbook: 'First do your task, then drink and laugh!' Graefe, a *völkisch* politician and owner of a knight's estate in Mecklenburg, pointedly added the following line of verse underneath: 'Drinking and laughing at such at time makes one a pitiful man!' It was no coincidence that this story was transmitted by Hadeln, an officer's daughter who had been living in financial straits since 1918 and had become an early supporter of the NSDAP. It was also no accident that Erzberger ultimately became one of the early, prominent victims of a new strain of right-wing radical terrorism that counted aristocratic officers among its leading ranks.[179]

In Hadeln's narrative, Erzberger, the 'soft' democrat who serves as the villain of the piece, is contrasted with Graefe, a new breed of nobleman which had been hardened by exposure to war. This new archetype resembled the modern concept of the *Führer-Adel* (literally the 'Führer nobility')—an ideal ruling caste that was summed up in an autobiographical report penned in 1931 by Countess Edith von Salburg, a member of the old aristocracy who worked as a *völkisch* journalist. In her piece, Salburg painted a portrait of this new type of elite that combined noble traditions, symbolic capital, material poverty, and a firm resolve to adopt fresh, radical modes of thought together in a blend of *völkisch* and aristocratic values that were fitting for the age. Her text also demonstrated how this new kind of *Führer-Adel*

dismissed the older ideal of the *Herrscher-Adel*—a more prosaic proponent of traditional, unchallenged aristocratic leadership and power (*Herrschung*). The countess exemplified this new ideal by describing the dignified atmosphere of a stronghold in Saxony, a place whose *Ahnensaal* ('hall of ancestors') was bedecked with paintings of the former lords of the castle, all of whom were portrayed in a chain mail shirt at the age of seventeen. 'The one they call the heir in the castle here today is poor . . . ', she wrote, 'He wears coarse working clothes and his hands look hardened. . . . The gate that was sealed so sternly over the centuries stands wide open. . . . His shining gaze looks to those whose Führer he wants to mature into. He has made a binding vow. The castle's day is not yet done.'[180] As can be seen from this *völkisch* author's words, there was often a direct link between social decline and an emotional opposition to wealth, luxury, trade, and the stock market—in short, to modern financial and industrial capitalism in all its forms.

The aristocracy's cult of austerity frequently adopted the guise of a call to arms. One example of this is presented by the 'Appeal to the German Nobility', a text that appeared on the front page of the *Adelsblatt* in 1921. Signed by Friedrich von Berg and Oskar von Hindenburg, it warned readers against succumbing to 'luxurious standards of living'. As with countless other noble publications of its kind, the article presented the nobleman, the 'simplicity of his lifestyle', and 'chivalry' as an indivisible trinity of aristocratic virtues.[181] Although a similar threefold ideal of toughness, self-discipline, and frugality had existed among the Prussian nobility for many centuries, the reimagined, more stridently anti-capitalist version of this ethos that emerged during the era of the German Empire—largely thanks to the efforts of the minor nobility's coalition that existed within the DAG—seems to have held more significance in modern times. In 1874, for example, a directive from Wilhelm I to the War Ministry regarding the introduction of courts of honour (panels of senior officers who made internal decisions about matters of military integrity, typically when younger officers misbehaved) contained the following pronouncement: 'The more that luxury and good living proliferate elsewhere, the more pressingly the officer's profession is confronted with the duty never to forget that it was not via material goods that it gained, and will preserve, its position of high esteem in the state and in society.'[182] This genre of criticism—expressed here in the martial, romanticizing tones of a soldierly king—unerringly called upon ancient chivalric virtues to appeal to an audience that extended well beyond the circles of military officers. The beast to be vanquished from

society had three heads: the Jewry, the financial middle class, and a section of the moneyed high nobility and the wealthy court aristocracy. As far as the minor nobility were concerned, these three forces increasingly merged into one and the same evil.

Over time, anti-Semitism would spread far beyond the milieu of the East Elbian minor nobility and become the most important medium for denouncing the corrosive effect that money-grubbing 'mammonism' had on the world. Count Franz von Galen—the well-known Bishop of Münster's younger brother who served as the chairman of the Association of Catholic Nobles until 1928—provided a prime example of this phenomenon in a lecture he delivered on *Chivalry in Bygone and Modern Times* in 1921. '[We must] hold fast', he declared,

> to the traditional simplicity of our customs. Weakness and luxury should have no place in our houses. Luxury is invariably a sure sign of decadence. And once the Jews have brought us to the point where we participate in, or even imitate, their mollycoddled, perfumed, sumptuous luxury, then they will soon have us entirely in their grasp . . . . The only thing missing then will be 'marrying into money' as the apparent last resort to gild the shield bearing the old coat of arms . . . . Let us return to simplicity in our actions, our entitlements, and our surroundings . . . . Let us despise luxury in all its forms.[183]

Broadly speaking, the nobility's austere, anti-capitalist ethos varied from region to region. For example, the southern German aristocracy were more likely to cling to certain minimum standards of living than the Prussian minor nobility. Evidence of this can be seen in a newsletter setting out a programme that the prominent Bavarian Baron Erwein von Aretin wrote to 'the young nobility of Bavaria', in which he broached the subject of the 'sharp and painful boundary [that ran] straight through the old domain of the aristocracy' due to the rift that had emerged between the rich and the poor. Admittedly, Aretin did make some effort to guard himself against the criticism of his increasingly destitute peers—'the impoverished aristocrat', he declared, 'might challenge class consciousness, but the only thing we cannot stomach is someone who came by their property via crooked means'. Nevertheless, unlike the authors of some of the tirades in the *Adelsblatt*, he was also adamant that noble property was the indispensable lifeblood of aristocratic culture and leadership. 'Property is', he stated, 'not unimportant to us. We know that it is the backbone of our rank, that it alone allows a dynasty to grow up with a broad attitude to life . . . It is not the goal of our outlook on life, merely a means to attain it . . . .'[184] The formula employed by

Aretin here could be seen wherever wealthy aristocrats pontificated about property in public.

In spite of all the differences that existed between the Prussian and south German aristocracy and between impoverished and wealthy noble groups, however, the cult of austerity was one of the areas of common ground that allowed the nobility to come together and reinforce old boundaries that separated them from the rest of society. Their increasingly aggressive dissociation from the mightiest sections of the upper middle class—a 'class of people that openly saw mere money-making as their purpose in life'[185]—was the most consequential of these dividing lines. Although the frontiers of the ideological territory the aristocracy marked out for themselves were not entirely fixed, they were provided with such impenetrable defences against industrial capitalism and parliamentary democracy that the nobility were unable to move into these brave new worlds of modern life until after 1945. From this small basis, the nobility were forced to try to rely on their one remaining tactic: making strident claims that they possessed alleged creative abilities. The most important component of these claims was the nobility's attempt to restyle themselves as the *Führerstand*—a class or group of Führers which would play a key role in overcoming democratic 'mass society'. Despite being built on flimsy factual foundations, this ideology was broadcast into an intellectual and political climate that proved eminently favourable to its reception. In fact, as the years progressed, older noble metaphors of toughness, conflict, and austerity began to unite more and more openly with the praise of brutality that was rife among the minor nobility and the ranks of the New Right. As tempting as it might seem, it is not possible to dismiss these 'staged male fantasies'[186] as the last signs of an outdated, crumbling world. Indeed, this muscular, masculine blend of noble guiding principles and modern, right-wing, middle-class ideas contained viable models for a violent future that flourished into new significance against the backdrop of revolution and military defeat that emerged in 1918.

Führertum

> The aristocracy's truest and noblest purpose is: leadership [*Führerschaft*]. The nobleman should be a Führer. That is his vocation, that is why he is here.
>
> —W. von Hagen in a 1921 edition of the *Deutsche Adelsblatt* (the periodical of the DAG)[187]

Even after 1918, members of the nobility did not give up on the idea that they—in contrast to the stereotypical middle-class 'workaholic' who was unfailingly 'overloaded and overeducated' and 'working on the brink of exhaustion'[188]—were *natural-born* leaders. This view, which formed part of the indomitable heart of the aristocratic habitus, was summed up in a speech that Count Friedrich von Galen delivered to his peers in 1912: 'The lords of the nobility hold a prestigious position from the outset, while others must first create one for themselves', he declared.[189] Although this notion was shared throughout the aristocracy, various noble groups had different opinions about how this innate superiority should manifest itself.

In 1926, the monthly magazine known as the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* gathered together a range of noble authors from the north and south of the country to write a special, thematic edition called *The German Nobility*. The resulting publication provides a contemporary snapshot of the range of different ideals of leadership that existed within the nobility and how they related to the lived realities and guiding principles of their class. The document is of particular interest because it features a range of prominent, powerful aristocrats using a combination of self-portrayal and political agenda to represent the noble cultures of the various regions from which they came.

The piece on the Bavarian nobility was penned by Baron Erwein von Aretin, an influential southern German figure who placed noble cultural achievements front and centre in his contribution. Aretin's article described magnificent castles that were 'brimming with artworks of all kinds' and told of Catholic canons from Franconia who 'had little inclination towards asceticism' and were among 'the best-educated people of their times'.[190] The ideal Aretin sketched out was a typical example of the public image projected by the dominant families in the south of the country. It was also patently based on the archetype of the *grand seigneur*. Members of the southern aristocracy often used this ideal of an independent lord who lived off his land and property in overt opposition to the East Prussian minor nobility's 'service' model that often manifest itself as salaried service to the state or the king. Indeed, they were exceedingly disdainful of the Prussians' 'military Führertum' that was based solely on 'submission'—a lowly type of leadership that could be 'enforced by exercising judicial power and whose vernacular is the command'. From their point of view, the highest form of *Führertum* never lay in military orders, but in that 'obvious lordliness [*Herrentum*] that never has to resort to giving orders, . . . because no one can resist it.'[191]

This southern German attitude stood in stark contrast to the contributions written for the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* by the three representatives of the old Prussian nobility. In his portrait of the 'Nobility in Northern Germany', for instance, Reinold von Thadden-Vahnerow took a sideswipe at the 'pleasant vineyards of the sunny Main valley' in the south of the country and reminisced about his northern forebears who had prevailed in the 'meagre poverty of the Mark Brandenburg's sandy ground'. His piece praised 'Spartan simplicity. . . frugality, sobriety and severity' in contrast to the shine seen 'on the parquet floor of the [southern, Catholic] electoral palace'.[192] This comparison was echoed by the Pomeranian landowner Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, whose own contribution, 'Nobility and Prussianness', used such terms as 'selflessness', 'duty', 'service', 'simplicity', 'frugality', 'obedience', 'severity', 'justice', and 'strength' to rail against the failings of 'feebleness and sentimental humanitarianism [*Humanitätsduselei*]' he saw in the southern reaches of the land.[193] The anti-capitalist, anti-southern message of these two texts was emphasized by Friedrich von Berg-Markienen—the last head of the Kaiser's Civil Cabinet and the chairman of one of Germany's largest aristocratic associations—who wrote that an 'upbringing into duty which begins with subservience, discipline, [and] self-denial' was the 'very best policy' for raising the aristocrats of the future. The same author also declared that to 'serve' (*dienen*) and not to 'earn' (*verdienen*) should be adopted as the nobility's motto.[194]

Despite dominating the publication, this glorification of East Elbian ideals of austerity did not go unchallenged among the nobility. Three years earlier, for example, Baron Erwein von Aretin had convinced Baron Otto von Taube—a member of the famously cultured, highly educated Baltic German aristocracy—to write a biting new version of the traditional critique aimed at the Prussian minor nobility for his *Newsletter to the Young Nobility of Bavaria*. Although it did include a few words of recognition for individual Prussian *grands seigneurs*, Taube's text was something of a denunciation that portrayed the northern German minor nobility as a collection of former lordly figures whose spirits had been broken by the Hohenzollern kings and debased into lowly servants. As far as the baron was concerned, the 'subordinate spirit' he saw in the 'north German minor noble mind' was incompatible with the sense of 'unfettered lordliness' that he so prized among their more southerly counterparts. Taube encapsulated his contempt for this group in a pithy phrase: 'Administration is to politics what cycling is to horse riding.' This single, derisive sentence denied that either

the proletarian aristocracy or the majority of the minor nobility who worked in the military or the civil service had any ability or eligibility to lead. The baron also described them as a 'homeless . . . respectable, industrious, selfless' group that—in contrast to the English aristocracy—had long since left 'the freedom-giving might of the noble seat' behind them and were now merely 'summoned from place to place in the service of the king'. They were 'good tools', he concluded, 'but never produced true leaders, [they] had political weight, but did not lead.'[195]

Despite its apparent geographical specificity, this combination of Baltic and south German criticism seems, on closer inspection, not to have been truly aimed at all individuals from a particular region. Instead, it appears merely to have criticized a brand of aristocratic mentality that apparently predominated amongst the East Elbian nobility. Indeed, Taube's criticism—published in a document that reads like a manifesto of the southern German nobility—resorted to generalizing allegations made against the north German aristocracy that had already been doing the rounds in intra-aristocratic debates at least as far back as the Prussian reforms in the early nineteenth century.[196] As early as 1811, for example, Baron von Stein, an Imperial Knight from the southerly Rhineland-Palatinate region, had levelled a famously derisive accusation at the inhabitants of the 'arid plains' of the Mark Brandenburg, a people whose 'paltry livelihood' and habit of 'staring joylessly at the barren earth' ostensibly resulted in a 'limitation of resources' and a 'smallness of ambition'.[197] It seems that the southern German aristocracy had not yet given up on repeating such stereotypical insults long after the turn of the twentieth century.

Based on such evidence, one might be tempted to conclude that the German aristocracy were broadly divided into two camps: the impoverished, unambitious minor nobility who worked for the state in the Protestant north on the one hand, and the rich, independent *grands seigneurs* from the Catholic south on the other. At best, however, such geographical categories provide nothing but crude approximations. As a matter of fact, historians have used the archetype of the *grand seigneur*—a figure of 'unfettered lordliness' that, in the words of Hartwin Spenkuch, was 'less uncomprehendingly hostile towards the modern world than the Junkerish minor nobility'[198]—to describe the richest, most socially static 'upper echelons' of the landowning Prussian nobility as well. Generally speaking, the *grands seigneurs* could be identified socially by their large, entailed estates and other sources of wealth, distinguished culturally by their high levels of education, and recognized

politically by their steadfast adherence to a moderate form of conservatism.[199] Such hallmarks were, of course, not limited to any single region.[200]

Despite the immense differences that existed between the myriad aristocratic groups, the overarching belief in their own innate superiority was common ground they all shared. Prince Alois zu Löwenstein—a Bavarian mediatized prince and one of the most important representatives of the Catholic aristocracy—found a prominent platform from which to reformulate this belief when he contributed to an edition of the *Staatslexikon* (State Encyclopaedia) in 1926. 'The essential characteristic that makes the nobleman, perhaps more than anyone else, capable of extraordinary accomplishments that would serve the people as a whole', he stated, 'is rooted in the fact that he is something from birth, and thus has no need to *become* something.'[201] In order to make such a claim, it was important for all aristocrats to prove that their own family history included centuries of 'staying on top', an aspiration commonly expressed in the emblematic image of the metaphorical '1,000 years of rule'. Achieving this feat was a significant factor in maintaining both the high nobility's sense of self-worth *and* upholding the pride of the landowning families of the lower Prussian nobility, a group that uniformly wanted to have been exercising power in their native Mark Brandenburg several hundred years before the Hohenzollerns had arrived in the region.[202]

The aristocratic claim to have remained 'on top' was based on a long history that the middle class simply could not match. In fact, unlike Thomas Mann's portraits of declining middle-class families and Bismarck's derisive *bon mot* that bourgeois clans started to decline as early as their third generation (when they started studying 'art history'), the old noble dynasties' claim to rulership was the product of the 'work of generations' and based on traditional lifestyles that were centuries in the making.[203] In the words of Baron von Aretin, these lifestyles were key to the nobility's success, producing leadership qualities 'which, once achieved by a family, c[ould], with considered care, resist all imitation for generations'.[204] From an aristocratic point of view, the middle class had nothing of equal value that could rival this ability to rule. The 'family of the nobility' as a whole also understood itself as a valuable asset, a group with an innate talent which, although represented in various versions by different branches of the family tree, had remained stable throughout the centuries and despite the vagaries of time. In 1908, the sociologist Georg Simmel spoke of this ability as a precious metal that changed form via 'perpetual remelting' but whose 'substance of

value' was 'relatively imperishable.'[205] It would be difficult to produce a more fitting description of the core of the noble self-image than this.

As far as the German nobility were concerned, the concept of 'aristocratic leadership' (*adlige Herrschaft*) was an independent, self-sufficient ideal that was not tethered to any tangible reality. In fact, this vision of themselves as independent, unfettered rulers even remained intact long after a considerable proportion of the nobility had taken up roles in bureaucratic institutions. Broadly speaking, two versions of ideal leadership were espoused by members of the aristocracy. Firstly, there was the notion of 'direct rule'—a type of first-hand leadership over individuals that was exemplified by the figure of the noble lord of the manor and found its antithesis in the model of bureaucratic rule.[206] Secondly, there was the concept of leadership as a duty, as a responsible position of 'service' that was bestowed upon its bearers and that contrasted most strongly with the capital-driven mechanisms of the modern economy. One thing that united both ideals was the nobility's concept of direct rule. An astonishing encapsulation of this latter idea can be seen in another story told by Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau, the landowner and uncrowned king of anecdotes. In Januschau's tale, Viktor von Podbielski, a conservative general and landowner, was walking through the Reichstag with the help of a stick when he came across the (slightly younger) socialist leader August Bebel. The latter, glancing at the walking aid, kindly asked the old man if 'His Excellency' was carrying the stick because he was 'suffering'. 'No', came the caustic reply, 'I brought the stick for you [i.e. to beat you with], you son of a bitch.'[207]

The most immediately striking aspect of the aristocracy's ideal of direct rule—a phenomenon that anticipated the key characteristics of the ideal modern Führer—is the frequent, stylized references they made to a certain *Volksverbundenheit*, a 'close relationship' they claimed to enjoy 'with the people' that clearly differed from their older idealizations of the lord of the manor who acted as the shepherd to his 'flock'.[208] To find illustrative examples of this bond, one need look no further than the relationship between noble children and their non-noble counterparts. Despite doubtless sharing a physical proximity, the two groups' interactions—and even their childhood games—were marked by a natural distance that existed between the 'to-the-castle-borns' on the one hand and the farmers' offspring and the children from the village on the other. In fact, their playtime was a rehearsal of the hierarchy that would determine their later lives together. Although a passage in the memoirs of the liberal journalist

Countess Marion Dönhoff extolled the shared games played by the count's and the farmers' sons, a striking accompanying family photograph unwittingly sets the record straight about these apparently innocent childhood scenes. Clad in hussar uniforms and bearing little sabres, the count's boys are shown riding atop their ponies ahead of the village youths who, carrying wooden swords and wearing shapeless clothes, follow after on foot. Staged from the earliest days of childhood, this long-standing hierarchical blend of physical proximity and natural distance between the aristocracy and 'the people' explains how the old nobility managed, after 1918, to portray themselves as an embodiment of the ideal modern Führer who knew how to combine *Volksverbundenheit* (i.e. closeness to the people) with being aloof.

Aristocratic children—the undisputed leaders of the village youth—took it upon themselves to organize and supervise their often warlike childhood games. The young Helmuth von Gerlach, for instance, once tried to orchestrate an elaborate manoeuvre in which he led an army against a force commanded by the master distiller's son. To his disappointment, however, the decisive battle did not take place. The children of the agricultural proletarian 'army', it transpired, did not dare 'take up arms' against the 'son of the "gracious master" '. 'The fear of the castle and its inhabitants', Gerlach wrote, 'lay far too deep in them for that. They did everything else I commanded, but they recoiled from even the mere semblance of conflict.' Count Dohna also described the limits of childhood fun just as openly as Gerlach: 'The world [was] divided up into boxes', he declared, 'and this arrangement determined with whom we were and with whom were not permitted to play.'[209]

Noble reminiscences portray the real physical proximity that existed between the lower and the upper orders in a number of ways, ranging from images of a 'relationship of trust' that had apparently been developed over centuries to the notion of the 'big family on the estate'. For example, the professional military officer Rudolf von Oppen claimed to remember enjoying a 'warm-hearted, paternal relationship with the all the people linked to the manor house and the land'. This rather touching impression is definitively contradicted by Oppen's very next sentence, however, which gives an insight into the actual, unbalanced dynamics that lurked behind this supposedly dreamy coexistence. 'How we loved the old housekeepers [*Mamsells*], the servants, coachmen and foresters on the different estates', he wrote, 'and how they spoiled us!' Noble accounts also invariably depict the network of relationships that existed in rural society as an *organic* system and

as a community based on common values where everyone knew 'who's on top and who's underneath'.[210] Aristocratic narratives also include endless variations on the theme of their duty to tend to the rural population. According to one statement passed down by Count Christian von Krockow, for instance, 'lordship without active care for the people entrusted to one is not worthy of the name'.[211] Back in the mid-nineteenth century, Ludwig von Gerlach had similarly encapsulated the nobility's unique ideological fusion of property, rulership, and welfare in a pithy statement. 'Property is only sacred in combination with the duties associated with it', he declared: 'as a mere vehicle for pleasure it is not sacred, but squalid. Communism is right to oppose property without obligation!'[212]

Despite the rosiness of their depiction in aristocratic sources, however, these class-based relationships only worked in one direction. Indeed, although the nobility were free to command their subjects as they pleased, the lower orders had no right to ask any favours of their masters. The nobility were also opposed to non-partisan justice: disputes between the unequal classes were not settled in accordance with the German Civil Code, but in line with a local sense of right and wrong. During an agricultural strike in the 1920s, for example, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, who was acting as the chief negotiator on behalf of the Pomeranian landowners, forced the protesting workers' hand by leaving the harvests to rot out in the fields until, their will broken, they went back to work. Only after the balance of power had been reaffirmed in this way did Kleist-Schmenzin give them the wage increase they desired. This was only granted as a gift, however, and pointedly not to satisfy their demands. 'From that moment on', he declared, 'everyone in Eastern Pomerania knew that anyone who deals with Ewald von Kleist is dealing with a lord, not someone who talks with authority only to end up making concessions.'[213]

From an aristocratic point of view, leadership was like a contract, a 'service' to the rural population that was practically begging to be ruled. In one account, repentant workers who committed some small misdemeanour were portrayed as having come willingly to their master—a man who lived like a 'Homeric king'—in order to receive their punishment: a slap in the face. In another, a West Prussian nobleman asked a shepherd named Karl 'whose Karl' he was. To the astonishment of a guest from Berlin, 'the merciful master's Karl' was the surprisingly subservient response he gave. Such tales were by no means limited to the northern reaches of the country. After the revolutions of 1848, for instance, some southern German peasants

asked a count, 'so, if you're no longer count, who'll be the count then?' When the nobleman gave his 'paternal reply' of 'no one', the workers shook their heads 'in disbelief' until an old peasant declared, 'we don't believe that, there's always been a count!'[214] The underlying hierarchical significance of this kind of 'matchless gesture of personal familiarity and institutional distance . . . that only an initiate would notice and understand'[215] was reflected in a *bon mot* uttered by one Count Kanitz in 1933. When asked if he lacked the 'common touch', the count, speaking in his broad Brandenburg dialect, responded 'quite the opp'site, I've a colossally common touch. Common folk need to obey without question, of course, always been that way.'[216] The message here is clear: although aristocrats were perfectly able to enjoy superficially amicable relationships with the rural populace, such bonds could only function if the nobility's absolute authority was never in any doubt.

After 1918, the nobility's long history of combining proximity with and distance from the lower orders actually helped them plot a course through the treacherous waters of the post-war period. Long before 1914, the aristocracy had complained of 'the democratization of the world with its levelling tendencies'. Although this development ate away at the traditional foundations of their aristocratic status, it also created something of a power vacuum in which the idea of the modern Führer—a figure that had already emerged during the German Empire in the New Right's criticism that the country had 'only been managed . . . not truly led'—could flourish into one of the key concepts in politics and the political imagination after 1918. This development ultimately provided the aristocracy with fresh opportunities to carve out a new role for themselves as Führers of the contemporary German state without compromising any of their pre-modern guiding principles to which they had held fast for many hundreds of years.[217]

Broadly speaking, three different visions of the modern Führer that the nobility had a hand in shaping emerged in German society after the First World War. First of all, there was the racial-*völkisch* concept of the Führer that was advocated by the DAG. Based on the criteria of ethnic purity and linked to an aggressive, explicit rejection of technology, modernity, and urban life, this notion went hand in hand with a new, racially redefined version of the ideal of the warrior or knight. Secondly, there was the concept of a Führer who would lead the masses from *within* their ranks and become heavily involved in right-wing associations and political parties. As far as the nobility were concerned, this suffered from a basic contradiction that

was difficult to resolve. Indeed, the aristocracy's unflinching claim to have innate superiority was fundamentally incompatible with the ideal of a Führer who was legitimized by the quality of his accomplishments. This hampered the idea's appeal among a variety of groups, ranging from chapters of the Agricultural League and the paramilitary Combat Leagues right through to the SA itself. The third Führer concept was based on the idea of forming an elite that would stand *above* the rest of the people. Noble adherents to this notion started imagining themselves joining forces with representatives of the educated and the financial middle class to form a new 'ruling class' (*Herrenschicht*) that would hold itself at a distance from 'the masses' in society. This concept was predominantly adopted by a variety of salons and clubs. Indeed, the most politically significant incarnation of the idea was expressed in the guise of the German Gentlemen's Club, an organization that will be analysed in Chapter 3.

After 1918, the image of a nobleman who was tailor-made for carrying out the duties of modern leadership started to emerge in the growing torrent of publications written by the aristocracy themselves. Created from features selected from the canon of noble values, this new figure stood as the contemporary aristocratic antithesis of the blindly obedient functionary, the corrupt bureaucrat, and the indecisive democrat. Compared with the model of personal 'leadership' (*Führung*) that was rehearsed on the manorial estate, this trio of feeble individuals seemed as risible as the bourgeois apparatuses they operated. For example, in 1936, a Prussian naval officer by the name of Bogislaw von Selchow declared: 'The cautious man only moves the helm ten degrees to starboard. The daring man calls for starboard, 25°. That can easily go awry. But to dare is the way of a master. Anyone who feels oppressed by the responsibility at ten degrees is born to be a dogsbody, not a king.' In a similar vein, another popular maxim—'wagen statt wägen, handeln statt händeln' ('take a risk, don't ruminate; act, don't equivocate')—implied that an aristocratic Führer should stand out thanks to his instinctive, decisive action. Generally speaking, the nobility prized a certain political assurance that favoured bearing over calculation, action over discussion, and an individual's ability to make decisions over the mechanisms of institutional power.[218] Indeed, a celebrated remark uttered in 1910 by the Prussian landowner Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau declared that the king of Prussia must have the ability to turn to a young lieutenant at any time and order him to 'take ten men and shut down the Reichstag'.[219] Viewed in the light of Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922, Hitler's failed Beer Hall Putsch of

November 1923, and the range of anti-republican coup attempts that took place after 1918, Oldenburg-Januschau's famous dismissal of parliament as a worthless, nonsense-riddled 'talking shop' (*Quatschbude*) could well have been interpreted as a timely call to arms.[220] In fact, the prevailing post-war climate presented the nobility with an opportunity to reinvent their experience of leadership for the new era and back it up with redoubled references to their tradition of ostensibly selfless rule.[221] They were not slow to seize this chance. Indeed, the 'conviction that the aristocracy . . . must go to the very front line'[222] to continue answering the call to leadership was soon echoed in myriad variations by all noble groups. As W. von Hagen stated, 'I have faith that our *Volk* is still healthy at heart. It is just waiting for a Führer, and that Führer is the aristocracy.'[223] After 1918, aristocrats of all ages also started using the more resonant term *Führung* instead of *Herrschaft* whenever they spoke of leadership. This was more than a mere example of a semantic shift. Indeed, the growing desire to 'be a Führer . . . , not a [*Herrschaft*-wielding] lord'[224] was indicative of changes both in what it meant to be an aristocrat and in the perceived role the nobility played in society. All sections of the nobility were keenly aware that this transformation was taking place. Moreover, they were quick to start discussing how best to deal with the fact that, as one contemporary commentator noted, 'the privileged ruling class has become obsolete for the foreseeable future.'[225] One solution was presented by the ideal of the *Führer-Beamtentum*, a new elite of incorruptible, landowning, populist civil servants that was dreamt up in the early 1930s by Count Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg, a member of the NSDAP who would later join the German Resistance. Although this notional elite was made up from all sections of society, it was not identical to the nobility of old, but nevertheless gathered together crucial elements of the prevailing ideological climate and bore definite noble traits—such as its affinity for military, anti-materialistic, and rural traditions—that the aristocracy would doubtless have found appealing.[226]

Such attempts to reinvent the nobility as a group of Führers with a warrior-like, *völkisch* bent were all part of a general aristocratic effort to refresh ancient concepts of leadership and make them applicable to the modern age. The exact form these Führer fantasies took when they left the realm of idle debate and became a political reality will be discussed later in this book. Even at this early stage, however, it is already possible to see that the aristocracy's undiminished belief that they were destined to serve as the 'Führer of Führers'[227] would play a central role in any vision they had for their future.

Indeed, this conviction that they were born for greater things set the minor nobility on a path that would ultimately lead them towards fascism and into an alliance with the New Right. As will be shown in due course, these unlikely bedfellows were drawn together by their shared appreciation for fascism's anti-middle class, anti-materialistic views—notions that were perfectly encapsulated in Mussolini's claim that the essence of his ideology could be expressed in just six German words: 'Wir sind gegen das bequeme Leben' ('We are opposed to the comfortable life').[228]

As this chapter has demonstrated, the aristocracy managed to reinvent some of their core concepts in the midst of a disastrous collapse and successfully offered them for sale on the lively market of political ideas that emerged in Germany after 1918. This meant that, whatever happened next, there would be no shortage of noble ingredients in the seething cauldron of counter-revolutionary movements and ideas that bubbled throughout the era of the Weimar Republic.

2

The Apocalypse and Beyond

> Everything we previously held to be valuable, ideal and worthy of admiration is ruined, besmirched and corrupted. . . . Our political role, founded on our historical status, is temporarily done for, our financial situation will have to reckon with severe losses.
>
> —Prince Friedrich Carl zu Castell-Castell, 1919[1]

Throughout the history of Europe, revolutions have haunted the nobility like nightmares. From the moment the French monarchy was ousted from power in the eighteenth century, the aristocracy began to view uprisings as the acceleration and essence of all the tendencies they most feared. This was certainly true of the 1918 German Revolution, an event sparked by the largest military disaster the nation had ever known. The nobility's sense of trepidation did not mean, however, that they were willing to go down without a fight. Indeed, ever since the French Revolution, the European aristocracy had begun cultivating a tradition of self-defence against the horrors of insurrection. Crucially, this brand of counter-revolutionary resolve was also firmly rooted among the ranks of the German nobility.

The question of how severely the German Revolution affected 'the aristocracy' as a whole is not one that can be easily answered. For one thing, there is a striking discrepancy between the sense of utter loss expressed by many aristocrats at the time (see, for instance, the despair that echoes through the quotation at the start of this chapter) and the prevailing opinion held by modern historians today, who generally view the revolution as an incomplete event, a half-hearted uprising that was fragmentary, unsuccessful, vanquished, or even betrayed.[2] Indeed, Lenin himself is said to have ridiculed the German revolutionaries, calling them the type of people who would not storm a railway station without first buying a ticket. Similarly scornful

accounts of the uprising's moderate nature are found elsewhere. Thomas Mann, for instance, quipped that 'the German Revolution is a revolution, but a very German one', dutifully noting in his diary that 10 November 1918 (just one day after the revolution had broken out) had otherwise been a time of 'sunshine' and 'duck and fruit tartlets'.[3] The theologian Ernst Troeltsch stated that members of the upper middle class who took a Sunday stroll through Berlin's Grunewald forest while the uprising was in full swing also seemed unconcerned: 'It was written on their faces', he noted: 'salaries will keep on being paid.'[4] For his part, the Marxist writer Arthur Rosenberg despaired that the sailors who took part in the uprising displayed a distinct lack of revolutionary zeal.[5]

Even historians took decades to come round to the idea of describing the events of 1918 as a revolution instead of a mere 'collapse'.[6] Previously, the insurrectionary momentum of that fateful year—an energy whose early dissipation was as remarkable as its initial success—had been dubbed the 'unfinished' (*steckengebliebene*) revolution in the historical discourse.[7] Indeed, only the most recent studies have begun to imbue the events that took place after the end of the First World War with a new significance, representing them as 'meteoric years' (*Kometenjahre*), as a time of optimistic experiments and new beginnings, and even as the 'greatest of all revolutions'. Such accounts downplay the era's failures and emphasize the potential for democratic progress that arose during the initial period after 1918.[8] This brand of interpretation is highly plausible. If one wanted to name the group that least shared the same positive opinion, however, one would unquestionably alight on the aristocracy, who would have considered such a positive interpretation of the revolution to be utterly unthinkable. As far as they were concerned, the Kaiser's war-ending decision to flee over the Dutch border on 9 November 1918 (about which much more in due course) was the symbolic precursor to their nation's utter demise. Indeed, when the monarchy fell, it took the German Ancien Régime, its army, its navy, and its colonies down with it.

After outlining the different ways in which the Kaiser's flight was perceived in Germany in general and by the Prussian nobility in particular, this chapter will explore the aristocracy's various responses to the events of 1918 on a spectrum between retreat and counter-revolution. It will also examine how the nobility were affected by the losses they experienced. Throughout the discussion, it will become clear that some sections of the aristocracy

were able to adapt to the changing times with greater success than other groups of their peers.

The Deserting Warlord

> So, my friends, now's the time to take up arms![9]
>
> —Wilhelm II to his companions, 9 November 1918

When the Kaiser's getaway car reached Dutch soil in the early hours of 10 November 1918 after a ghastly drive through the night, Wilhelm II is said to have issued an instruction that gave his companions a glimmer of relief: 'Have a smoke, my friends', he declared—'you've earned it'.[10] Sixteen years later, however, the exiled Kaiser was able to find far fewer friendly words when describing his erstwhile entourage: 'Blood must flow, much blood, [the blood] of the officers and the civil servants, above all of the nobility, of everyone who has deserted me', he railed.[11] During the period that separated these two quotations, an intense interpretive debate took place regarding Wilhelm II's capitulation and the fact that the Kaiser, like every single Federal Prince in the German Empire, had smuggled himself to safety without any semblance of a struggle.[12] This discussion raged particularly fiercely among the aristocracy, who drew their own conclusions about whose blood should have flowed and who had deserted whom back in 1918.

Contemporary sources describing the Kaiser's flight are full of anecdotes, dramatic moments, pithy utterances, and decisions made by great men. For the nobility, however, the significance and interpretation of Wilhelm II's retreat was by no means relegated to the realm of mere storytelling. Indeed, what seems at first glance to be nothing more than a grotesque detail in the overall context of the German Revolution reveals itself, upon closer inspection of the discussions among the aristocracy, to be a crucial turning point for the political orientation of the symbol-obsessed noble elite. Among the Prussian aristocracy in particular, the reality and interpretation of the Kaiser's flight were seen as key contributing factors in the deterioration of the noble worldview, the weaknesses of the Prussian monarchy, the demise of conservative thought, and the precipitous rise of New Right ideologies. Moreover, Wilhelm II's escape ultimately helped create space for a symbolic and political vacuum to emerge within the nobility that allowed the widest

range of leadership desires to flourish and permitted Hitler's transformation 'from a drummer to a Führer'.[13]

A wide variety of accounts—and not just those that emerged immediately after 1918—have tended to frame the Kaiser's flight as the consequence of a cluster of fateful decisions taken by great men. This chapter is, however, less concerned with the historical sequence of events than with the subsequent aristocratic interpretations of the retreat of Wilhelm II, a man described as 'the physical incarnation of calamity in recent German history before Hitler'.[14] As a result, the following discussion will focus not on the incident itself, but on the insights it can yield into the worldviews of the Kaiser's entourage. Indeed, rather than viewing the episode as a disastrous choice made by a small group of individuals, it will be presented as the highly symbolic climax of a longer process that resulted in a strained relationship between Wilhelm II and the Prussian military clans.

For a long time, it was popularly believed that the outcome of the First World War had rested 'on a knife's edge'[15] and that a feasible alternative to retreat still remained open to the Kaiser as late as November 1918. This conviction prompted the emergence of two different explanations as to why this apparent alternative had not been seized. The first interpretation stemmed from a (dwindling) set of older, largely aristocratic officers, civil servants, aides-de-camp, and intellectual auxiliary forces who spent many years—despite knowing better—weaving a legend of a 'Führer-Kaiser' who had been surrounded and betrayed by a feeble, inept circle of advisers that ultimately forced him to undertake his so-called 'journey to Holland'.[16] As well as using the absurdly euphemistic term 'departure' to describe Wilhelm II's escape, this revisionist cohort also portrayed the Kaiser as having merely 'stepped aside'[17] or 'taken his leave' back in November 1918. The second, contrasting explanation came from a (growing) band of predominantly younger, aristocratic figures who judged that the last Kaiser had taken 'flight' or even committed the crime of 'desertion'. In their eyes, Wilhelm II's retreat was nothing less than the dramatic culmination of his 'weaknesses as a leader', a criticism that had already been levelled openly at the monarch before 1914. With hindsight, the idea that the Kaiser had another option can be shown to have been illusory. This does not, however, diminish its contemporary significance. No matter how erroneous it might have been, this notion emerged among the aristocracy at an early stage[18] and remained the focus of heated debates and finger-pointing well beyond the conclusion of the Second World War.

Historians have painstakingly reconstructed the anxious consultations that were held at the German military headquarters in the Belgian town of Spa where Wilhelm II arrived on 29 October 1918. At a far remove from their capital city, the Kaiser's entourage—a mix of military and diplomatic figures whose own worldview was dominated by a sense of uncompromising, militarized masculinity—discussed three different options that were open to their leader. The first of these was the view that the Kaiser should abdicate in a 'timely' manner in the hope of preserving the monarchy as an institution. Although championed with increasing vehemence by Reich Chancellor Max von Baden and his advisors in Berlin at the end of October 1918, this course of action was roundly rejected by the Kaiser himself.[19] Indeed, when Baden's emissary ultimately presented the Chancellor's and the Foreign Ministry's proposal to Wilhelm II on 1 November, he was summarily rebuffed. 'If even the slightest thing happens', the Kaiser declared, 'then I will write [the revolutionaries] an answer with machine guns on the pavement, even if I have to blow my own palace to pieces in the process; whatever transpires, order must prevail.'[20] Incidentally, this was not the first time the monarch had expressed such violent intentions. According to his aide-de-camp, Wilhelm II had already explicitly signalled that he would lead a march on the capital in the event of a Bolshevik uprising. 'I will take my place at the head of a few divisions, advance on Berlin and string up anyone who commits treason', he declared: 'Then we will see if the masses do not support the Kaiser and the Reich!'[21]

Various contemporary voices doubted the feasibility of such a violent approach. After the revolution had begun, for instance, a middle-class officer from southern Germany by the name of Quartermaster-General Wilhelm Groener attended the military briefings that were held to assess the situation on 9 November. The sober appraisal Groener delivered to the gathering painted a rather pessimistic picture of the outlook for the monarch, claiming that the army was only partly still controlled by its leaders, would no longer obey the Kaiser, and would be particularly unwilling to act against the uprising itself. Despite such a negative prognosis, however, it was precisely the idea of quashing the revolution that formed the basis of the second option presented to Wilhelm II. This notion was put forward and doggedly defended by Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg—the General Staff Chief of Crown Prince Wilhelm's army group—who believed that rallying a selection of loyal units, supplying them with equipment and provisions, and mounting a counter-revolutionary push across the bridges

along the Rhine would be a feasible proposition. Backed up by two other generals whose own assertions were more tentative than his own, Schulenburg argued that the Kaiser should lead a long march on Berlin with the goal of suppressing the revolution by force.[22] This plan not only pre-empted the brutality of the paramilitary *Freikorps* that would emerge in the counter-revolutionary battles of 1919, but also chimed in with the verbal displays of strength Wilhelm II had articulated in the hope of breaking free from the image of the toothless *Schattenkaiser* (literally: shadow emperor) he had undoubtedly become. Using language that was deliberately resonant of mighty figures of old,[23] the monarch had declared, for instance, that he would gather his troops, march to Berlin and blow 'the city to pieces, if that is what it takes'.[24]

Unlike the first option discussed above, this second plan treated the monarch's life like a commodity that could be used at his entourage's discretion. Indeed, even if Schulenburg really did think that a military victory over the revolution was possible, the words he used made it blatantly obvious that it would have been eminently preferable for Wilhelm II to die a hero's death in the attempt than undertake a coward's 'journey to Holland'.[25] In a letter he penned to a friend on 30 November 1918, the count expressed the hope that civil war could be avoided, but nevertheless described dying in combat as an opportunity to salvage the Kaiser's reputation and secure the future of the monarchy. Perishing on the battlefield was also something Schulenburg longed to do himself. 'I envy those covered by the green grass', he wrote, 'and those who have fallen in the proud knowledge that our people's might cannot be broken and that their loyal, courageous army cannot be conquered.'[26]

While the increasingly anxious debate about Wilhelm II's first two options was underway, an impromptu survey was taken of thirty-nine generals and regimental commanders. This snapshot revealed that the majority—like Groener—believed that the army would be unusable for a fight against 'the enemy within'.[27] This information was still sinking in when steadily more urgent telephone calls were received from the Reich Chancellery in Berlin entreating the Kaiser to step down with immediate effect. During the early afternoon of 9 November 1918, news then came that the Reich Chancellor had made the executive decision to announce Wilhelm II's abdication as the German Kaiser and the King of Prussia and declare the Crown Prince's renunciation of his own claim to the throne. In the aftermath of this pronouncement, Paul von Hindenburg—the Kaiser's trusted General Staff Chief—was evidently unable to summon the courage

to endorse Count Schulenburg's high-risk strategy of launching an assault on the capital.[28] Indeed, he was all too aware of Louis XVI's failed flight to Varennes, painfully aware of the fate of the Tsar's family in Russia, and haunted by spectral visions of his king being mistreated at the hands of the revolutionaries.[29] As a result, Hindenburg countered the plan to take the Kaiser to the Swiss Republic with the suggestion that the Kingdom of the Netherlands, just 50 kilometres away, would offer the most practical solution. 'If there is shooting in the front of the villa', Hindenburg declared, 'His Majesty can still proceed by car from the back.'[30] After additional pleas from Berlin and reports of insurgent units advancing on the Kaiser's headquarters, Wilhelm II finally agreed to the scheme late in the evening of 9 November 1918, giving the order that his 'departure' would take place in the early hours of the following day.

The precise sequence of these events is documented in detail thanks to the wealth of memoranda and memoirs written by the people involved[31] and, above all, due to years and years of meticulous work by Count Kuno von Westarp, a lawyer who became chairman of the German Conservative Party's Reichstag caucus in 1913. Westarp initially spent many months gathering together statements from eyewitnesses and participants and incorporating them into an account that was released in 1919. Although it also served various immediate political ends, the long-term aim of this text was to create careful documentation that could counter criticism of Wilhelm II's actions and preserve his image as a heroic warlord concerned with the welfare of his people. Signed by Hindenburg, Schulenburg, and three other individuals who had been involved in the events, this selective report was finally delivered for publication on 27 July 1919.

Briefly put, the account of July 1919 described an unwavering, courageously resolute Kaiser who, when confronted by a hopeless situation, selflessly decided to move abroad to spare his rebellious subjects the misery of a civil war. Crucially for the Prussian nobility, it also showed that the courageous Kaiser and his noble, Prussian, military entourage had clashed with the gutless, bourgeois, ennobled, and—above all—south German civilian elites who valued political calculation over the virtues of heroism. In so doing, it demonstrated how the Kaiser's first option (his 'timely' abdication put forward by ordinary southern Germans and other 'inferior' sections of humanity) was unacceptable, and why the second option (launching a counter-revolutionary campaign) failed: although preferable, it was rendered unworkable by a group of feeble civilians.[32]

This biased narrative, which reveals little about the actual opinions of the authors involved in its composition, was merely the version of events fashioned for public consumption. Indeed, as far as historians are concerned, its importance was outstripped by a second work that Westarp compiled for posterity around twenty years later and that was published posthumously in 1952 and included a number of revelations.[33] Firstly, it provided a range of extremely detailed insights into how Westarp and the partisan writers under his command had spun pro-monarchist myths about the events of late 1918 in their original report. Secondly, it demonstrated that the Kaiser's erstwhile advisors had engaged in acrid in-fighting—something that the text of 1919 had concealed. Finally, it briefly sketched out a simple fact that both monarchist propaganda and Westarp's initial publication had denied: namely, that 'when it came to the decisions of 9 November . . . the monarch had the complete freedom to act as he saw fit and the duty to exercise [that power]' and that, ultimately, it had been entirely up to the Kaiser to assess the situation, to 'come to his own conclusion and, if required, [to] entrust other individuals with carrying out his decision.'[34] Making such admissions was a major departure for Westarp. Before writing this book in the 1940s, the count—a loyal supporter of the Kaiser's who would long remain one of the rare conservative fossils among the Prussian nobility[35]—had spent many years engaging in the Sisyphean task of protecting Wilhelm II against numerous accusations. He was not alone in this endeavour. Paul von Hindenburg, for example, had privately warned those involved in the decision-making process at the military headquarters in late 1918 not to highlight the unused plan to march on Berlin too strongly, for fear that 'the undiscriminating multitude [would] resent His Majesty for not having followed [it].'[36]

Such revelations were not all that Westarp's original report had attempted to conceal. Indeed, reading between the lines of the text from 1919 reveals the aforementioned third option that was open to the Kaiser in November 1918. This alternative—which was discussed in Berlin and Spa and chewed over by the nobility for decades after the fact—was a plan of great simplicity: instead of fleeing to Holland or mounting a counter-revolutionary assault, Wilhelm II could have chosen to sacrifice himself and die a staged death on the battlefield.

Reconstructing the content, intensity, and longevity of the discussion that took place regarding this third course of action is straightforward. What remains unclear, however, is whether anyone openly confronted Wilhelm II.

Groener, the General from Württemberg, alleged that the monarch was indeed aware of the plan. According to his version of events, Groener had argued 'that the Kaiser must immediately make his way to the battlefield in order to seek his death there'. This, he believed, would have transformed the mood in the country. Groener also claimed that a group of young officers had expressed the desire 'to go to their deaths with the Kaiser.'[37] In a letter he wrote to Westarp in 1919, Groener even asserted that he had personally 'attempted on several occasions to take the Kaiser to the place where, in my opinion, he belonged, to the fight on the battlefield, just as his great forefathers were wont to do in similar situations.'[38] It does indeed seem that Groener and Joachim von Stülpnagel—the Chief of the General Staff's operations department—had begun making concrete preparations for the monarch's staged last stand: efforts were made to find a fitting location in the trenches where the Kaiser could mount his final, doomed assault, for example, and volunteers were sought and identified for this 'small-scale special attack'.[39] At the same time, members of the Maritime Warfare Command established a scheme to scupper the flagship of the German fleet during a skirmish while the Kaiser was on board.[40] This option would, it was argued, have secured Wilhelm II's death in combat with greater certainty than the (apparently less fool-proof) plot to seek his demise on land.[41]

Interestingly, the debates about this third option that raged in Spa already bore the traits of the split between the older and younger generations' opinions of the Kaiser's conduct—a schism that would later become an unavoidable presence in German society. Indeed, the 'heroic solution' of 'going to the front *before* the cessation of hostilities and never coming back' tended to be favoured by younger officers, while a 'large number of the older officers refused openly to criticize the monarch'.[42] This rift would only deepen after 1918.

Members of the Kaiser's predominantly military entourage in Spa were not the only ones in favour of Wilhelm II's staged demise. As early as October 1918, for example, the former Reich Chancellor Georg Michaelis had, after consulting a circle of Prussian aristocrats, told the lady-in-waiting to the *Kaiserin* (the Empress, the Kaiser's wife) that he hoped Wilhelm II would call for 'the final assault' and 'personally draw the sword' himself. Nevertheless, he failed in his attempt to present this plan to the Kaiser during their last audience together at the end of the same month. Incidentally, a hypothesis later emerged that Michaelis, a non-noble lawyer who had spent four years teaching at a university in Tokyo, had been inspired to

dream up the scheme by the *hara-kiri* tradition of the samurai. This would, however, seem both out-of-character for the Reich Chancellor and rather far-fetched for the milieu under examination here. Indeed, it is extremely unlikely that the Prussian landed aristocracy—the group from whom Michaelis had taken advice on the matter—would have developed their own code of honour by studying the culture of Japan.

The various different plans for the Kaiser's heroic death that were discussed in Berlin and readied in Spa were all united by a basic desire for an irreproachable, *symbolic* act—a last, valiant gesture for posterity. As time passed, this urge to save face would prove to be a very prescient impulse indeed. In fact, by failing to die at the front, the Kaiser ultimately placed himself at the mercy of anyone who cared to form an opinion[43] and precipitated many decades of public debate. An example of the shift in attitude that was triggered by Wilhelm II's cowardice can be seen in the figure of Hermann Ehrhardt, a naval officer and a charismatic *Freikorps* leader who later married Princess Margarethe zu Hohenlohe-Oehringen.[44] In 1919, Ehrhardt was involved in planning a lightning strike to 'rescue' the Kaiser and his wife from their exile in the Netherlands and thus thwart calls for Wilhelm II to be handed over to the Allies. By 1926, however, he was publicly accusing the monarch of having left Germany in the lurch. In a sharply worded letter to the committee of the United Patriotic Associations, for instance, Ehrhardt and a group of young *Freikorps* officers declared that they would henceforth 'make the distinction between the monarchy and its individual representatives' after Wilhelm II had 'betrayed' the institution itself.

Ehrhardt's criticism was also yet another symptom of the generational conflict that was emerging between the older officers who were loyal to the Kaiser and their younger counterparts who had seen active service at the front. It was not just the disillusioned latter group that began to experience antipathy towards the monarch as an individual, however. For instance, some of the Knights of the Order of Saint John—a charitable organization led by a member of the Hohenzollern family—began to bemoan the 'pathological traits of the man who bears the Imperial German Crown' in their private correspondence.[45] Resistance member Fabian von Schlabrendorff's memoirs also record his father's belief that all the Kaiser's sons, with the exception of the Crown Prince himself, should have done their duty by seeking their death at the front.[46] Similarly, Alexander Stahlberg, a fellow Resistance conspirator, recounted the depression and bewilderment that reigned in stately homes in Pomerania. In Stahlberg's account, these residences were

transformed into 'houses of mourning' where grandmothers, mothers, and aunts sat clad in black from head to toe in the aftermath of Wilhelm II's flight. Stahlberg also described his and his peers' own view of the Kaiser's 'departure' in no uncertain terms, calling it a crime of 'desertion' (*Fahnenflucht*) and condemning the Crown Prince, whom he portrayed as having 'taken to his heels'.[47] Wilhelm von Oppen-Tornow, a landowner and retired cavalry captain, reached a similar conclusion in a diary entry of 1925. 'That all the German princes abandoned their thrones without a fight was an unprecedented disgrace!' he wrote, adding: 'The heaviest burden of guilt, however, lies with the Kaiser who went ahead of them all.'[48] Comparable sentiments were also expressed by the advisory staff surrounding the Crown Prince himself. As early as 1919, for example, the Crown Prince's adjutant could already foresee that a 'monstrous blow' had been dealt to the monarchist ideology as a result of the 'inglorious' end to the Hohenzollerns' 'proud royal splendour'.[49] Even Magnus von Levetzow, Wilhelm II's political plenipotentiary, thought that the Kaiser's decision to 'travel abroad' was wrong and that it would be 'almost impossible to remedy'.[50]

Such privately held points of view mingled with the increasingly negative opinions of Wilhelm II which were swept into the public sphere by a flood of noble autobiographies that were published after 1918.[51] They also echoed an attitude that was widespread among the aristocracy and shared by supporters and critics of the Kaiser alike. In January 1919, for example, the *grand seigneur* Count Dietlof von Arnim-Boitzenburg—the last president of the Prussian House of Lords and one of the most distinguished representatives of the Mark Brandenburg aristocracy—wrote, 'I still feel as though I cannot not go on living without our Kaiser and King.' Despite such heartfelt words, however, the count believed that the German dream of the 'master race' (*Herrenvolk*) had 'come to an end forever' and that the might of the Hohenzollern dynasty had been extinguished for the foreseeable future. Arnim-Boitzenburg also made it eminently clear that he thought it had been the Kaiser's duty to 'go and join the troops at the front'[52] and invoked five centuries of history in an attempt to convince his monarch to do the right thing. 'Your Majesty should', he urged, 'hold fast in the position He was placed in by God Himself, not the will of the people, and in which His Majesty may stand and fall, but not falter. Throughout 500 years of the glorious history of our Hohenzollerns, the world has never witnessed a ruler from this dynasty abandoning his post.' Wilhelm II replied by telegram, promising that he would indeed 'hold fast'.[53]

At first glance, Arnim's invocation of the Prussian kings' ostensible 500-year-old tradition of fighting at the front would appear—like the frequent hushed references that were made to the accomplishments of Frederick II—to give the impression that royal sacrifice was the continuation of a practice once adopted by noble warriors of old. However, it seems much more plausible to interpret such calls for the Kaiser's heroic death in combat as part of a modern 'invented tradition' that developed during the First World War.[54] In fact, although appeals for Wilhelm II's demise on the battlefield do bear some resemblance to the long-standing customs upheld by self-sacrificing military leaders from the high nobility, they seem to have been fuelled far more extensively by twentieth-century *völkisch* motifs. These motifs drew an artificially confident line between the 'traditions' of the Prussian royal house and the invented 'traditions' of the antique German tribes that supposedly harked back to the deepest depths of the past.[55]

It is, of course, true that muscular notions of an 'exemplary' life and death do lie at the heart of aristocratic military values. Indeed, the famous formula *noblesse oblige* asserts that the nobility must voluntarily shoulder both the duties and dangers of their rank in an act of acceptance that underpins their right to rule. Moreover, although proponents of this ideology would consider it absurd for a king to meet a hero's end *before* 'his' nobleman and 'his' army, they would also certainly view following one's subjects into death after a catastrophic military defeat as a fitting, posthumous fulfilment of the noble contract. This was a logic that Wilhelm II was unable to escape. In 1922, for example, Ernst Jünger—a war hero and shock troop commander (*Stoßtruppführer*) who was just in the process of becoming a leading light of the radical Right—encapsulated the legitimacy of the call for the Kaiser's death in a single, pithy phrase. The monarch's demise, he wrote, 'may be demanded by those countless figures who went to their deaths before him.'[56]

Despite sharing a certain similarity with aristocratic traditions, the German public's post-war sense of yearning for a people-orientated leader and their belief that death in battle was proof of a ruler's dedication had far more in common with the Führer mythology that emerged in the twentieth century than with any historical precedent. This can perhaps best be demonstrated by examining the foundations of the 'Hitler myth' that arose from the late 1920s. From this perspective, the exiled Kaiser's best efforts to cast himself as a dazzling representative of traditional ruling power *and* the very image of a modern Führer faltered time and again precisely because he had failed to die a hero's death. Unlike Hitler—a courageous front-line

fighter who had been the victim of a gas attack[57]—Wilhelm II had not proven his mettle by offering himself up in an heroic sacrifice or putting his life on the line in the masculine microcosm of the *Volksgemeinschaft* ('national community') that existed in the trenches. As a result, Hitler was able to attain precisely the same brand of 'street cred' in the wreckage of post-war German society that Wilhelm II could have passed down as his symbolic legacy to the German monarchy had he not refused to seek out a soldier's demise.

Lost Kingdoms

All the King's horses
And all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again
—English Nursery Rhyme

The exaggerated hopes and expectations that were projected onto Wilhelm II during the latter days of the German Empire led to exaggerated disappointment after 1918. Of course, neither these dreams nor this despondency were the sole preserve of the nobility alone. The liberal historian Friedrich Meinecke has, for instance, written about the era's yearning for a Kaiser-like Führer, a figure for whom many people—and members of the educated middle class in particular—were ready to 'walk through fire'.[58] Nevertheless, the aristocracy's special proximity to the monarch and the existence of an influential cult of soldierly death among the Prussian minor nobility both suggest that the disappointment and anguish caused by the 'loss' of the king weighed especially heavily on noble shoulders. This sense of dejection was also a central cause of the fundamental weaknesses of German monarchism,[59] which was undermined less by the aristocracy's inability to win over the republican-minded 'masses' than by the dissipation of the nobility's own ties to the monarchy—and, as a result, the erosion of their own monarchist values—at an early stage.

At first glance, it would appear that aristocratic loyalty to the crown was not dealt an especially heavy blow by Wilhelm II's decision to abscond. Indeed, it seems as though the more venerable generations of the nobility in particular had become ossified in their fondness for the monarchy and in their esteem for old, traditional ways. This phenomenon is ostensibly demonstrated, for example, by the 'most humble' manner in which they greeted

their erstwhile sovereigns,[60] by the toasts they proposed to the Kaiser during family celebrations at East Elbian country houses,[61] and by the continued pilgrimages they made to visit the exiled Wilhelm II in the Dutch town of Doorn. Nevertheless, this superficial impression of banner-waving monarchism must not be mistaken for an expression of inward conviction. In fact, the Kaiser's conduct left a bitter taste in many aristocrats' mouths, as did the realization that his 'journey abroad' would necessarily have catastrophic consequences for German monarchism itself. Although they only ever said anything to their closest confidants and far from the public's prying eyes, even the most prominent of the Kaiser's (outwardly) loyal supporters betrayed their dissatisfaction on this score. Count Dietlof von Arnim-Boitzenburg revealed this private brand of resentment in his correspondence as early as December 1918, for example. '[Wilhelm II] wanted to save his own life', he wrote, a life 'that was certainly not in danger when he was with the troops at the front, and especially not when he was with his 1st Guard Regiment; in so doing, he has destroyed—forever, I fear—his dynasty and the Reich as significant powers. The troops are now leaderless'.[62] Equally prominent members of the Prussian aristocracy seemingly experienced an even wider gulf between their faith in the principles of monarchism and their private rejection of the Kaiser himself. When required to give a toast at festivities, for instance, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, who became chairman of the Central Association of German Conservatives in 1927, always proposed a tellingly non-specific salute to 'the bearer of the crown'. At least as far as his circle of close friends was concerned, there could be no doubt as to whom this toast did *not* intend to include. In Kleist-Schmenzin's eyes, Wilhelm II and the Crown Prince had both disqualified themselves from respect by their ignoble retreat, and even the Crown Prince's offspring were deemed unsuitable for veneration. Indeed, although he is often cited as one of the most important protagonists of steadfast German conservatism, Kleist-Schmenzin is reported to have regarded the Kaiser with 'hatred', the Crown Prince with 'reservation', and the latter's sons with 'contempt'.[63] Similar sentiments could be detected when the German Noble Society (DAG) held internal debates about the restoration of the monarchy at a conference in 1926. Although the speakers had to urge their listeners to exercise restraint and remain civil when faced with a lack of candidates who could command a consensus, the one thing those present could 'all agree on' was that the future monarch was 'not Kaiser Wilhelm II' and that 'none of the princes of adult age' were 'worth considering' for the position, either.[64]

The tone of the private correspondence shared between aristocrats also indicates that many professed noble monarchists felt a resigned sense of pity rather than royalist admiration for their exiled leader—a man who, according to one cynical remark, was reduced to hunting nothing but 'water rats' at his new home in Doorn.[65] This was even true of Count Kuno Westarp, an indefatigable Don Quixote figure who fought unsuccessfully against his contemporaries' open criticism of Wilhelm II. In 1919, for instance, the count penned a letter to a peer in which he stated that, although he would 'naturally attempt to uphold my standpoint in another form than I give it here' when in public, he secretly no longer believed the Kaiser had a role to play in any future German state.[66] This contrast between privately expressed aversion and outwardly declared loyalty was also cultivated by Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg. The criticism Schulenburg levelled at both the Kaiser and the Crown Prince behind closed doors was exceedingly cutting. Nevertheless, when an aristocratic author published a pamphlet deriding Wilhelm II as a glory-hungry 'coward' in 1919, the count (who also held the rank of general) ordered two officers to challenge him to a duel with pistols.[67] Although such a divided monarchist sentiment did not hit all sections of the aristocracy with equal force—some key noble groups, such as the old Bavarian and the Guelph nobility, would naturally have been inclined to maintain a rather icy stance towards the Prussian King anyway—the Kaiser's retreat without a fight into obscurity nevertheless marked an irreparable break in relations with many of his peers, including even parts of the royalist circles from the heartlands of his own northern German home.

Dramatic though it was, the Kaiser's flight may only have been one dramatic moment in a longer process of alienation between the nobility and the king. Indeed, the historian Martin Kohlrausch has impressively demonstrated the considerable extent to which Wilhelm II's standing had already been shaken by a series of scandals and their treatment in the press before 1914.[68] As a consequence, the year 1918 was merely the point at which the floodgates burst open, unleashing a now-unstoppable torrent of publications intent on criticizing the monarch. Until 1939, the aforementioned Count Westarp put in countless hours of toil and wrote over 100 reviews of books on the Kaiser in order to defend the image of Wilhelm II as a good, heroic king. When Reich Chancellor Prince Bernhard von Bülow—an establishment figure if ever there was one—included a number of controversial passages criticizing the Kaiser in his memoirs that were published in 1930/31, however, even Westarp was forced to admit that it would be

difficult to guard the former sovereign against a prime 'literary hatchet job' penned by such a prestigious noble individual.[69] The worst assaults, however, came from noble officers who had drifted towards the *völkisch* camp. In 1926, a far keener aristocratic critique of Wilhelm II arrived in the guise of the five books on the monarch written by Count Ernst zu Reventlow, a figure who became a member of the NSDAP's left-leaning 'Strasser wing' in 1927. Reventlow, who had previously mounted journalistic attacks against the 'Byzantism' of the Kaiser's entourage, provided a consistent, biting continuation of his earlier criticism in the book entitled *Monarchy?* that was released by the *völkisch*-minded Hammerverlag publishing house. Reventlow, a disabled naval officer, made a wide range of acerbic claims in his work. He asserted, for instance, that the acolytes surrounding Wilhelm II had ceased being 'Führers' long before 1918. In a similar vein, he contended that the German princes had fallen 'like dry leaves from the tree' in November 1918 and could not merely be 're-righted at any given moment like some toppled chair'. Elsewhere in the book, he argued that remaining loyal to a Kaiser who had abandoned his people was an oxymoron,[70] that re-establishing the monarchy was not desired by the majority of the population, and that a restoration would only be thinkable with the help of the 'Jewry'. Furthermore, he called upon the old aristocracy to participate in the removal of 'capitalism' by becoming personally involved in the 'national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*). Finally, he advocated the creation of a new 'Führer elite', adding that it could 'come from wherever it likes', as long as it was not composed of members of the aristocracy, the only section of society he no longer regarded as fit for consideration for the role.[71]

It is perfectly possible to interpret the contents of Count Reventlow's uncommonly vehement denunciation of Wilhelm II as an indication of the compatibility between the (generally private) criticism expressed by the nobility and the shrill tones that came from the *völkisch* elements in society. At around the same time as Reventlow's own writing was being published, for instance, Hitler had issued a similar condemnation of the 'lamentable attitude' of the German princes who, with the Kaiser at their head, had indisputably brought their own downfall upon themselves in November 1918. According to Hitler, the German monarchs had been weakened by the Jews at their courts, influenced by figures he referred to as 'parasitic worms', and ultimately abandoned in their hour of need by the 'chickens' in their entourage who, when the revolution broke out, 'ran away from every red arm band [the sign of a left-wing worker]' and left the Kaiser to his fate,

letting 'their king be king'. Too cowardly to 'be struck dead for their master', these 'crawlers and bootlickers' had apparently disappeared without trace.[72] In 1934, a speech given by Richard Walther Darré—an exceptionally anti-aristocratic Nazi whose speeches were particularly hostile to the Kaiser and the old nobility—emphasized that, 'with the best will in the world', it was 'incomprehensible why we should bring back people who *abandoned us in our moment of greatest peril!*' 'We peasants only ask one thing of our Führers', he continued: 'that they have a heart that beats for us and that they lead us well.' According to Darré, if Wilhelm II ever returned to Germany, he would be forced to appear before a people's court (*Volksgericht*).[73] Both Hitler's and Darré's aggressive accusations of cowardice among the upper echelons of the aristocracy were later repeatedly recast for use in National Socialist propaganda that was designed to discredit the authorities of old.

Despite all of this ideological turmoil, the outward appearance of life under a monarchy remained (at least superficially) in tact. Indeed, little pockets of resistance to the reality of the new Republic endured throughout the country. These anachronistic counter-cultures were staged in the castles of the high nobility, in the large manor houses of the landed aristocracy, at the balls organized by the DAG, and in innumerable salons held in Germany's large towns and cities. Such locations and events gave older aristocrats the opportunity to perform something akin to historical re-enactments that recreated 'the good old days' in minute detail and reanimated the customs of the Ancien Régime. In 1929, for example, the King of Denmark attended the festivities for the silver wedding anniversary of Mecklenburg's prince and princess. Surrounded by members of the region's old court society at Ludwigsburg Palace, the Danish monarch was able to pronounce that 'one truly does not notice that you are a Republic here today'.[74] A similar example of a monarchist microcosm could also be found in the miniature court maintained by the exiled Kaiser in Doorn.

Although widespread, these clusters of obsolete courtly life should not be mistaken for a real sense of longing for a bygone era. Although it is true that 'the aristocracy's outward appearance' seemed to confirm their 'traditional image as the backward-looking caretakers of Imperial thought',[75] this impression proves, upon closer inspection, to have been nothing more than a rhetorical device. For example, such newly established monarchist associations as the Prussian League and the League of the Upright found it hard to attract support during the entire era of the Weimar Republic, even among circles of the old Prussian nobility.[76] Overall and with the notable exception

of Bavaria—a place where key sections of the (largely Catholic) nobility remained loyal to their traditions, their values, and to Crown Prince Rupprecht, the pretender to the Bavarian throne[77]—monarchism in the Weimar Republic remained a heterogeneous, politically feeble force that could not provide the aristocracy with any stable sense of ideological orientation.

Aside from the small matter of its lack of support among the general populace, German monarchism also suffered from four main structural weaknesses that it never managed to overcome. Firstly, there was the problem that the Kaiser's flight without a fight was interpreted as an irrepearable blow by all groups and generations of the aristocracy. Indeed, to quote the huntsmanly words written by Count von der Schulenburg in 1932, Wilhelm II's retreat had given the monarchy a fatal 'broken neck.'[78] Secondly, there was the issue of succession. As candidates from no fewer than three generations of the House of Hohenzollern were under consideration to take the crown, the dynasty's guiding principles of legitimacy had been thrown into disarray. In consequence, the process of finding a claimant to the throne who could command a consensus was postponed indefinitely. Thirdly, it was unclear how the rulership claims of the princely houses that had fallen in 1918 would be dealt with if the monarchy were to be restored. As was true of other exiled monarchs before him, the Kaiser's relocation abroad had complicated such matters beyond resolution.[79] Fourthly and finally, there was the problem that the younger generation from all levels of society was rapidly drifting away from monarchism and towards the various groups, ideologies, and prospects that were emerging on the radical Right. For all their long-standing traditions, the nobility were in no way immune.

From the moment the Kaiser took flight in 1918, this quartet of structural weaknesses coalesced and presented all the vague and concrete plans to restore the monarchy with issues that could not be resolved. This was true of the entire spectrum of suggested schemes, ranging from the tactics entertained by the Weimar Republic's Presidential Cabinets of 1932/33[80] to the manoeuvres the conservative Resistance discussed for the 'Schmidt family' (their codename for the House of Hohenzollern) in 1944.[81] As a consequence, all were doomed to fail.

These fundamental problems were exacerbated by the increasing lack of faith people felt in any single royal candidate's ability to rule. In the cool, cynical verdict he pronounced upon the German monarchy in 1926, for example, Count zu Reventlow took great pleasure in citing a cutting remark

Bismarck had once made to the Empress Frederick: 'Pour faire un civet, il faut un lièvre, pour faire une monarchie, il faut un roi.' ('To make jugged hare, you need a hare; to make a monarchy, you need a king.')[82] This dwindling belief in regal capabilities was precisely the reason why a majority of the Prussian nobility began to switch their political and emotional allegiance from king to Führer. Such a departure from monarchist aspirations is plainly apparent in the correspondence of the aforementioned Count Schulenburg. 'Only a Titan can still master the situation', he wrote in 1928, adding that such a figure was neither available 'on the right nor the left' of the political spectrum.[83] In 1924, even the Crown Prince himself had reached the conclusion 'that, when all is said and done, only a dictator [could] pull the cart out of the mud'.[84] By this point, no one of any standing, not even within the Prussian nobility, would have entrusted this dictatorial role to the Kaiser's son any longer. In private, one Prince Salm—a dazzlingly wealthy, powerful member of the high nobility—had agreed with the equally mighty and affluent Count von Arnim-Boitzenburg that Wilhelm II and the Crown Prince were 'impossible' leadership candidates, the latter due to his lifestyle and, above all, 'because he went to Holland and abandoned the army', a crime that made him a 'quasi-deserter'.[85] As early as 1920, Count Schulenburg had also privately labelled the Crown Prince a 'wimp' and a 'weakling' who could no longer be counted on in future.[86] Such rejections of the royal dynasty delivered another severe blow to conservative strands of thought within the aristocracy's ranks.

In the period following the Kaiser's abdication, discussions about the name and profile of a potential candidate for the throne were held only tentatively, if they were ventured at all. In 1927, even Wilhelm II's political staff believed that seriously contemplating an immediate restoration of the royal house was—due to the structural weaknesses of the monarchist movement—'a thing so utterly hare-brained and a crime against the crown, a worse example of which cannot be imagined'.[87] At the same time, however, the idea of the future 'Führer', 'Dictator', or 'Titan' was increasingly taking shape. 'Only a dictator with an iron broom that can sweep through this entire rabble of international parasites [i.e. Jews, socialists, etc.] can help us now', wrote one Count von Bernstorff in his diary. 'If only we had a Mussolini like the Italians!', he added.[88] The general trend here is clear: as conservative hopes for a new age of royal splendour became ever feebler and more diffuse, the New Right's concept of the future Führer grew in popularity and strength. Even aristocrats were not immune to this development. Except

within Bavaria's borders, this left behind a kind of 'vagabond monarchism' in German society that was no longer attached to any real royal individuals. This sudden lack of a royalist focal point had two major consequences. Firstly, it stripped the nobility of a long-standing monarchical lingua franca that had served as the cornerstone of their political discourse right up until 1918. And secondly, it allowed the cult of the monarch and the cult of the Führer to start merging together as one, thus undermining a potential conservative alternative to National Socialism even before the Nazis had begun their inexorable rise to power.[89]

Perceived Catastrophes

From the aristocracy's point of view, the German Revolution was more than just a mix of the Kaiser's treachery, the disappearance of the monarchs, and the demise of a familiar political lexicon. Indeed, members of the nobility from the capital city to the most far-flung country estates endured direct, dramatic experiences of disruption, insurrection, and counter-revolution while the uprising was underway. Provoked by rumours that circulated between the front lines and home, many aristocrats were also terrified that a repeat of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre—an event of 1572 in which the French Protestant elite were murdered by a Catholic conspiracy in Paris—had broken out across the land. Noble officers fretted about the threat the 'Red Terror' posed to the families they left behind. Their relatives, in turn, worried about their husbands and sons in the military, whom they envisaged surrounded by hordes of bloodthirsty revolutionaries. Although they were based on scant information, there can be no doubt that such fearful rumours contained a kernel of truth. Educated aristocrats were aware, for example, of the French revolutionary Terror and made allusions to its horrors on a daily basis. Moreover, the Russian Revolution and its violent excesses—a savagery that was considered likely to make the leap across the German border at any given moment—were also even more widespread and fresh in people's minds.

Although the imagined spectre of Bolshevism hit Germany far harder than its reality, aristocrats' fantasies were amply inspired by tales of Bolshevik terror[90] and accounts of insurrectionary violence inflicted upon members of their class. Many such stories reached their ears from Russia and—even more alarmingly—the nearby Baltic states. In July 1918, for example, news

of the slaughter of the Tsar's entire family in a cellar at the edge of the Urals became known at around the same time as reports of the noble German diplomat Count Wilhelm von Mirbach's assassination at his nation's embassy in Moscow. Such initial accounts were often transmitted directly to the German nobility from their Baltic and Russian 'cousins': the murdered Tsarina was a German princess from Hesse-Darmstadt, after all. Close and extended family connections to the Russian high nobility also allowed the aristocracy at least to imagine they had experienced the horrors at close quarters and made them worry that they would be next in line.[91] Although few members of the German nobility experienced actual physical threats, almost all of their number saw the world through a lens of fear. The exiled Kaiser and numerous members of his country's high nobility believed, for example, that the Bolshevists would overrun the land and cause it to become 'infected' as though 'by a serious illness'. Yet more lurid tales helped fan the flames of such anxieties. The image of a despairing, helpless noble officer standing in a crumbling world, his epaulettes—the symbols of his power—being cut off by insurrectionaries was a recurring image in aristocratic recollections of the revolution.[92] Stories were also told of officers who had their ears bitten off,[93] revolutionaries were described advancing with pistols and sharpened knives at the ready,[94] and rumours about officers being thrown into the River Spree after having their fingers hacked off spread like wildfire.[95] Although such violent caricatures may well have been distorted and overblown by noble authors, they were nevertheless based on foundations of actual, lived experience. Indeed, aristocratic officers endured physical peril in a variety of forms, ranging from the frigate captain whose dachshund was served up as 'roast hare' by insurrectionary sailors in the officers' mess,[96] to individuals who were imprisoned, suffered assassination attempts,[97] sustained physical injuries, and even lost their lives in murderous assaults.

A long way behind the front lines, aristocratic women also suffered their own perceived traumas during the course of the revolution. Judging from Clara von Arnim's account, for example, it still seemed possible to protect oneself from the perils of the revolution by simply locking the door. 'If a man in a flat cap [a typical worker's accessory] rang at the garden gate', she wrote, '[my mother] instructed the [female] cook: "Don't open it, it's bound to be a commie." '[98] More dramatic accounts can be found in the recollections of Tisa von der Schulenburg, whose life as a boarding school pupil appeared still to be under threat in the summer of 1919. 'The Abbess told us

excitedly', she noted, 'that marauding hordes of up to a thousand armed Spartacists [socialist revolutionaries] were moving through the country! They're on their way to us! Unimaginable! We must apparently be ready to flee into the woods.'[99] Although located at a far remove from documented reality, the memoirs of the Franconian Baroness von Guttenberg provide an interesting reconstruction of aristocratic perceptions of the revolution that took hold in Munich in 1919. 'We lived in the dark', she recollected, 'for shots were often fired into the windows of well-known personalities' homes.... One heard of acts of terror and knew that the Red mobs were perpetrating unbridled violence. The atmosphere in Munich was marked by crippling fear.' The words 'one heard' are particularly telling here. Indeed, on the very same page, Guttenberg spun a rather unlikely yarn in which 'a pack of Reds' intruded into her father's house. Upon reaching the critically ill baron's bed, however, they respectfully turned around and left the residence 'in silence'.[100]

Despite their seemingly fictive nature, such accounts were not entirely based on rumour and fabrication. For example, the 'upside-down world' forged by the revolution in Munich really did create a climate in which aristocrats were menaced, assaulted, detained, interrogated, and shot.[101] As elsewhere, a very few incidents sufficed to grab the nobility's attention throughout the country. For instance, ten prisoners—including Baron von Seydlitz, Baron von Teichert, Countess Haila von Westarp, and Prince Gustav Franz Maria von Thurn und Taxis, all of whom were members of a *völkisch*, right-wing, radical organization known as the Thule Society—were gunned down by soldiers of the Munich *Räterepublik* (Republic of Workers' Councils) in April 1919.[102] Although it was one of only a handful of cases in which revolutionary zeal verifiably went beyond the level of verbal threat, the shooting of the Munich prisoners temporarily became the most significant symbol of the 'Red Terror' across an area that far exceeded Bavaria's borders. The haunting photographs of the bodies taken at the scene of the crime by Heinrich Hoffmann—a man who would later become Hitler's court photographer—were used as part of a propaganda campaign that suggested the revolution had long exceeded 'the outrages of the French Revolution' and opened wide 'the gates of Hell'. A Munich magazine called the *Münchener Neue Illustrierte* released a 'special hostage edition' with a full-page photo of the 'hostage cellar' where the unfortunates had been held. Postcards bearing portraits of the victims—and that of the young Countess von Westarp in particular—reached a wide public.[103]

Aristocrats' letters and diary entries that described the revolution during or shortly after the events themselves were dominated by a unified sense of fear, desperation, and rage. In November 1918, for example, Hans-Hasso von Veltheim sent a letter to his mother outlining his first-hand experience of a version of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre that had broken out in Belgium. According to Veltheim, German soldiers had sold their machine guns for five marks apiece to local civilians, who had then used them to shoot German officers in the back.[104] Writing in his diary at around the same time, one Gerhard von Donop also noted how he 'came across a car with a sailor stretched out in it' on a 'bridge over the Rhine'. 'This beast', he continued, 'was wearing a fur collar that was half a metre wide and looking as smug and lofty as you like. This kind of scum is now in charge. One is consistently struck by cold fury when one sees such a sight.'[105] As time went on, however, narratives in which nobles described the anger and trepidation inspired by bloodthirsty 'mobs' became increasingly mixed with rather more mocking accounts of the rampant revolutionary 'rabble'. Indeed, memoirs written several decades after the fact almost entirely mask their intense original terror behind a facade of derisive anecdotes about ridiculous insurgents. This fearless and disdainful contempt for the insurgent 'riffraff' notably only arose when composures were regained after the revolution had faded. At least in retrospect, aristocrats also asserted that they had unfailingly demonstrated their ancient leadership skills and their timeless abilities as a Führer elite throughout the turmoil of the uprising. Indeed, this particularly tenacious claim has withstood decades of political turbulence and remained essentially the same from the moment of its inception to the most recent aristocratic autobiographies. An example of this kind of assertion can be seen in the writings of Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau, the epitome of an anti-democratic landowner whose memoirs from 1936 describe how he returned home from the front lines and established a counter-revolutionary shock troop on his estate. In so doing, he evoked comparison with the kinglet Odysseus, who reimposed order with physical force after arriving back from his voyages. In his account, Oldenburg-Januschau boasts how, upon meeting an insurrectionary farmhand, he single-handedly put an end to the revolt on his estate once and for all. Armed with nothing but a knobbly walking stick, the landowner claims to have threatened his worker with a lusty cry of 'I'll beat yer up until you're standing on yer 'ead!', after which the labourer sheepishly caved in and repentantly took up his old place in the household once again. The passage concludes with the following words: 'His

courage left him and he acknowledged me as his master. The relationship of mutual trust was restored. He continues to work for me with the same diligence as before.'[106]

Countless other anecdotes demonstrate how noble individuals managed to bury their despair at the demise of their known world in tales of their own remarkable authority and narratives of novel noble leadership. General von Tschirschky, for example, a 'red wine-guzzling old war veteran' who had had tears of patriotic distress for the vanished status quo rolling down his 'rough cheeks' only a brief while before, cheered himself up by incorrectly introducing the Socialist leader Friedrich Ebert as 'Herr Evers' at a meeting.[107] This deliberately careless gesture of ostentatious disregard for non-noble names was an explicitly symbolic act that reassuringly reinstated the hierarchy of old. In a similarly haughty account, the stout-hearted German Empress deflated a group of heavily armed sailors who invaded her palace in Potsdam and ordered her to take a seat with a single, withering response: 'I tend to sit down when it suits me.'[108] While behind the front lines, Crown Prince Wilhelm also claimed to have put a rebellious 'lad in his place so severely that, trembling and pale with fright, he gave one salute after another.'[109] In a similar tale, an insurrectionary officer looked 'like an ox in a lightning storm' after a particularly imperious admonition from Prince Heinrich von Sachsen.[110]

Accounts of this kind should not be understood as accurate descriptions of reality, but as expressions of wishful thinking. As such, they can be seen as continuations of the aristocratic ability to adapt an unvarying repertoire of anecdotes and leitmotifs to the demands of the current age. Between 1919 and 1933, for example, the members of the nobility attempted to position themselves as potential vanquishers of the 'Rule of the Inferior'—a government of feeble-minded unworthies described by Edgar Jung in his 1927 book of the same name—by pointing out the possible future uses to which a noble group of Führers could be put. From 1933 to 1945, the aristocracy's tales then gave evidence of how they had fought against the democratic system and demonstrated their value to National Socialism in an attempt to curry favour with the Third Reich. Immediately after 1945, the nobility's self-portrayals changed yet again to provide proof of the ostensibly unflinching distance they had managed to maintain between themselves and the Nazi 'rabble'. Noble accounts from this period merely shifted their derision from the figure of the laughable revolutionary worker to members of the SA, or parroted one of innumerable narrative caricatures that staged Hitler

as a perennially absurd figure of fun. Finally, as time went on, this very particular blend of noble narratives—dubbed *Grafenerzählungen* ('lordly stories') by a number of commentators—started to overlap with the apologetic tones of the post-war period and replace their formerly aggressive timbre with a humorous, nostalgic resonance.[111]

Counter-Revolution

Back in 1797, Joseph de Maistre, a leading conservative thinker, encapsulated the essence of the reactionary ideology in a pronouncement he made in response to the French Revolution: 'Le rétablissement de la monarchie, qu'on appelle contre-révolution', he stated, 'ne sera point une révolution contraire, mais le contraire de la révolution.' ('The re-establishment of the monarchy, which one calls the counter-revolution, will not be a counter-revolution, but the opposite of a revolution.')[112] One might imagine that the German nobility, filled with a desire to return to the old order, would have followed this reactionary ethos to the letter. However, after 1918, the majority of the aristocracy pursued agendas that shared the same revolutionary traits as contemporary fascist movements. Indeed, both the nobility and various fascist groups consisted of unlikely coalitions united by their common belief in the myth of rebirth and their joint desire to fight decadence in all its forms.[113]

As was demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the nobility's immediate reaction to the revolution was generally marked by fear, desperation, and grief. Although the actions they took when faced with the uprising were far less uniform than their early perceptions, it is possible to identify certain overall trends and patterns of behaviour that emerged among the German noble elite. In fact, while the aristocracy did play a considerable role in suppressing the rebellion by dint of military force, their most common initial response to the revolution can broadly be described as a tactic of going to ground and quietly working from the shadows to make sure their interests would continue to be represented in the post-revolutionary world.

This strategy is encapsulated in a statement the historian Reinhard Rürup made about the old German power elites, but which equally applies to all aristocratic groups that held any political relevance in society. After 'awakening from the brief stupor [they experienced] while the state was being overthrown', Rürup noted, such individuals began 'to re-establish their

unsettled positions of leadership with great circumspection and tenacity—that was *their* idea of compromise with the revolution'.[114] Indeed, soon after they had recovered from the initial shock of the uprising and enacted their pre-planned policy of lying low, many members of the landowning nobility started to make sure their influence was still being felt by banding together in landowners' associations.[115] At the same time, the minor nobility and various New Right coalitions of aristocrats and middle-class citizens also began to set up organizations that developed novel forms of *Führersammlung*—the systematic search for talented Führers from all walks of life. This latter phenomenon will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 3.

No sooner had the revolution broken out than aristocrats who held leading positions in agricultural associations, centrist politics, and right-wing political parties started moving to the sidelines. At first glance, it might seem as though these influential figures were forced from power by the popular uprising against the old elites. In many cases, however, this removal from public positions was part of a deliberate, defensive aristocratic strategy to retire to a safer distance and watch how events would unfold.[116] Although the otherwise action-hungry minor nobility were certainly no strangers to this strategy of tactical retreat, it was adopted more eagerly and for longer periods of time by members of the rich, propertied aristocracy who had suitable boltholes and resources. Immediately after the events of 1918, this was particularly true of the *grands seigneurs*, who—acting both as individuals and as members of interest groups that were dominated by the high nobility—skilfully bided their time and stepped aside from political associations. In March 1919, a directive issued by Prince Christian Ernst zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, the chairman of the German Association of Princely Houses, ordered his members to lie low and not seek out any political attention in light of the 'unsettled political times'.[117] This advice largely appears to have been followed, at least by the heads of the high noble houses. In 1920, for example, the Kaiser's friend Prince Max Egon von Fürstenberg turned down membership of the conservative German National People's Party (DNVP)—an organization to which he was 'sympathetic'—because he believed it wise not to join any parties and to be 'nowhere visible in politics'.[118] This line of reasoning was widespread among the high nobility. In fact, the Prussian Crown Prince's circle of advisors suggested that he follow a strategy of 'discreet' restraint during the early days of the Weimar Republic. 'Besides', noted one of his mentors, 'my policy for [the prince] is this: keep your mouth shut, hold back in all matters, do not get into politics,

work hard and endeavour earnestly to build a new life, do not expose any weak spots in your private life. In short: wait and see.'[119]

Despite their initial fears that led them to withdraw from the public eye, it quickly became reassuringly clear to the high nobility that they would not share the same fate suffered by the French royal couple in 1793 or the Tsar's family in 1918. Although the horrors of the 1791 Jacobin and the 1917 Bolshevik uprisings were doubtless still on their minds, the landowning nobility in particular speedily came to the conclusion that history would not be repeating itself. Take, for example, one Prince Rohan's account of his anxious return from the Eastern Front. When he arrived back at his parents' castle, the prince fully expected to be greeted by a smouldering ruin filled with its massacred inhabitants. Instead, he discovered a soirée in progress accompanied by the family's private string quartet. 'We experienced a feeling of immense astonishment', he wrote: 'Did this mean the world had not collapsed? All we had experienced was the end of an era.'[120] A handful of other contemporary sources from Germany's former ruling houses—clans that had held power right up until 1918—attest to the remarkably relaxed attitude that reigned just a few weeks after the 'eventful days' of the revolution. Even while house-to-house fighting was still taking place in Berlin, for instance, the landed aristocracy in Mecklenburg (a region in northern Germany not too far from the capital itself) could be seen relaxing on a hunt.[121] At the same time, their monarch—the grand duke of Mecklenburg who had escaped to exile in Denmark—was starting the process of coming to terms with his new situation. With keen insight, he had grasped that the revolution would result in 'a certain amount of restriction' being placed upon his family. Although he bemoaned the insufferable notion of losing his castle back home in Schwerin, however, it quickly became clear to the astonished nobleman that things were not as bad as they might at first have seemed, especially not when compared to the revolutions in Russia and France. Shortly after his abdication, for example, the grand duke—who was spending his period of banishment in a comfortable palace with the rather promising name *Sorgenfrei* ('Carefree')—started asking astonishingly guileless questions about such trivial matters as the size of his future staff. Like many members of the high nobility, the monarch was also keen to start cautiously returning to his former position once the initial fears of the uprising had ebbed away and a certain level of confidence had crept back in. Indeed, as early as December 1918, he wrote to his leading court official, asking 'Is it too early to say when you would recommend we return to Mecklenburg,

just in case the republican government remains in place for the time being?'[122] This casual attitude—and his evident impression that the new German state was just a passing fad—becomes especially surprising if one considers that, at around the same time, the Tsar's family and thousands of other aristocrats were being slaughtered in Russia, a country whose borders were not so many miles away.

As they lowered their guard and rapidly regained their self-confidence, members of the nobility also started to expand their flexible, far-sighted repertoire of responses to the uprising. One new strategy saw them quietly beginning to play an active role in helping to establish the institutions that emerged during the revolutionary period. Noble officers, for example, became involved in revolutionary local soldiers' and farmers' councils. On the whole, aristocratic memoirs portrayed this move as a savvy leadership tactic intended to 'dupe' the 'rabble'.[123] Although this might seem like a case of aristocratic exaggeration at first glance, the historian Eckhart Conze's case study of northern Germany has emphatically demonstrated that such a course of action was indeed part of a successful, carefully coordinated strategy that was deliberately adopted by the nobility in some places. In fact, by putting the brakes on the foundation of a large number of autonomous peasants' organizations at a local level, the aristocracy managed to shut down the revolution in many rural areas before it had even really begun.[124]

Such flexible forms of retreat and organizational influence were accompanied and followed by another traditional noble strategy, that of military counter-revolution and—after the failure of the first putsch attempts—paramilitary action. These violent tactics were predominantly waged by the bellicose minor nobility and frequently supported by major aristocratic landowners. Much of these individuals' combative zeal arose because Germany as a nation was one of the states that most keenly felt the First World War had not come to a clear, satisfactory end in 1918.[125] This impression had a particularly significant impact upon the Prussian minor nobility, who were one of the main groups that continued the war effort in the guise of an intellectual, political, and paramilitary counter-revolution even after the Armistice had been signed. An especially prominent role in this campaign was played both by the aristocratic officers who had seen active service in the First World War and by their younger brothers—figures known as 'victory watchers'[126] who had been 'excluded from the legitimizing myth of experience on the front line' as a result of their youth.[127] A striking example is presented by the figure of Count Fritz-Dietlof von der

Schulenburg, the son of a general and a member of the Prussian military nobility who joined the NSDAP at an early stage and would later become one of the central figures of the Resistance. Schulenburg's sister noted that the Great War had not waited for her brother who, despite setting off in 1919 to join a *Freikorps* unit on the Polish border at the age of sixteen, did not get a chance to take part in the combat he so longed for on that particular occasion. Indeed, although he had allowed his face to be veritably cut to shreds during bouts as a student at one of the ancient duelling fraternities, the courageous count was unable to fulfil his desire to prove himself on the battlefield until as late as 1941. Ideologically speaking, the young Schulenburg's fighting spirit stemmed from his adoption of the older, front-line generation's view that humanity was neatly divided up into friends and foes.[128] His outlook was also heavily influenced by his elder brothers who had seen active service in the war and carried on fighting as voluntary *Freikorps* soldiers in the Baltic after the ceasefire of 1918.[129]

This desire to engage in continued combat was not unusual. In fact, to quote Baron Walther von Lüttwitz, 'the old officers' urge to offer their services to the Fatherland against Bolshevism was strong.'[130] Between 1919 and 1923, the majority of the men who wanted to lead the armed fight 'against the revolution' found a chance to do so in the paramilitary *Freikorps*.[131] Examples of aristocratic involvement in such anti-insurrectionary efforts abound. Even after 1945, for instance, Franz von Papen—who variously served as a General Staff officer, a diplomat, Germany's Chancellor, and the most important figure behind the establishment of Hitler's first political cabinet—was still proudly recalling his contribution to the Bavarian counter-revolution in 1919, a campaign which claimed hundreds of civilian lives. Papen's pompous autobiography describes how he immediately joined a *Freikorps* unit he chanced upon near Munich in order to 'smoke out the Red Eisner brigades' of insurrectionaries led by the Jewish, socialist intellectual Kurt Eisner.[132] Similarly, the family history of Wilhelm von Oppen-Tornow, a former cavalry captain who had served as an officer in the colonial corps, casually recounts how he hid counter-revolutionary putschists and *Fememörder* (far-right political assassins) in his 'stunningly beautiful' country house. Aristocrats in many regions across the country were also involved in 'arming the rural population'.[133] Indeed, the use of noble estates as counter-revolutionary armouries and training camps—part of what the historian Marcus Funck has described as a wider 'trend towards the privatization of war and violence'[134]—was of direct significance for the very first time

during the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch of 1920, an attempted coup in which aristocratic officers performed an important role.[135] The nobility also helped establish such radical, right-wing paramilitary units as the *Orgesch*, the *Stahlhelm*, and the SA. In fact, members of the old aristocracy thronged the leadership levels of all three organizations.[136]

The nobility's yearning for combat was infused by a growing belief in the legitimacy of using extreme violence against 'lesser-born' enemies. During the early twentieth century, the German officer corps—vast numbers of whom were sons of the aristocracy—spent large amounts of time fighting brutal campaigns against groups they viewed as 'primitive', 'racially inferior' foes. This experience of vicious combat not only gradually engrained violence in their psyches, but also led to an ideological glorification of brutality that became mixed up in the concept of 'race wars' and a new ideal of masculinity and strength. This attitude was partially evident in what has been described as the *Blutmühle* ('blood mill')—savage battles that raged on the Western and Eastern Fronts during the four years of the First World War.[137] Long before 1914, noble commanding officers had also waged similarly formative 'race wars' in Germany's African colonies, places where 'raw violence' and sheer 'terrorism' were explicitly encouraged, planned, and implemented against local women and children. Indeed, the nobility played a key leadership role in the German colonial wars of 1904–7, events historians have recently framed as the first genocide of the twentieth century.[138] Notably, it was during these conflicts that the Prussian General Lothar von Trotha issued a *Vernichtungsbefehl* ('extermination order') in October 1905 that commanded his troops to annihilate both the Herero and Nama peoples in modern-day Namibia. Couched in murderous jargon, this document stands as a monument to the nobility's complicity in European colonial crimes.[139] Chillingly, it used the idea of a 'race war' to sanction the ruthless use of expulsion, resettlement, concentration camps, and the forces of nature—in this case, driving entire populations into the desert to die of dehydration—on the civilian communities in the areas the general wished to control.

The experiences of such barbarism—the worst strains of which had become a standard feature of German colonialism long before 1914—did not simply disappear after the killing had come to an end. Indeed, the horrors of the First World War and Germany's brief, vicious spell as a colonial power changed codes of honour and the rules of combat in the minds of those involved. They also helped establish a tradition of savagery that numerous

individuals—including noble officers—brought back home with them after 1918. As early as the 1950s, the likes of Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon were already pointing to the boomerang effect that saw the unprecedented brutalities committed in the colonial 'Heart of Darkness' being exported back to their countries of origin. Although very little is still known for certain about the cultural significance of these atrocious ideological legacies, the fact of their existence is no longer disputed by any historians today.[140]

It is also well documented that the practice of exercising military brutality against combatants and civilians alike did not end in 1918. In fact, such crimes demonstrably continued in conflicts along Germany's borders, during the Russian Civil War, in the Baltic region,[141] and in the fight the German *Freikorps* waged against their armed and unarmed compatriots.[142] Indeed, although the German Revolution can be described as a largely non-violent event, the same could never be said of the counter-revolution itself. Around New Year's Day in 1919, for instance, *Freikorps* units in Berlin used machine guns to fire on a number of demonstrators. After the event, officers proudly reported that young girls had been among those who were shot. Following the general strike in March 1919, the counter-revolution also claimed another 1,200 lives, and artillery and fighter planes were deployed to bombard targets in the centre of the capital city. Around a thousand more victims were slain during the suppression of the Munich *Räterepublik*, and the early days of the new German Republic were shaken by a series of political murders and revolts.[143] Comparing such events with post-war Britain—a place where equivalent incidents were scarcely to be found[144]—highlights the extent of the brutality involved.

It is clear that thought, speech, and action all underwent profound changes during the early years of the twentieth century. It is also evident that the aristocracy were by no means immune to such developments. At the beginning of the counter-revolution, for example, some sections of the German nobility started following the paramilitary trend for issuing military orders in murderous language. During Germany's undeclared civil war (and particularly from 1918–23), noble officers also helped with systematically hunting down and killing male and female civilians who were suspected of harbouring communist views. In some cases, such atrocities even involved the use of blatant terrorist techniques. Of course, the aristocracy cannot solely be blamed for this violence. After all, four years of meting out savagery and living close to death during the First World War were not experiences

specific to the nobility.[145] Furthermore, the extent to which aristocratic men were actively involved in the brutality of the post-war period cannot be precisely ascertained. The consideration that aristocrats tended to experience both the war and the civil war from the perspective of leadership roles suggests, however, that their contribution to the processes of brutalization was clearly above average. Indeed, noblemen who fought on the front lines in the First World War had almost exclusively served as officers; depending on their rank and position, this meant that the majority had undoubtedly acted as specialists, organizers, and/or implementers of military death.

Needless to say, some aristocratic officers privately expressed their desires for peace. Nevertheless, the opposite attitude clearly enjoyed a greater prevalence among their ranks. Indeed, the nobility's experiences of the losses and horrors of war seem to have resulted in exhaustion, resignation, and pacifism less often than in other sections of society. In fact, the distinct, prevailing tendency among aristocratic survivors of the First World War was to become entrenched in a hardening habitus of warrior-like ways. This phenomenon can be explained by pointing to the fundamentally different attitudes to war that were held by the upper and lower echelons of German society. For instance, the millions of workers', peasants', and citizens' sons who were conscripted into battle saw heroic images of warriors as mere propaganda devices. In contrast, the male members of noble military clans—men who were, it must be remembered, exclusively and deliberately socialized at the furthest possible remove from the ideals and forms of middle-class and working-class pacifism—viewed the same warrior tropes as nothing less than embodiments of a historical tradition and a vocation that lay deep within their veins.[146]

It was precisely this deep-seated military background that led many noble officers with experience of front-line combat to join the *Freikorps* after 1918. These paramilitary organizations unquestionably played a key role in helping a vicious 'culture of war'[147] to take root in post-war German society. Insights into how the nobility contributed to continuing the brutality that was characteristic of the First World War within the nation's borders are provided by Ernst von Salomon's 1938 work *The Book of a German Freikorps Leader* and by some early, astonishingly frank reports written by aristocratic *Freikorps* commanders prior to 1933.[148] In his fictionalized account of the civil war, for instance, Salomon described the mindset of his fellow combatants in visceral, savage terms. 'We crashed', he wrote, 'into surprised crowds and rampaged and shot and smote and hunted.... We slung the

bodies into wells and threw grenades in after them. We killed whatever fell into our grasp, we burned what could be burned. We saw red, we had no more human feelings left in our hearts.'[149] Such descriptions of the era's warlike bloodlust—a craving that laid waste to 'the bourgeois codes, the laws and values of the civilized world'—celebrated a new warrior archetype that was not only embodied by the 'nasty elements' of the lower social orders, but by aristocratic and middle-class officers alike.[150] As time went on, both the reality and exaggerated representations of the counter-revolution that was waged against German men and women increasingly moved further and further away from the ideal of 'chivalric conflict'—or at least what was left of it from the battlefields of the First World War. Ever since the Romantic era, bittersweet tales had been spun and songs had been sung about bullets striking the heart of a loyal comrade in an honourable vision of war. After 1918, however, noble descriptions of combat began to tell a different story. One such savage narrative, for example, sang odes to the hand grenade that ripped apart an unfortunate woman described as 'the bitch sitting at the field kitchen'.[151] This transformation accelerated in the later years of the Weimar Republic and reached its zenith in the brutalities of the SA, a group that had the freedom to terrorize any German village, town, or neighbourhood they pleased by 1932.

The deep marks left in the noble psyche by the First World War—a conflict that was prolonged long after the Armistice had been declared—can also be detected in the memoirs of the soldiers' sisters and wives. An account Camilla von Stackelberg wrote about her young husband graphically encapsulates this worldview. Although he had 'missed' the First World War itself, the Baltic noblewoman's spouse had volunteered to fight against the Red Army as a member of the reactionary White Guard. When she greeted him in the city of Stettin after a long time apart, Stackelberg recounts that her sense of alienation from her husband was so great that she addressed him with the formal German pronoun *Sie* ('you'). 'He was a warrior now', she noted, 'he did not care for the idyll of family life; he wanted to sleep on the hard floorboards at night because the bed was too soft and unfamiliar to him.'[152]

In a similar vein, Countess Tisa von der Schulenburg's portraits of family life at her father's Mecklenburg estate provide striking depictions of how the old and young generations of the nobility experienced different reactions after the close of the First World War. She recounts, for instance, how the habitus of her older brothers changed when they returned home,

recalling that they waved away protests against their new-found disregard for traditional noble table manners by claiming 'this is how one does it in the field, mother.' Reaching out to grab a sausage with their hands at dinner was, however, the most innocuous aspect of their altered behaviour. 'There is no doubt that the brothers brought a kind of trench style [*Schützengrabenstil*] back with them after the war', Schulenburg wrote, 'and they enjoyed it, too. The rougher and wilder, the better.'[153] In contrast, the countess's father—a figure who had served as the General Staff Chief of Crown Prince Wilhelm's army group in 1918—became a broken, embittered man who withdrew into a separate part of the manor house to let his anguish flow out in a myriad of letters and a 2,000-page memoir that would never be published.[154] Although he had been the most energetic supporter of the counter-revolution in November 1918 and ended his days as a general in the SS, his correspondence from the first few years after the war was marked by depression, desolation, bitterness, and nostalgia. 'Having to go on living is not a joy', he wrote to Count von Arnim in 1920: 'That is all the more reason why I am glad that we cling loyally to one another.'[155]

Despite many exceptions, a clear overall trend can be detected between the two age groups. Indeed, while the older generation really did see 1918 as the end of the world, younger aristocrats viewed it as the end of just *one* world—the world of their parents. Moreover, much like the younger members of the right-wing intelligentsia, they believed that this 'collapse' of the old order would precipitate an 'awakening' of a new breed of thought and action.[156] This idea was encapsulated in 1920 by Arthur Moeller van den Bruck's pithy phrase '*We want to win the revolution*.'[157]

The violence of the counter-revolution and the resultant transformation of societal codes were also accompanied by a fierce change in the aristocracy's vernacular. It is, of course, true that the post-war proliferation of rough language from the front lines and the accelerated decline in 'well-spokenness'—a virtue the aristocracy had been carefully cultivating for hundreds of years—were not matters that affected the nobility alone. Nevertheless, a growing number of aristocrats conspicuously started using the course, aggressive new idiom. A typical taste of this linguistic brutalization is provided by one Gerzlaff von Hertzberg-Lottin, a former county commissioner who enjoyed equal influence in both the Pan-German League and the DAG. In 1922, he wrote a report to Heinrich Claß—one of Germany's most influential leaders on the extreme right of the political spectrum—to inform him about a nationalist gathering that had taken place

in the town of Coburg. Hertzberg-Lottin's rather coarse account described how Hitler and 'his guards' had put 'the Reds' in their place: 'their broken skulls', he wrote, would take time to 'grow back together'.[158]

The nobility's feelings of despair, terror, grief, hatred, and revulsion that were triggered by the revolution also erupted in extreme portrayals of the 'Jewish epidemic' (*Judenseuche*) that had supposedly 'putrefied' the German state and its people. 'It is revolting to live among this degradation', lamented one Baron Uexküll in a letter to Prince Eulenburg in early 1919. In the same message, the baron also employed two metaphors that anticipated both of the major strategies that were used by the political Right after the First World War. 'I see two ways forward', he wrote: either a 'foreign surgeon' could 'cut out' the Jewish Bolshevik 'cancer' from German society, or one could wait until the population rejected it itself. This would unfold, Uexküll claimed, after the populace had become radicalized in a 'great mystic-religious reaction' provoked by the 'general starvation' that would doubtless set in as a result of some future national privation.[159] Remarkably, this statement not only managed to predict the rise of Adolf Hitler (the 'foreign surgeon'), but also foresaw the 'radicalization' that gripped the country after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and eventually led to the Nazis' rise to power in 1933.

Of course, the savagery that swept through the German aristocracy after 1918 was not limited to the realm of mere language. Indeed, individual aristocrats were also involved in organizing some of the most vicious waves of killing in Berlin and Munich during the first brutalizing phase of the counter-revolution itself.[160] The extent to which terror, physical violence, and murder became socially acceptable among growing sections of the aristocracy is exemplified by Count Anton von Arco-Valley, an offspring of the ancient nobility who was married to Countess von Arco-Zinnenberg and later went on to enjoy a career with the Lufthansa airline in the National Socialist state. In February 1919, the young count shot the Bavarian Prime Minister Kurt Eisner from behind and was subsequently tried and thrown in jail. Despite his crime, however, he did not lose his firmly established place in the Bavarian aristocracy's 'best' marriage and social circles and even remained a member of the state's most exclusive aristocratic organizations after his early release from prison.[161] Indeed, although they harboured misgivings about his suitability as a future Führer, many of Arco-Valley's peers not only accepted him, but also venerated him. Members of the Bavarian Home and King's League also regarded him as someone who had 'disposed' of a 'pest' by killing someone they viewed as a tyrant.[162]

Arco-Valley's attack and its favourable reception were not one-off events as far as the nobility were concerned. In the summer of 1921, for example, Mattias Erzberger, a democrat who signed the Armistice in November 1918, was assassinated by members of the Organisation Consul, a right-wing radical group that included a number of aristocrats among its ranks. A year and a half earlier, another attempt on Erzberger's life had been made by the nobleman Oltwig von Hirschfeld, an erstwhile officer candidate who tried to dispatch the politician with a pistol. In 1919, members of the most prominent northern German aristocratic families also rejoiced privately and in public after learning that 'the insolent Jewess Rosa Luxemburg' had been 'lynched'. The attitude they displayed was similar to the reception that welcomed news of Arco-Valley's own strike. 'Thank Heavens!' wrote one Andreas von Bernstorff in a diary entry from 1919: 'Hopefully they will now wipe out all of her ilk.'[163] According to Duke Carl Eduard von Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha, some members of the high nobility also made up their minds at an early stage to offer financial and practical support to right-wing radical terrorists.[164]

This acceptance of brutality was also true of such lofty figures as the Prussian Crown Prince himself. In 1932, for example, the Kaiser's son advised General Schleicher and President Hindenburg not to be too 'upstanding', told them to 'eliminate' political troublemakers in southern Germany with 'ruthless energy',[165] and shared his desire to see some 'communists laid out in the street'.[166] Later that same year, the Crown Prince dispatched a letter to Hitler praising the leader's 'wonderful movement' in tones of high aristocratic acclaim.[167] He also sent a reproachful message to Groener, the Minister of Defence, asking how he could countenance helping to 'crush the wonderful stock of humans that is united and receiving a valuable education in the SA and the SS'.[168] On a personal level, the Crown Prince also commonly exhibited a loud mouth and imperious manners in a display of what Groener described with the bitingly apt expression *Reitpeitschenmanieren* (literally 'riding crop manners').[169] There is good reason to interpret such haughty conduct as verbal compensation for what much of the nobility regarded as the inexcusable failures committed by him and his father on and after 9 November 1918. At the same time, however, they can also be read as evidence that the intellectual, linguistic, and factual distance that may once have existed between the 'chivalrous' code of honour and the unrestrained violence of brutish, mercenary hostilities was dwindling at a constant rate. The road that led from ancient concepts of gallant

warfare to the cold-blooded slaughter of women and civilians was long, but many took it during the course of the counter-revolution. One of the most extreme examples of this shift towards violence is presented in the memoirs of Manfred von Killinger, a former naval officer, a *Freikorps* leader, and a member of the National Socialist movement. Throughout his account, Killinger takes great pleasure in adumbrating how a band of soldiers under his command helped established 'order' in the insurrectionary Munich Soviet Republic in 1919. The monstrous portraits he paints throughout are couched in an exceptionally vulgar idiom. One prisoner, for instance, is described getting a hand grenade 'right in the gob', 'gargling' in his own blood, and 'staggering away'. A female captive described as a lascivious 'Schwabinger Malweibchen' (a pejorative term for a female artist from the Schwabing district of Munich) was beaten up and flogged by several men 'until no more white patches were visible on her backside.' Killinger was unrepentant. 'Some will call it "barbarous" ', he remarked: 'That is correct, but it was the right thing to do. The rabble would have construed anything else as weakness.' Several parts of the author's work make it clear that he was not merely writing a grisly account of life at the front line, but also attempting to put forward a model of leadership based on the most brutal version of the idea that societal conflicts could best be resolved with drastic levels of virile military intervention and pugnacious leadership. From Killinger's point of view, for example, the revolution was able to make headway for exactly the same reason that the Kapp Putsch 'went down the drain' a short while later: those in charge had conducted themselves like 'bunny rabbits'. According to his account, both outcomes would have been avoidable if only the aristocracy's aptitude for military leadership had been set free sufficiently early during proceedings, and if the noble 'Führers' who could 'unleash hell when necessary' had been given the chance to crush their 'inferiors'.[170] Although the brutality of Killinger's account is undoubtedly an exception rather than a rule, his text is perhaps the aristocratic memoir that most clearly displays the bloody lessons that a majority of the minor nobility seems to have drawn from the events of the German Revolution.

As has been demonstrated above, the counter-revolution and the legacy of the First World War affected the language, the thinking, and the political outlook of many aristocrats, ranging from members of the minor nobility to the families of the *grands seigneurs*. It would be a mistake to view such changes as the sole product of a process of political radicalization, however. Indeed, the transformation was also provoked by the severe setbacks that

practically all sections of the nobility suffered as a result of the revolution and its aftermath. In fact, although there were many exceptions to the general rule, the radicalization of the aristocracy was not born of a sense of self-confidence that was inspired by holding unshaken positions of power, but triggered by the impact of the real and imagined losses they had sustained after the First World War. The next section of this chapter will sketch out some of these losses and examine how they affected various noble groups in a range of very different ways.

Doom and Transition

It is only truly possible to understand the perceptions and reactions the aristocracy exhibited after 1918 if they are viewed in the context of the losses they sustained in the post-war period. The existential threat posed by the revolution was not entirely a figment of the nobility's imagination. Indeed, the insurrection was accompanied by the actual collapse of mechanisms that had long made it possible for aristocrats to retain their elevated positions in society. The disappearance of the Kaiser, for instance, was followed by that of the eighteen reigning Federal Princes, each of whose courts had served as cultural reference points and sources of employment for male and female aristocrats for hundreds of years.[171] Wave after wave of republican purges also led to the downfall of noble old boys' networks at the higher levels of the civil service. Moreover, the elimination of three other institutions—the Prussian triple-class voting system, the Upper Houses in various German states, and, above all, the Prussian House of Lords—abolished three bastions of noble influence that had made it easier for the aristocracy to put up with an unloved parliamentary democracy.[172]

Perhaps the very worst blow to the aristocracy's standing was dealt by the Treaty of Versailles, which reduced the German officer corps down to a mere 4,000 men. This hit the minor nobility particularly hard. Although data suggests that the overall proportion of aristocratic soldiers in the *Reichswehr* (the German army) remained impressively high, such figures paint a rather misleading picture. In absolute terms, no more than nine hundred of the ten thousand or so noble officers who had served in the Kaiser's military force actually managed to secure a position in the new *Reichswehr*.[173] The abolition of Prussia's and other German states' training academies for careers in the military and at court (*Kadettenkorps* and *Pagarien*, respectively)

took a similarly heavy toll on aristocratic prospects. As one waspish author noted in 1930, the *Kadettenkorps* had opened up careers in the officer corps and given opportunities to 'even the Prussian nobility's stupidest sons'.[174] When these traditional sanctuaries for second and subsequent male offspring were eradicated in 1918, no substitute was set up in their stead. At the same time, the closure of various ladies' institutions and convents also hampered the traditional career paths followed by aristocratic daughters.[175]

In 1919, the Weimar Constitution damaged the nobility still further. Article 155 changed the key mechanisms that aristocrats had used to protect their property by announcing the dissolution of entailed estates (*Fideikomisse*) and obliging state legislatures to make entailed property subject to the general rules of inheritance law.[176] Particularly as far as the landowning nobility were concerned, this was a difficult pill to swallow. Similarly, article 109 of the constitution declared an end to the last privileges 'of birth or social status' in public law, decreeing that noble titles—attributes some aristocratic groups had fought a tenacious, successful campaign to maintain—would now be subsumed into family surnames.[177] Although the left-wingers in the National Assembly did not ultimately succeed in bringing about the total 'abolition of the aristocracy' they desired,[178] and even though aristocrats retained the right to keep using their distinguished (and distinguishing) titles, the German nobility had technically ceased to exist. To make matters worse, the dissolution of the Prussian Heraldry Office and other similar aristocratic authorities also brought the state-run 'protection' of noble names and titles to a close, throwing the gates wide open to phoney aristocrats, confidence tricksters, and high-class identity fraud.[179]

Later accounts written by some members of the German aristocracy have retrospectively compared their collapse of 1918 with the downfall they experienced in 1945. The former was worse than the latter, they claim, because it came more unexpectedly and 'the height we fell from [was] greater'.[180] This assessment is not unfounded. It is, of course, true that the nobility tended to have an irrational, overblown sense of loss after 1918. It is also true that some aristocratic groups were able to adapt to their new situation remarkably well, and that the nobility continued to produce impressive proportions of the nation's major landowners, higher-level civil servants, diplomats, and officers after the conflict had come to a close. Nevertheless, the events of 1918 and beyond sent shockwaves throughout the aristocracy and inflicted substantial losses upon their ranks. In fact, it is no exaggeration

to say that the revolution and defeat in the First World War caused the nobility to fall further than any other group in German society.

Examining aristocratic life before and after 1918 in more detail reveals that the revolution affected various sections of the nobility in a number of different ways. These divergent experiences are reflected in a variety of contrasting accounts that members of the nobility wrote after the end of the Second World War. In 1946, for example, Arnold Vieth von Golßenau, an erstwhile Guards Officer from a family of the ancient Saxon nobility, published a literary swan song dedicated to his peers under his *nom de guerre* of Ludwig Renn—the pseudonym he had used in his dashing career as a communist journalist since the end of the First World War. Even the book's title, *Adel im Untergang* ('Nobility in Decline'), succinctly encapsulated the downward trajectory Renn believed the aristocracy had been on since the days of the Kaiser's rule.[181] Fifteen years later, the historian Johann-Albrecht von Rantzau published his own interpretation of the nobility's recent history in a work that arguably stands as the finest early-twentieth-century portrait an aristocrat has written about the upheaval and collapse of German noble society. Rantzau named his book *Adel im Übergang* ('Nobility in Transition'),[182] a far more positive title that stood in direct contrast to its communist predecessor's more negative tone.

Both these books' titles are accurate and misleading in equal measure. For example, the notion that the entirety of the nobility suffered a collective 'decline' tells the reader more about Renn's political agenda than any verifiable social fact. At the same time, Rantzau's flexible 'transition' into the era of the new Republic was not a feat the majority of the nobility were able or willing to achieve. The following pages will attempt to shed some light on this complex situation by sketching out the various routes taken by different aristocratic groups between perseverance and adaptation on the one hand and decline and fall on the other.

As was discussed in Chapter 1, members of the nobility are peerless masters of memory who can spin tales that unfailingly put them in an advantageous light. This ability—which is not shared by any other societal group—means that aristocratic accounts about the apparently unique nature of their 'victimhood' during the First World War and in post-1918 German society need to be taken with a pinch of salt.[183] Nevertheless, even when read with a critical eye, some of their narratives of loss cannot simply be ignored. Take, for example, the fact that a disproportionate number of aristocratic men lost their lives during the Great War. Between 4,500 and 4,800 noble

officers—almost a quarter of aristocracy's adult male population—never returned from battle.[184] The percentage lost by families with a strong military tradition was often considerably higher. Moreover, the bloodshed even robbed many households of the last members of their male line. Indeed, the 1921 edition of the *Helden-Gedenkmappe* (the commemorative portfolio of the aristocracy's war heroes) listed 160 only children, 675 only sons, 100 pairs of fathers and sons, and 497 pairs of brothers who had fallen 'in the fiercest fight' or who had 'given up' their lives and been obliterated 'without a trace on daring patrol[s] . . . in the surging sea, in the thicket of the jungle, [or] in the horrors of desert solitude'.[185] Quite apart from the psychological damage such losses must have inflicted, the rapid rise in the numbers of widows and orphans in many noble families alone was enough to trigger a dramatic decline in aristocratic living conditions.

Overall—and depending on which region, subgroup, and professional sector one considers—the real privations that the entire aristocracy suffered during the post-war period can be divided up into three broad categories. Firstly, there were instances of total institutional collapse. These arose when the princely courts were dissolved, for example, or when the cadet academies were dismantled and not replaced. Secondly, there were deep professional wounds that were inflicted upon members of their class. The loss of jobs in the officer corps and the civil service are prime examples of this affliction. Thirdly, there were states of permanent adversity that the aristocracy only managed to overcome with great difficulty. Examples of this latter phenomenon can be found in the various forms of economic calamity that ran through the German population after 1918, including periods of financial downturn and enduring agricultural crisis that put thousands of noble estates in jeopardy and foreshadowed the international economic collapse of the early 1930s. Although all of these losses affected every section of the aristocracy to some degree, not all of them were damaged in equal measure. Indeed, they seemed to have a particularly dramatic impact among the minor nobility, a group that now experienced a combination of financial decline and ideological radicalization that rapidly worsened.

A particularly vivid, archetypal example of the failure and loss experienced by the minor nobility is presented by Eckart Conze's detailed portrait of one Count Andreas von Bernstorff-Wedendorf (1868–1945).[186] After giving up his career as an officer due to ill health as early as 1902, the count's career included a string of fruitless attempts to find his way in the world. He unsuccessfully tried his hand at agriculture on a number of occasions, for

instance, fell into increased financial difficulties after 1918, and later developed an enthusiasm for the National Socialist movement. As well as providing a typical example of the experience of substantial sections of the minor nobility, the count's life story also reflects another phenomenon that has been uncovered by the most recent historical research: namely, the fact that the most economically robust sections of noble clans often played an extraordinary role in protecting their most vulnerable members from utter collapse.[187] Indeed, Bernstoff-Wedendorf was the son of a wealthy household from one of northern Germany's most prestigious noble families. As such, the desperate count had the advantage of wealthy brothers and an effective family network that allowed him to continue living an aristocratic existence and stopped his tale of social decline from deteriorating into a history of total noble downfall.

Despite being an engrossing narrative, this particular count's cushioned descent to an inferior social standing is not representative of the extent of the 'proletarization' that took place among the lower echelons of the nobility, however. Indeed, the lion's share of the Prussian minor nobility's social history in the post-war period took place at lower social depths than the count's biography could ever reveal. In order to examine the far less fortunate fates of what contemporary texts referred to as the 'proletarian aristocracy' (*Adelsproletariat*), one therefore needs to delve significantly lower than the station Bernstorff-Wedendorf managed to cling on to thanks to the efforts of his family network.

The male constituents of the hapless *Adelsproletariat* came from various backgrounds, including officers and civil servants who had been let go, members of princely courts who no longer had any courts to frequent, uneducated landowners who had lost their estates to debt, and directionless sons who had returned defeated from battle to find their fathers broken and their family coffers empty. These unfortunates were joined by the uncertain numbers of aristocratic widows and orphans who had been left behind by the aforementioned 4,500–4,800 noblemen who died in the First World War. The family networks and career prospects of such proletarian aristocrats had been damaged beyond repair. Indeed, the sons of countless Prussian families and military clans who had dreamt of one day wearing the red-striped trousers of General Staff officers were forced to gain employment as cab drivers, petrol station attendants, and clerks. Moreover, the daughters of these clans—women who had expected to find a place at one of the German princely courts, study at university, or, at the very least, secure themselves a

husband—now found themselves working as secretaries, shop assistants, or trapped in a grey existence in the 'spinster wings' of frugal, unheated Prussian manor houses. Over time, such examples of misfortune opened up ever-expanding rifts between different aristocratic groups. To make matters worse, they even drove a wedge between sections of individual families themselves. In fact, the notion that unity existed among the aristocracy as a whole started to look increasingly far-fetched when faced with the very real breadth of such conspicuous social divides.

The deeper one delves into aristocrats' contemporary portrayals of their own suffering and misery, the more one realizes that, in real terms, the 'decline' they describe was relatively mild. Unsuspecting aristocrats who descended into a life 'that looked significantly different' from the one 'promised by the expectations of the nursery'[188] often despaired of 'adversity' that other people would have viewed as a comfortable middle-class existence. Nevertheless, the outcome of the First World War and the trials of the drawn-out agricultural crisis—a period in which aristocrats and their estates were jeopardized by a mix of falling prices, higher taxes, poor harvests, and general mismanagement—had appreciable material consequences for every single aristocratic family. Although such effects were certainly no more severe than those felt by other echelons of society, they frequently brought an abrupt end to sparkling careers and the 'mapped out route through life' that had awaited many noble individuals.[189] Indeed, at least when viewed from the perspective of their subjective experiences of loss, the fall caused by the revolution and the war seems to have hit the aristocracy harder than all other societal groups. After all, they had a long way to drop, and their fall was often from a height.

Unequivocal evidence of the nobility's actual decline is provided by records of the aid that the aristocratic associations handed out to their impoverished peers with immense effort, meagre resources, and mediocre success. In 1931, for example, an appeal for donations that the impoverished Brandenburg branch of the DAG issued to well-off members of the nobility asked: 'Who will again give us the *potatoes* that play such a key role among our vulnerable individuals as they often represent their only sustenance?'[190] Crop failures meant that Bodo von der Marwitz, a man who had contributed 350 'hundredweight' (*Zentner*) of the root vegetables with six other landowners four years earlier, was unable to repeat his gift to the DAG.[191] The German Noble Society's reliance on non-monetary donations also indicates that the budgets available for financial support were exceptionally

tight. In 1926, for instance, the Bavarian branch of the DAG decided to spread some 'Christmas cheer' by dividing 'funds of 850 marks' between 450 of their 'needy' peers. Simple arithmetic illustrates just how much yuletide joy these hand-outs must have delivered.[192]

The image of sacks of potatoes being distributed to destitute members of the minor nobility also matches the sorry state of the DAG's own finances. In 1931, for example, the society's central aid organization was able share out 22,000 marks nationwide. In contrast, just two years later, they only had around 17,500 marks to dispense. At the same time, the DAG was in debt to the tune of 45,000 marks. Only a small portion of this figure (900 marks) had been borrowed at considerable expense from two major banks—institutions the nobility generally viewed as a necessary, Jewish-controlled evil. Most of the rest, amounting to 39,000 marks in total, had been loaned from affluent members of the organization itself.[193]

The society also bore the outer social 'fringes' of the nobility in mind when distributing their paltry charitable resources. Indeed, even supplicants who were as far removed as possible from the aristocracy's traditional milieus could hope to receive aid from the DAG. In 1928, for example, the chairman of the DAG's regional branch in Pomerania—an individual by the name of von Thadden-Trieglaff—petitioned for aid to be given to a former officer from the von François clan, 'a deserving family of soldiers'. Thadden let it be known that his protégé had worked underground as a miner for two years to finance his studies in chemistry,[194] a thoroughly proletarian indignity that no self-respecting nobleman would have ever countenanced before the decline of the aristocracy in 1918.

The fact that it was necessary to uphold this private, immensely high-maintenance system of intra-aristocratic donations points to the ubiquity of the proletarian aristocracy, a group that posed the nobility throughout the country with problems that were impossible to solve. The pitiful sums it was able to hand out also reveal that the wealthy aristocrats' sense of solidarity with their less fortunate peers was more theoretical than real. This line of investigation will be dealt with later on in this book. Before broaching that particular subject in more detail, however, it is first instructive to examine another issue that provides a further insight into the minor nobility's experience of transition and decline: namely, the aristocracy's perception and the reality of their success in various professional domains.

The nobility's progressively worsening financial straits unavoidably affected the career choices of young aristocrats. As the years progressed,

increasingly candid debates were conducted both within and without the DAG about the 'fitting' professions that were worthy of individuals of their station. One of the major issues under discussion was the fate of young female aristocrats. The problems facing noblewomen were by no means new. Back in the days of the German Empire, many female members of the minor nobility had already been vulnerable, for example, and the plight of 'impoverished' women had preoccupied the nobility in theory and practice well before 1914. The traditional demands placed on noblewomen to live austere lives had also intensified over time, and private aristocratic discussions about how to deal with the situation had, by necessity, become increasingly frank.[195] After the First World War, however, female aristocrats' prospects of achieving a marriage deteriorated drastically. As a result, their chances of evading perpetual confinement to their parents' households, avoiding being sent to convents, or escaping the 'career of an aunt'[196] (an unmarried, penurious existence totally dependent on one's siblings) were significantly reduced. In consequence, noble families and aristocratic associations were forced to rethink the matter of their daughters' earning potential. Although well-meaning, however, this development ultimately caused noblewomen to sink even deeper into the social doldrums and greatly exacerbated their plight.

A pamphlet from 1930 in which the DAG's central aid organization discussed 'the education of our daughters' provides an example of the minor nobility's unwilling ideological adaptation to the prevailing economic climate. According to this publication, it was no longer adequate for women to answer the question 'What do you want to be?' with a simple reply of 'a beloved husband's loyal wife'. 'Life in our era', it lamented, 'mercilessly puts paid to many young girls' dreams of marital bliss.' During the course of its detailed but rather understated analysis, the pamphlet not only discussed such professions as housekeeper, doctor, teacher, and librarian as potential avenues of employment, but also mentioned beekeeper, business school teacher, orthopaedic gymnastics instructor, commercial interpreter, and 'manageress of a large laundry operation'. All of these occupations were listed next to their relevant training pathways and earning potential.[197] Evidence of noblewomen actually being forced to pursue unwanted careers that took them as far as could be imagined from their traditional social spheres is provided by the lists of 'gainfully employed ladies' that were published by the aristocratic associations. These documents gave details of women from the most prestigious noble families whose services were

available to hire. 'Piano lessons', 'language instruction', and 'typing' were offered alongside such activities as 'gymnastics', 'massage', 'needlework', 'sewing', and 'mending'.[198] Nursing and teaching seem to have been the two most common occupations for noblewomen overall.[199]

Interestingly, it would appear as though noblewomen being forced to engage in unwanted careers was not the only consequence that emerged when the idealized dream of the 'daughters of our standing [who were] created to be happy in love'[200] was shattered in the post-war period. Indeed, as various autobiographical accounts and aristocratic debates have revealed, 1918 also marked an ideological watershed in which the combination of sudden, forced independence and precipitous social decline helped inspire astonishing numbers of female aristocrats to become politicized on a massive scale and shift to the radical, right-wing end of the political spectrum.

Contemporary sources that examined both male and female aristocrats' changing careers tended to present rather vague facts and figures that give little insight into anything more than broad professional trends.[201] This is due to their habit of focusing on successful stories of transition and concealing failures behind such decent-sounding designations as 'merchant', 'major (retired)', and 'colonel's widow'. However, examining the correspondence of various aristocratic organizations reveals that the term 'merchant' could refer both to an executive director at AEG (a major German electricity company) and a nobleman who simply peddled onions. When viewed in this light, the initially impressive-seeming data provided by such documents reveals that the number of members of old noble families who actually made a successful transition into the leading echelons of the modern economy remained extremely low.[202] In fact, such tales of prosperity were vastly outnumbered by instances of aristocratic decline.

For centuries, the aristocracy had assiduously avoided becoming involved in various areas of professional life that were deemed unbecoming, vulgar, and vastly beneath their station. The extent to which these former boundaries had been eroded by economic necessity is demonstrated by an advertisement one noble colonel's widow posted in 1930 in an attempt to convince readers of the *Adelsblatt* to stay at her 'totally Jewless', 'dust-free', 'Aryan house' in Upper Bavaria—a residence she offered at a discount for members of the DAG.[203] This promotional text, which saw a former officer's wife putting herself forward as a *völkisch* hotel manageress, cannot be dismissed as a mere curiosity. Indeed, it is a prime example of how large

numbers of nobles were forced to stoop to careers that had previously been deemed 'unseemly'.

This new social reality pushed many aristocrats—including individuals outside the active circles of the DAG—into performing an ideological balancing act between their continued belief in traditional noble virtues and the very real impossibility of maintaining lifestyles appropriate to people of their standing without stooping to various 'bourgeois professions'.[204] In 1931, for instance, noble school leavers were counselled to look upon a 'placement' in 'industry' as one of the options they should consider for their futures. In a similar vein, the exceedingly eminent Catholic aristocrat Prince Löwenstein wrote a text for the State Encyclopedia in 1926 that extolled the continued importance of traditional noble careers while also stating that no job was 'too lowly . . . for a nobleman if only it is carried out in accordance with the tenets of Christian morality and chivalric sentiment'.[205]

Despite making such a progressive claim, the prince could not bring himself to forgo the old noble resentment of all things commercial, however. 'This is a solemn admonition to stay away from all ventures that can only prosper by crushing lesser livelihoods', he declared: 'It is better to break rocks than practise usury in any form.'[206] This traditional sentiment proved to be an extremely fixed aristocratic attitude. In 1921, for example, an article in the *Adelsblatt* called for prosperous aristocrats to use their wealth to enable the sons of impoverished peers to get an education and attain influential roles as 'parliamentarians, debaters, or writers' instead of migrating to 'alien' careers in business[207] or 'losing' themselves in banks. In the same year, another *Adelsblatt* article by one Dr von Trotta-Treyden warned aristocrats against sinking into commercial careers. Instead, he advised individuals who would previously have taken up now-defunct leading roles in bureaucracy and the military to seek employment in academic occupations (as professors, teachers, doctors, and clergymen). Trotta-Treyden's polemical, overblown argument for the suitability of following intellectual professions over mercantile alternatives also managed to link the entire sector of trade and banking to a hackneyed vision of Jewishness. 'It is not necessarily guaranteed that the nobleman per se is the appropriate candidate to ruin Hirsch and Itzig [stereotypical Jewish names] in the commercial domain', he wrote.[208]

Even though a life in commerce never enjoyed general approval within the DAG, a shift in the society's discussions on the subject show that attitudes

did slowly change. After warning of the perils of entrepreneurship, for instance, Prince Löwenstein's aforementioned text spoke in favour of aristocratic 'dealers', wine merchants, and 'lottery organizers' as though the DAG's traditional hostility to all forms of commerce and the nobility's resentment towards certain professional occupations had never existed at all.[209] After much debate, the German Noble Society even decided to start its own 'economics department' in 1928 in order to support aristocrats who worked in commercial spheres. This organization believed that the nobility had to keep an eye on the Jews, a group that was apparently able to control 'almost all of the production on the planet' thanks to the intense solidarity they maintained between individual 'tribe members'. As a result, they issued clumsy appeals urging landowning 'unfettered lords' not to give work to 'non-noble representatives and employees'. In its most extreme form, these demands can be summed up in two overarching rules: 'nobles buy from nobles!' and 'nobles do not buy from Jews!'[210]

Although they were closely related in reality, the industrial sector generally received a somewhat friendlier rhetorical welcome from the minor nobility than the worlds of commerce and finance. In 1923, for instance, one Count von Dürckheim interrupted the anti-materialist pathos of a pedagogical speech he was giving with a warning to his peers not to get the wrong idea of industrialists. According to the count, many of their number lived lives of 'exemplary simplicity' and stood out thanks to their remarkably 'aristocratic disposition'.[211] This line of reasoning that regarded captains of industry in a more positive light than mere merchants was widespread among the nobility as a whole and also echoed a similar view that was held by the nation's educated middle class. Their opinion was immortalized by *Merchants and Heroes*, a pamphlet from 1915 in which the prominent social scientist Werner Sombart contrasted the apparent heroism of the Germans with the British love of trade.[212]

Unfortunately for the aristocracy, the slow shift in their attitudes to capitalism was not mirrored by any real degree of entrepreneurial success. On the contrary, the nobility's commercial endeavours provide yet more evidence of the substantial social-historical damage the year 1918 inflicted upon their class. Before the First World War, aristocratic merchants had attempted to highlight their membership of the nobility via the selection of goods they sold to other aristocrats. These offerings typically included such articles as horse-riding equipment, hunting accessories, and guns. For the most part, however, such face-saving endeavours broke down after the events

of 1918. Some aristocrats were even forced to sink to the commercially demeaning after the international conflict came to a close. One former colonel, for example, could be seen promoting his weed-killing products *Unkraut-Ex* ('Weed-Ex') and *Spritze Diesteltod* ('Thistle Death Spray'), while other noble sales representatives took out advertisements for cheap 'floor cloths' and 'bath mats'.[213] Increasingly, such distinguished figures as erstwhile cavalry captains started taking 'temporary employment as chauffeurs, petrol station attendants, taxi dancers and the like'.[214] Moreover, lists of 'peers in business' published in the *Adelsblatt* had zero success, and the costly task of compiling them was soon abandoned.[215]

A number of contemporary sources also demonstrate that the nobility attempted to use their traditional family career networks to break into the heartlands of modern capitalism. Some voices were initially optimistic about this endeavour. In 1931, for instance, Friedrich von Berg, the head of the DAG, wrote that even the nobility's 'middle-class comrades from the old army' who held positions of leadership and influence in major companies 'almost never fail to cooperate' in helping aristocrats start careers in their respective sectors.[216] In reality, however, such claims were nothing more than wishful thinking. Indeed, attempts to capitalize on aristocratic contacts from the upper echelons of commerce and industry failed for one simple reason: such contacts were few and far between and represented the exception rather than the rule. For its part, the DAG was entirely lacking in contacts with outstanding 'business leaders' that its own leaders claimed to be able to establish. The network of contacts the society actually did have at its disposal was far less impressive than advertised and sufficed, for example, merely to secure one aristocrat a modest job in the sales and marketing wing of Thorbecke & Puvogel, a mail-order company from Bremen.[217]

This latter, northern enterprise, which styled itself as the 'largest distributor of coffee within the German aristocracy', tailored its advertising to suit militaristic minor noble tastes. 'Thorvogel coffee', they claimed, 'is the force that prevails in every coffee battle.'[218] This display of palpable tension between pre-modern aristocratic ideals and an accelerated decline into the bargain basement of modern economic practices was also echoed on the front page of the *Adelsblatt*, which exceeded the grotesque as far as advertising was concerned. Beneath its famous logo, which featured the image of a knight in a suit of armour, for instance, the aristocratic periodical started adding such motifs as pin-up girls with lascivious gazes peddling 'milk chocolate with a refreshingly delectable almond filling'. The paper also

printed promotions for *Trommler* ('Drummer') cigarettes that attempted the astonishing feat of linking their product to the glorious battles of Frederick the Great. 'As a drummer once threw the French into disarray at the Battle of Rossbach', they blustered, '... so *Trommler* cigarettes surpass all similarly priced cigarettes today and are also superior to them in taste.' In a similar vein, sons of the Franconian Princely House of Castell who manufactured writing implements commissioned advertisements in which two knights on horseback jousted with Faber-Castell pencils instead of their usual lances.[219]

The obstacles set up by the nobility's centuries-old aversion to middle-class professions in general and commerce in particular also proved far from easy to overcome. For example, a confidential report produced by the Hamburg branch of the DAG in 1928 resignedly described how young aristocrats had consistently failed in their attempts to gain a foothold in the commercial and industrial sectors of their Hanseatic town. According to the document, such individuals often performed less well in commercial apprenticeships than middle-class trainees and thus failed in their aim of becoming 'Führers' of enterprise.[220] Although Hamburg was a focal point for (typically ex-military) young noblemen who wanted to try their hand at commerce in the 1920s, most of their forays into business were fleeting and unsuccessful. In only a very few cases did young aristocrats actually manage to forge prosperous careers and shape professional ties with the upper echelons of the city's mercantile class. More often than not, aristocrats who did find employment were engaged by (sometimes rather dubious) companies that were set up during the post-war period and hoped to use nobles with their evocative names and titles as prestigious figureheads for their enterprise.[221]

Very occasionally, however, such figures as Baron Tilo von Wilmowsky, Wichard von Moellendorff, and Arndt von Holtzendorff did genuinely manage to break into the upper levels of modern economic life. Wilmowsky—a landowner, a county commissioner, and a military officer from a family of the ancient Silesian aristocracy—married the second daughter of the steel magnate Friedrich Krupp in 1907, thus securing himself a fortune of over 20 million marks. In 1911, he was promoted to the corporation's supervisory board by his brother-in-law Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, the director of the Krupp company who had also married into the family himself.[222] Incidentally, Wilmowsky's memoirs referred to the sense of isolation he felt while working as a noble 'free-market

entrepreneur' as a result of the aversion many of his peers felt towards his chosen career.[223] For his part, Wichard von Moellendorff served on the executive board of AEG (the electricity company) and was one of the 'business leaders' who—along with the Jewish industrial tycoon Walther Rathenau—explained the novel organizational concepts of 'total war' to the Imperial government in 1914.[224] Unlike most of the army's aristocratic Prussian generals, Moellendorf realized early on that success in modern warfare would likely hinge on a nation's ability to manage its resources effectively. Such clear insights into the link between cutting-edge economics and the mechanisms of power made him rather an exceptional figure among the old nobility's ranks. Similar traits can also be seen in the life of Arndt von Holtzendorff, the descendant of a prestigious old family from Brandenburg who had studied law at university. From 1896, Holtzendorff enjoyed a remarkable career with the Hamburg America Line (HAPAG), the world's largest shipping company that had been co-founded by Albert Ballin, his personal friend. Starting off as the organization's Berlin representative, he eventually ended up serving as a board member and a director of the company itself. Despite this success, a career in business had not been Holtzendorff's first choice. As the youngest brother in a family of twelve siblings, he had few prospects of ever owning an estate, so originally opted for a career in the military. His soldierly life was cut short by a horse-riding accident, however, so he embarked on a successful entrepreneurial trajectory that was extremely unusual for a member of an ancient military clan. The extraordinary nature of Holtzendorff's professional position was matched by his unusually open-minded social and political stance. Examples of this attitude range from his friendship with the Jewish businessman Albert Ballin, his amicable links with the Jewish Warburg banking family, and, after 1918, his close relationship with Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Socialist party who became the first president of the Republic in 1919.[225]

As a rule, officers from the Guards' regiments and the General Staff probably found it easier to attain leading positions in banks and businesses than the majority of the minor nobility thanks to their previous experience and their personal ties. Indeed, a handful of aristocrats from the 1st Guards' Infantry Regiment managed to attain senior commercial positions. One reached the leading echelons of an Amsterdam bank, for instance, one achieved the directorship of the Dresdner Bank corporation, and yet another married a bank director's daughter.[226] Higher-ranking officers also tended

to possess a combination of authority, organizational abilities, technical knowledge, and the best connections which, if they were so inclined, they could put to use to make the sideways move into industry.[227]

Although such isolated achievements were indeed possible in individual cases, real stories of commercial success remained exceptionally rare among the aristocracy in general and the old nobility in particular. For one thing, second and subsequent sons who were considering a move 'into the economy' were usually met with formidable resistance from fathers, uncles, and the heads of families who disapproved of such an 'unworthy' decision. In addition, aristocrats who came to capitalism from the military typically rejoined the army as soon as possible with the help of their regimental comrades-in-arms.[228] Generally speaking, officers who managed to resume their soldierly careers after a sojourn in the commercial world tended to view the move as a liberating experience that had delivered them from the demeaning conditions of a 'bourgeois' professional existence. Despite murmurs to the contrary, a life in commerce and industry continued to be viewed as a stopgap or an emergency measure at best. Indeed, the notion that 'there are professions which destroy the essence of the aristocratic being'[229] was not dispelled among the German nobility until after 1945. Moreover, nobles who had descended into lower middle-class lives still clung to their arrogant belief that they were destined to be Führers. In fact, many members of the 'fallen' minor nobility—the group that made up the majority of the membership of the DAG—upheld their pompous claims to be natural-born leaders even if the only position of leadership they had ever held was managing their own corner shop. This unerring noble self-belief also meant that, even after large numbers of nobles were forced to sink to the economic level of the lower middle class after 1918, it never crossed their minds actually to forge any links with their middle-class fellow citizens.

Of course, the downfall typically experienced by the minor nobility was not the only one that befell the aristocracy as a whole during the post-war period. As at all other levels of society, the mix of social decline, political radicalization, and military defeat that hit Germany after 1918 affected various noble groups in contrasting ways. In order to tease out these significant differences and build up a picture of many aristocrats' ability—or inability—to persevere, the remainder of this chapter will look further than the disasters experienced by the minor nobility alone. After focusing on the adaptations and 'transitions' the aristocracy underwent in their three main occupational fields, it will examine the enduring significance of the aristocratic *grands*

seigneurs—a social stratum that, although slim, continued to wield immense financial power. In this context, the term 'transition' is used to refer to two distinct phenomena: the preservation of traditional bastions of noble power after 1918, and the moves individual aristocrats made into new careers without losing any of the power and influence they had enjoyed in the social hierarchy before the First World War. A typical example of the first transition would be a mortgage-free knight's estate whose parcel of 1,000 hectares of land remained undiminished after 1918. The second transition might be represented by a General Staff colonel who managed to play a leading role in a prominent steel business after 1920.

As has often been stressed throughout the pages of this book, landownership—the first of the nobility's three major areas of operation—was, and remained, the economic, social, and cultural backbone of the aristocracy. Not even the events of the German Revolution were able to break or even permanently damage this mainstay of noble power. Although demanded by the Spartacus League and at least debated by the Social Democrats, the idea of confiscating major estates in order to destroy the heavily fortified 'tyrannical bastions of Junkerism' never came to fruition.[230] In contrast to Russia, Germany's hesitant social democratic revolutionaries did not even have an agricultural policy in place to dispossess the major landowners within their country's borders. As a result—and despite anti-Junker rumblings and verbal attacks on 'Junkerism' itself—the existing distribution of wealth in Germany in general and East Elbia in particular actually remained an accepted fact of life after 1918.[231]

Contemporary middle-class critics of the nobility spread the idea that aristocrats were lazy incompetents who mismanaged their finances and—in the words of Max Weber—were suffering their 'economic death throes' by the end of the nineteenth century.[232] This image has been significantly revised by more recent historians, however, who have demonstrated that most major aristocratic landowners were perfectly able to consolidate and even expand their estates in the turbulent market conditions that prevailed during the era of the German Empire.[233] Furthermore, they even managed to hold onto their property throughout the wild days of the German Revolution itself. In fact, such individuals cannot be said to have entered their 'death throes' until the agricultural crises of the mid-1920s at the earliest,[234] and rigor mortis did not properly set in before the year 1945.

Although some territories were wrested from them by the Treaty of Versailles, the distribution of aristocratic property that had been consolidated

in the nineteenth century remained largely intact after 1918. In 1925, for instance, around 13 per cent of all the German Republic's agricultural land found itself in noble hands. In some parts of East Elbia, this figure rose to well over 20 per cent. In addition, major landholdings were disproportionately held by members of the nobility. In the east of the country, for example, 50 per cent of the major agricultural estates of over 200 hectares in size were owned by the aristocracy, while very large holdings in excess of 5,000 hectares were almost exclusively under noble control. The old nobility also remained significantly overrepresented among the owners of the largest and most profitable estates (which were, of course, not always the same thing). In 1925, Germany was home to 152 aristocrats who possessed estates in excess of 5,000 hectares. Forty-nine of these individuals owned estates of 10,000 hectares or more. The record, however, was held by the Duke of Pleß who held a portfolio amounting to approximately 70,000 hectares of land around the turn of the twentieth century.

Unfortunately for the nobility, however, merely owning territory was no guarantee of economic success. During the 1920s, there were probably in the region of 5,000–6,000 aristocrats who were in possession of land.[235] Nevertheless, it is unclear how many of these noble individuals managed their estates in line with the business practices of major agricultural operations. Indeed, even if the figures are interpreted generously and the agricultural crises of the 1920s are taken into account, these aristocrats' income suggests that barely 2,000 of their number belonged to the agricultural 'power elite' by the closing days of the Weimar Republic.[236]

In terms of the sheer numbers of individuals who were affected after the First World War, the nobility were significantly less successful when it came to persevering in the civil service, their second traditional mainstay of employment. Before 1914, an impressive proportion of high-level civil service positions had been held by aristocrats. In the post-war period, however, these numbers took a nosedive. By 1930, for example, only one of Germany's twelve governors (*Oberpräsidenten*), fourteen of around 480 county commissioners, and none of the country's thirty-two district governors (*Regierungspräsidenten*) were members of the nobility.[237] Moreover, although some statistics demonstrate that around 4,000 noblemen held down jobs in government and administrative positions during the Weimar Republic, over half of these individuals were members of the *Briefadel*—aristocrats whose noble status had merely been conferred upon them by letters patent.

Interestingly, this overall decline was not due to aristocrats' political views. In fact, it is well documented that harbouring anti-democratic opinions was in no way incompatible with holding senior public offices. Noble civil servants and military officers were even explicitly encouraged to act as 'secret Führers' who would hold positions in the 'last strongholds' of parliamentary democracy's 'bedraggled citadel' and await the right moment to organize an assault on the institutions of the republican state.[238] Ultimately, although some aristocrats did withdraw from the civil service of their own free will, the losses in their ranks were overwhelmingly brought about by the levelling machinations of social democratic politics, which carried out 'purges' of noblemen throughout the civil service in the name of equal opportunity. Such initiatives, which dealt an especially heavy blow to the Prussian nobility, were particularly rife after the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch of March 1920.[239]

Although it was more of a symbolic victory than a key part of aristocratic social history, one exceptional case in which the nobility actually managed to thrive in the civil service can be seen in the diplomatic sector. Up until 1918, the nobility had dominated the diplomatic service and were particularly well represented in the Political Department (*Abteilung IA*) of the Foreign Ministry.[240] Crucially, an impressively large aristocratic contingent also retained influence in these circles after the First World War. Between 1921 and 1933, for example, some sixty-two of the Foreign Ministry's 161 leading civil servants were members of the aristocracy. Moreover, only twenty-six of these noblemen belonged to the *Briefadel* that had been established at a later date.[241]

Overall, the nobility sustained their heaviest professional losses in the military, the third time-honoured stronghold of aristocratic employment. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, the situation did not seem so dire at first glance. In fact, with some minor fluctuations, the nobility managed to hold an approximate 21 per cent of the positions in the *Reichswehr*'s officer corps throughout the entire duration of the Weimar Republic. This impressive figure was even significantly higher in some institutions, regiments, and branches of the military service. For example, the aristocracy represented 31 per cent of the General Staff officers in the *Truppenamt* (the phoney 'Troop Office' used to conceal military activity limited by the Treaty of Versailles), 36 per cent of all the officer candidates who were active in 1932, 47 per cent of the officers in the cavalry regiments, around 50 per cent of all the generals, and up to 69 per cent of the officers who served in some of the army's

exclusive 'traditional regiments' (*Traditionsregimentern*).[242] Although of interest to historians of the *Reichswehr*, however, these impressive percentages did not translate into aristocratic prosperity during the post-war period. Indeed, examining the absolute employment figures shows just how misleading these numbers can be. Take, for example, the fact that the *Reichswehr* was forced to shrink to just 100,000 men with a 4,000-strong officer corps by the Treaty of Versailles. Seen from this perspective, the above percentages show that no more than 800 to 900 noblemen managed to pursue a career as professional officers in the armed forces after 1918. Subtracting ennobled individuals and the lower-ranking officers (from subaltern to major) from this figure reveals that there were no more than 100 aristocratic men who actually belonged to Germany's military power elite. The idea that the aristocracy were able to consolidate their social position by entering the military is thus demonstrably false, as is the misleading notion that the *Reichswehr* represented a metaphorical 'refuge' for members of their class.[243] In fact, by the end of the First World War, well in excess of 9,000 noble officers had been relieved of their duties in the army. As a result, the aristocracy's traditional notion that the 'less intellectually able young people' of noble standing could 'hope for fame, glory, and rich rewards from the keenness of their sword'[244] was no longer valid.

If one tallies the estimated employment figures above with the approximate numbers of aristocrats who are known to have held various other positions of leadership in agricultural associations, at universities, in secondary schools,[245] in the church,[246] in the legal profession,[247] in chambers of agriculture,[248] and in the still-avoided worlds of industry, commerce, and finance,[249] it quickly becomes apparent that viewing the terms 'nobility' and 'elite' as synonymous became an exceedingly questionable proposition after 1918. Indeed, even if the results are interpreted generously, there were only around 4,000 to 5,000 men from the old nobility who could still be classified as members of a 'power elite' in any meaningful sociological sense due to their professional position or—in the case of the *grands seigneurs*—their stockpiles of economic and social capital. Although more research would be required before it could be stated with absolute certainty, there is also good reason to believe that the size of this high-flying group of noblemen was considerably outstripped by the sheer numbers of individuals who belonged to the *Adelsproletariat*, their complete opposite on the aristocratic social spectrum.

Although no noble groups escaped the events of 1918 entirely unscathed, the varying levels of success and failure they experienced when attempting to integrate into post-war society ultimately began to drive a social wedge between the higher and lower echelons of their class. As time passed, multiple members of the high nobility, numerous mediatized princes, and many of the richest *grands seigneurs* (including those from the lesser levels of the aristocracy), began to act like a unified group that operated in a social league of its very own. In contrast to the professional military officers, landowners, and county commissioners from the aristocracy's lower strata who were struggling to get by, this elite noble group was intent on embodying the ideal of the perfect prince. This exemplary aristocratic figure united wealth, a title, and the traditions of his name with myriad intellectual, physical, and social abilities that expressed themselves in his multiple roles as a major landowner, a forester, a castle owner, a military officer, a diplomat, a lawyer, a horse rider, a hunter, a host, a dancer, an orator, a conversationalist, a sportsman, an art connoisseur, a patron, and a philanthropist. Even after the end of the First World War, many of Germany's most fortunate aristocrats still possessed the considerable resources necessary to enjoy lifestyles that lived up to this image of 'unfettered lordliness'. However, this type of lavish existence soon opened up an immense social gulf between the richest manorial lords from the high nobility and the deprived circles of the East Elbian minor nobility who had to work hard to manage their own estates.

Despite the myriad issues that afflicted the German aristocracy after 1918, the mediatized princes retained a considerable edge over the majority of the minor nobility in terms of their reserves of economic, social, and cultural capital. Indeed, members of their rank—which even many lowly nobles acknowledged as the 'most prestigious group in the German aristocracy'[250]—had a number of advantages. These included: their ancient noble origins; their centuries-old history of local rule; their tight-knit, often blood ties to the high nobility in Germany and abroad; their wealth, which was often immense; their extensive holdings of land, shares, and real estate; their investment in commercial and industrial enterprises; their experience of life in foreign lands; their contacts with the European noble courts; their substantial levels of education; and their largely self-contained circle of eligible marriage prospects. Even during the turmoil of the post-war period, this long list of advantages clearly helped set the mediatized princes apart from the rest of the aristocracy.

Examining the mediatized princes' coffers provides a further insight into the considerable social distance that existed between the richest and poorest aristocratic groups in German society. For example, the staggering sums that Prince Christian Ernst zu Stolberg-Wernigerode made in charitable donations in 1921 alone outstripped the entire budgets of the DAG's regional branches by an enormous degree.[251] Comparing the fortunes of ruined members of the minor nobility with the private accounts of one Prince von Thurn und Taxis is similarly illuminating. While some minor nobles were receiving donations of clothes from the aristocratic associations, this hereditary prince was one of the richest noblemen in the land. Before the First World War, he was granted an allowance of around 42,000 marks per annum. In 1916, this figure rose to 60,000 marks. If other supplementary funds for such expenses as cars, horses, valets, and servants who organized hunts are taken into consideration, the hereditary prince had around 136,000 marks to use as he saw fit every twelve months by the time the year 1930 came around.[252] Lavish annual allowances were not an uncommon phenomenon among the upper echelons of the German aristocracy in the post-war period. Indeed, most *grands seigneurs* were still able to grant substantial incomes to their family members. In many cases, even second and subsequent daughters and sons received sums that made them prosperous figures who—in comparison with the aforementioned financial standards of the DAG—seemed like fairy-tale princesses and princes with unimaginable riches at their disposal.[253]

Despite possessing such immense wealth, the loftiest sections of the German aristocracy continued to express anti-capitalist views. Interestingly, many of these pre-modern utterances were triggered by dissenting voices that emerged from within high noble families themselves. Indeed, whenever economic hardship affected the upper aristocracy, it was the 'secondary' children of noble clans who felt the pinch first. This was due to the tradition of primogeniture, which valued the prosperity of the entire dynasty over the needs of its hereditarily less important individual members. Many second and subsequent offspring from noble families rebelled against the inequality of this system when times were tough. In the ensuing fights over the distribution of assets, even the richest strata of the aristocracy resorted to a type of armchair anti-capitalism that bore at least a spoken resemblance to the cult of austerity espoused by the minor nobility. In the words of one Count La Rosée, for example, 'our forebears did not establish the might of

the aristocracy so that [entailed property—i.e. property exclusively reserved for the first-born child] would be carved up now and the nobility would become the wage slaves of high capitalism.'[254] This anti-capitalist sentiment was also reflected in the high nobility's attitude to certain types of charitable donations. In 1922, a private memorandum warned the mediatized princes not to make the same mistakes as the lower nobility, a group that thought 'calculatingly like merchants' rather than answering their highest calling and caring for the 'little man' in society.[255] Numerous examples of aristocratic munificence suggest that this idea of forgoing money-grubbing economic aspirations and caring for those less fortunate than oneself still existed among the high nobility. One prince spent nearly one million marks on charitable purposes in 1921, for instance, and Prince Alois Löwenstein gifted each of his servants a month's salary on the occasion of his seventieth birthday in 1940. Although this generous bonus was declared inadmissible by the Reich Labour Trustee and subsequently halved, such examples highlight the immense wealth that individual families (or at least the heads of households) retained among the high nobility and serve to underscore the continued existence of princely social contributions that some members of the old aristocracy carried on distributing within their traditional spheres of influence.

Politically speaking, the lives of numerous members of the high nobility also reveal that the (relative) post-war decline they experienced went hand in hand with a certain degree of radicalization.[256] Nevertheless, the ideological shift that can be detected among the *grands seigneurs* and their social milieus was not anything like the level of radicalization seen within the minor nobility and the organizations they formed. In fact, the leading representatives of the *grands seigneurs* tended to channel their frustrations into a sober brand of interest-driven politics that was carried out under the guidance of experts. They also used pressure groups to push forward their agendas via a heavily funded political machinery that avoided both the spotlight of publicity and the loud, *völkisch* tones that reverberated among the minor nobility's ranks.

Although this thin stratum of extremely wealthy aristocrats managed to hold onto their pre-eminent positions after the First World War, they could not resist getting involved in one particular debate: namely, the discussion about the future of 'the family of the nobility' as a whole. This conversation preoccupied all noble groups and various sections of the citizenry in equal

measure. Indeed, even after the aristocracy had been officially dissolved by the Weimar Constitution, discussions surrounding the definition, purpose, and future of the noble establishment captured the public's imagination and fuelled ideological debates as never before. These conversations about the nobility's fate and the creation of a 'new aristocracy' will be discussed in the next chapter.

3

The Nobility Reloaded

The nobility have always established clear boundaries between themselves and the outside world. Whether one finds this tendency fascinating or maddening, it indubitably lends a high degree of visibility to all the members of their class. Such prominence also comes at a cost, however, and leaves them open to criticism and insurrection. Nevertheless, ever since the French Revolution, the aristocracy have demonstrated time and again that, although easy to wound, they are extremely difficult to remove outright. In fact, by adopting a succession of different guises, both the concept and reality of the nobility have survived all manner of attacks for hundreds of years.

Throughout the centuries, many anti-noble thinkers have tried to invent alternatives to the aristocratic caste at the top of society. Their attempts have, however, only rarely managed to do away with the notion of an 'elite' or a 'nobility' altogether. In part, this is due to the machinations of aristocrats themselves. Indeed, whenever debates and plans have emerged regarding the creation of a 'new nobility' in Germany, members of the aristocracy have unfailingly grasped the importance of offering their services as potential protagonists in middle-class dreams of a new societal elite. This strategy became particularly important after the First World War for two main reasons. Firstly, the aristocracy's unsuspected, precipitous decline forced them to consider relaxing their traditional isolationism and establishing new alliances. And secondly, large segments of the German population suddenly became much more open to working with the nobility themselves. This was largely thanks to the emergence of the 'New Right'—a political amalgam of conservative and fascist elements that was created from the despair and aggression that arose during the counter-revolution and ultimately found the aristocracy exceedingly difficult to ignore.

The intersection between the New Right's search for contemporary Führers and the nobility's (albeit reluctant) openness to collaboration made

for a potent combination in the post-war period. This combination was reinforced by the two groups' shared ideological connections. For example, much of the aristocracy's traditionalist, militaristic mythology matched the scorching metaphors used by the New Right's phalanx of aggressive intellectuals whose combative, anti-democratic thought was infused with an obsession with war. Moreover, the terms *Führer*, *Führertum*, and *Neuer Adel* ('new aristocracy')—language that was relished by the nobility—were also key constituents of both the thought and the idiom of the new political Right. Indeed, as the *Adelsblatt* noted in January 1933, 'the vibrant forces that opposed the elimination [of the nobility] predominantly rallied around the political form of *Führertum* after 1918. The word "Führer" is one of the *pivotal* words in the political lexicon of Germany's renewal.'[1] This third chapter will examine the rapprochement that took place between the nobility and the New Right in post-1918 Germany by outlining how both groups discussed the concepts of aristocracy and *Führertum* and investigating some of the practical attempts they undertook to cultivate, shape, marshal, and organize a 'new nobility' after the war.

Both before and after 1918, Germany's intellectual discourse was replete with expressions of desire for a new breed of ruling elite. During the First World War, for instance, the famous sociologist Max Weber confidently pointed out the vague longing for an 'authentic aristocracy' that existed among the nation's educated middle class.[2] This yearning lived on during the Weimar Republic, a period in which there was no shortage of debates surrounding the ideas of *Führertum* and the establishment of a new nobility. Indeed, these concepts were discussed by conservative, *völkisch*, National Socialist, and—perhaps more surprisingly—various liberal thinkers. Examples of this can be seen in a variety of different quarters, ranging from the most influential intellectuals in the SS and the liberal historian who went in search of a 'Führer for whom we are ready to walk through fire'[3] to Heinrich Himmler himself, who used the symbolism of knights, chivalric castles, and the early medieval kings to conjure up a vision of the future elite. Such was its significance that, over time, the concept of the new nobility developed into one of the pillars of right-wing thought.

Despite the existence of many variations on the theme, nearly all the middle-class, intellectual visions of a new nobility shared four key things in common. Firstly, they all included the notion that the nobility of the future should not be identical to the aristocracy of old. Secondly, they all argued that the educated middle-class individuals who had masterminded the

concept should number among the ranks of the new nobility themselves. Thirdly—and in line with Edgar Julius Jung's claim that 'the appearance of *Führertum* is eternal and unchanging'[4]—they all embraced the view that the forthcoming nobility should include certain groups of existing aristocrats. Fourthly and finally, they all took it for granted that the new elite would operate 'above' democracy and its rules. Indeed, despite their many trifling differences, the goal of 'vanquishing' the democratic system of government was the lowest common denominator shared by all strands of New Right thought.

Although the first two did not bode well for the old nobility, the second two commonalities opened up new opportunities to members of their class. Seeing their chance, the aristocracy therefore started trying to influence the cult of the individual Führer figure—a concept that had been circulating ever since the work of Thomas Carlyle in the mid-nineteenth century—by insisting that the original nobility had a vital role to play in Germany's future and asserting that they could provide society with leaders from their inexhaustible supply.[5] In other words, they argued that the old aristocracy should both continue to exist in its current form *and* serve as the quarry from which the architects of the new nobility could gather materials to construct their redesigned elite.

The aristocracy were particularly open to collaboration with middle-class authors who could not only write about, but also demonstrate practical examples of their own ability as Führers. Experience in battle was the most powerful currency in this particular ideological marketplace. A prime example of someone who embodied all these ideals was the highly decorated war hero Ernst Jünger, who published a book with the impressive title *The Adventurous Heart* in 1929. In the work, Jünger—a pharmacist's son who had tried to join the French Foreign Legion in his youth—described the middle-class existence as a 'dream without colours and imagery, one of the dullest dreams to which anyone was ever enthralled'.[6] This view was typical of New Right thinkers, who countered a bourgeois life of regularity, calculation, security, and reason with vitalistic images of combat, blood, warriorhood, decisiveness, and action. It is perhaps unsurprising to learn that the military clans of the landed nobility—a group with members who defined themselves as 'warriors and hunters with tracts of land'[7]—welcomed both the authors of the New Right and these guiding principles with open arms.

After 1918, the German political Right's intense search for potential vanquishers of the 'Rule of the Inferior' (a term Edgar Julius Jung had coined

to describe the feeble democratic system) inevitably stumbled across this brand of New Right concepts and focused on the ranks of the old nobility. In the aftermath of this discovery, the country suddenly came alive with heated debates in which a diverse range of groups began asking what role the nobility could play in a newly forged *Führerschicht* (a ruling class of Führers). These groups included various influential reactionary thinkers, a number of 'barefoot prophets'[8] (*völkisch* journalists, speakers, and pamphleteers), and many mandarins of the educated middle class. Even aristocrats started engaging in increasingly open discussions about the right-wing intellectual view that, although the old nobility could still contribute to the future ruling elite, the heyday of their caste was largely over.[9]

The dramatically deteriorating conditions that prevailed after the close of the First World War also forced together two older discourses that had, historically, existed in largely separate domains. The first of these was the discussion about matters of aristocratic reform. Initiated by middle-class and aristocratic theorists, this conversation had occupied the nobility time and again since the early years of the nineteenth century.[10] The second discourse was an elitist critique of democracy that had been dreamt up by middle-class thinkers. Although it had already made a considerable impact during the days of the German Empire, this line of thought emerged with particular vigour in the outpouring of publications that appeared after 1918. Referred to as the 'New Right' (*Neue Rechte*) in this book, this blend of right-wing ideologies, new right-wing organizations, and new ideals of anti-democratic leadership has been dubbed the 'Conservative Revolution' by some historians. Although commonplace in the German-speaking world—largely thanks to the writings of Armin Mohler, a right-wing intellectual from Switzerland[11]—the term 'Conservative Revolution' is both oxymoronic and rather misleading, however. For one thing, the majority of the authors who made up a part of this so-called 'Conservative Revolution' neither espoused conservative views nor triggered revolutions with the power of their words.[12] In fact, this 'combination of apocalypticism, a readiness to use violence, and an uncompromising masculinity [*Männerbündlertum*]'[13] that emerged after the end of the war shattered allegiances with the Kaiser and the monarchy and broke with the style and various guiding principles of conservative thought. Rather astonishingly, this movement seems to have been exactly what many aristocrats were looking for, however. Indeed, after 1918, a significant section of the nobility spurned their faith in the values and institutions of old-style conservatism and moved with surprising ease

over to a new ideological home under the auspices of the so-called New Right. Both in chronological and ideological terms, this movement, which emerged during the eras of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic, stood somewhere between older forms of conservative politics and Hitler's National Socialism.[14]

According to the sociologist Stefan Breuer, 'order' is 'a favourite word of the political right'.[15] This was very much the case in post-1918 Germany, where—in contrast to the nations that had emerged victorious from the war—discussions about the elites and the Führers who could be entrusted to forge a 'new order' in society became a central component of right-wing politics. Generally speaking, these debates about the new order did not include an acceptance of republican rule or calls for a return to the state of affairs that had prevailed prior to 1914. Indeed, as the most significant studies on the New Right's ideas and organizational history have demonstrated, the terms *Führertum* and 'new nobility' were key concepts in this political conversation.[16]

Ever since middle-class critics of the aristocracy had first dreamt up the idea in the nineteenth century, the educated middle class had argued that the nobility should not look down on the middle-class 'intellectual aristocracy' and should accept them as an ally instead.[17] This increasingly urgent demand became more and more attractive to the nobility after 1918. Before the war, the majority of the aristocracy had dismissed such proposals as the glorified presumptuousness of mere desk jockeys. Now, however, some members of the nobility (or at least the most intellectual of their ranks) started to come around to the idea and view it as both an opportunity and an enticing proposition.

This burgeoning sense of rapprochement was also facilitated by other factors that helped bring the two groups together. In the disorientated morass that was post-war society, for example, experience of front-line combat became something of a leader for the German population as a whole.[18] This made it inevitable that the middle-class search for new leadership would sooner or later stumble upon the nobility, a group that had expended a great deal of effort trying to style themselves as timeless military Führers. At the same time, the aristocracy were also left feeling stranded by the revolution and the republican state that had stripped them of vital fixed points of their ideological and political orientation. As a result, they were unusually ready to open themselves up to new allies in turn.

Throughout this chapter, concepts will be discussed that may seem rather sketchy and vague. This is not the result of an accident or some

by-product of summarization, however. Nor should the 'sojourn in nebulous approximations'[19] that characterizes almost all sources that deal with the 'new nobility' be interpreted as evidence of their authors' intellectual deficiency. On the contrary, the imprecise, often metaphor-laden tenor of these writings was born of a deliberate style, a 'rebellion of emotionally charged images and mythical-utopian symbols' that was designed to stand 'against the barren language of democracy and rational discourse'.[20] This shapelessness can also be detected in the key principles espoused by the New Right. In 1922, for example, Moeller van den Bruck explained that it was 'not by chance' that the New Right concepts associated with the *Drittes Reich* (Third Reich)—a term he popularized—remained 'oddly cloudy', 'lyrical', 'floating', and even 'downright transcendent'.[21] Indeed, Moeller recognized, not without reason, that this wooliness was a strength—rather than a weakness—of his intellectual, right-wing idiom.

This chapter will discuss examples of individual organizations in which the old nobility and the right-wing intelligentsia actually converged. Before that, however, it is necessary to sketch out the underlying conceptual framework that both middle-class and aristocratic thinkers used to meditate on the ideas of *Führertum* and the new nobility. Although the two groups initially worked in isolation from one another, their paths increasingly began to cross as a relationship of supply and demand—in which aristocrats offered to answer the middle-class call for anti-democratic, anti-republican Führers—began to emerge as a force to be reckoned with in German society.

The Nobility in Demand

The educated middle-class dream of establishing themselves at the heart of a newly forged elite was based on the notion that the enlightened members of their class constituted a *Geistesadel* ('intellectual aristocracy') and a *Leistungsadel* ('aristocracy of accomplishment') that offered a better version of nobility than the nobility themselves. This idea, which can be traced back to the thinkers of the early Enlightenment, was echoed time and again in middle-class criticism of the aristocracy.[22] After 1918, a variant of the same notion also occupied a central position in the thought of the right-wing intelligentsia. As the years progressed, this group increasingly imbued the idea with concepts of societal order that aimed to codify inequality and establish an updated *Führertum* that would divide up the property-less,

education-less 'masses' into manageable chunks before bringing them under control.

During the era of the German Empire, the long-standing, educated middle-class claim that they were a form of aristocracy with the ability to rule became substantially more robust and led to ever-sharper criticisms of both the old nobility and the monarch himself.[23] Before 1914, for example, Oswald Spengler—a middle-class figure who would rise to become one of the most popular right-wing intellectuals in the Weimar Republic thanks to his book, *The Decline of the West*—wrote two grandiloquent open letters aimed at the Kaiser and the German aristocracy as a whole. Spengler's texts, which included the main strains of the New Right's critique of the aristocracy, called for a Kaiser who had a close relationship with his people and demanded that the nobility be stripped of their privileges, undergo rigorous training, and be forced to accept fresh talents from the middle class into their ranks.[24] In essence, these arrogant appeals from Spengler, a young mathematics teacher, resembled the self-assured suggestions that Paul de Lagarde—the renowned orientalist, biblical scholar, and influential mastermind of the New Right—had dispatched to Bismarck and the Prussian Crown Prince two decades earlier.[25]

Such criticisms were not the sole preserve of the political Right. Indeed, liberal members of the educated middle class repeatedly denied that the aristocracy in general, and the Prussian minor nobility in particular, had any qualification to lead. In 1917, for example, Max Weber—a figure who was arguably the ideal incarnation of an extremely learned, self-confident, politically aware, middle-class German citizen—claimed that 'ten minutes spent among' the East Elbian landed aristocracy was 'enough to see that they are *plebeians*'. This was particularly true of their 'virtues', he continued, which were 'tremendously plebeian in character'. He also noted that, although it was quite possible to enjoy hunting, drinking, card games, and good hospitality on East Elbian estates, any leadership ability was nowhere to be found.[26] In another attack, Weber stated that small and medium-sized Prussian noble estates were 'the very worst vermin'.[27]

Over time, certain sections of the middle class became more and more convinced of their own suitability for greater things. For instance, some middle-class elite theorists indulged in fantasies of a new coalition between the aristocratic heroes of the battlefield and members of their own kind—desk-bound, middle-class 'heroes' who optimistically styled themselves as aggressive 'warrior-intellectuals' (*Kampfdenker*, a term coined by Moeller

van den Bruck). Such daydreams often involved wild overestimations of their authors' own abilities and cast their achievements in a strangely military light. In 1932, for example, Ernst Jünger, a highly decorated front-line combatant, dedicated one of his works to his fellow writer Oswald Spengler who, he claimed, had 'forged the first new weapons after Germany's disarmament' by the mere power of his words.[28] Perhaps the purest embodiment of this type of would-be warrior-intellectual, however, is Hans F. K. Günther, a philologist and 'racial researcher' who later went by the name of *Rassen-Günther* ('Race Günther'). In 1914, Günther had voluntarily tried to sign up to fight for his country, but was prevented by a heart condition and his rheumatoid arthritis. Thus denied the opportunity to prove himself on the battlefield, the young man, who was a trainee teacher at the time, created an outlet for his thirst for action by writing his first book. Released in 1920, the work is saturated in a yearning for virility, for a 'proximity to death', and for combat 'in the forest of the Lindworm'—a dragon-like monster from the Middle Ages which was used in the text as a symbol for liberal capitalists, supporters of democracy, and the Jews. Günther named the book *Knight, Death and the Devil. The Heroic Idea*,[29] a title infused with medieval, chivalric significance that contained echoes of the wider right-wing struggle against industrialism and liberal modernity.

Increasingly, middle-class intellectuals also started adopting elements of the aristocratic style into their lives. This is exemplified by the rather bizarre, telling fact that the aforementioned scholar Paul de Lagarde wrote about the new nobility—ideas which, it must be remembered, aimed to bestow aristocratic status upon himself and his learned colleagues—while sitting astride a writing chair in the shape of a saddle.[30] This phenomenon was not limited to Lagarde and his immediate circles. In fact, after 1918, it became common for academics to style themselves as an 'intellectual elite' and a class of 'Führers' from behind their lecterns and inside their stuffy offices.[31] As time passed, the old middle-class cult of educational excellence was also superseded by the cult of the *Tatmensch* (the 'man of action'),[32] a decisive figure that shared far more in common with aristocrats than the model of the desk-bound man of letters. Furthermore, middle-class writers began to realize that, in a society where experience of front-line combat had taken on immense social significance, using increasingly militaristic language allowed them to lay claim to a certain warrior-like virility armed with nothing more than a fountain pen. This ideological shift away from traditional middle-class values created a new breed of determined, 'combat-ready'

intellectuals that many nobles found easier to relate to than the classic archetype of the verbose, anaemic scholar. In the words of the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, the imaginary bond many intellectuals dreamt of sharing with the nobility was based on one simple consideration. 'What makes the aristocrats attractive and what draws some of them to the intellectuals', he wrote, 'is almost tautological in its simplicity: it is the fact that they are not bourgeois.'[33] Indeed, a militaristic, anti-middle class attitude can be found wherever the nobility and the right-wing intelligentsia converged.

For their part, the old aristocracy showed a keen interest in the middle-class search for a new nobility. This was true whether it was being carried out by such New Right luminaries as Robert Michels, Oswald Spengler, Max Hildebert Boehm, Ernst Jünger, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, and Edgar Julius Jung, or the myriad of second-rate professors and journalists[34] whose own studies of *Führertum* followed in the intellectual wake of their more celebrated peers. In 1930, for example, at a time when the debates regarding the new nobility were at their peak, the DAG made space available in its periodical for an extensive series of articles written by Werner Henneke, a middle-class academic. The highpoints of Henneke's texts were the dramatic appeals he made to the nobility asking them to wage a fresh wave of attacks against the wealthy middle-class and their profit-orientated way of life. The 'mortal enemy' of the rebirth of the 'intellectual value system', Henneke claimed, was not found 'in the proletarian masses, but in the ruling bourgeoisie.' 'Every notion of an aristocratic renaissance …', he continued, 'therefore necessarily aims its point against the bourgeois way of life. … Germany's role in Europe today is to raise the fight against the rule of the lawyers and bankers to a pan-European level. Taking the lead in this mission is the noblest objective the German aristocracy can be assigned.'[35]

This kind of belligerent, soldierly tone that served as the hallmark of practically all the pamphlets and books published by the New Right can also be detected in texts that strike a more balanced tone. Take, for example, the work of the lawyer, front-line officer, terrorist, and journalist Edgar Julius Jung, whose 1927 polemic *The Rule of the Inferior* adopted a deeply unsentimental anti-middle-class stance. Jung, himself the offspring of a middle-class family, used his text to pit the image of a decadent bourgeoisie which was obsessed with money, education, and advancement against the old nobility with all their leadership qualities, conscientiousness, and sense of aristocratic style.[36] The book—which, by its second edition in 1930, had grown in size

to become an encyclopaedia of New Right thought—also included a chapter about 'the new leadership [*Führung*]' that dealt with the old aristocracy and how a modern elite should be formed.[37] Despite including numerous passages that were positively inclined towards the historical nobility as an institution, Jung claimed that the new 'upper class' (*Oberschicht*)—a group he also referred to as the 'aristocracy' (*Aristokratie*) and the 'new nobility' (*neuer Adel*)—should not be identical to the aristocracy of old. Instead, he suggested replacing the old nobility—a group that had irrevocably lost their grip on power—with an open, 'organically' assembled elite based on a foundation of 'good' (but not necessarily noble) birth, education, and hereditary property. Any members of the old aristocracy who were still able to fulfil these 'selection criteria', he continued, would be just as entitled to join the new nobility as 'Führers' from other sections of society. As a result of these conclusions, sections of the old aristocracy and middle-class members of Germany's power elite alike both regarded Jung's vision of a modern nobility as an attractive proposition.[38] Consequently, he enjoyed superb connections with the nation's foremost business leaders and, for a short period in 1933, rose to become the leading intellectual figure in the mixed middle-class and aristocratic entourage that surrounded Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen, for whom he even worked as a speechwriter. Jung's thought was not appreciated by everyone, however, and he was murdered in the summer of 1934 for his vigorously elitist views that stood in opposition to the promises of the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft*.[39]

In 1933, it became apparent that the Nazis would not be content with merely following Jung's suggestion that they should submit to aristocratic leadership and serve as mere foot soldiers tasked with tearing down the Republic.[40] This development led Jung to reassess the significance of the old nobility once more. From his point of view, National Socialism had not yet managed to liberate itself from the democratic, middle-class, materialist idea that there would henceforth 'only [be] one nobility, the nobility of effort'—i.e. a noble status that was earned by achievement rather than acquired as an accident of birth. Indeed, Jung criticized the Nazis' faith in the 'democratic creation of elites' and countered it with the model of a nobility who would draw 'their lack of ambition from their sense of self-worth' and would possess an inner 'desire' to mould themselves in the 'image of God'. 'The nobility…', he wrote, 'rules by force of their superior being. The [democratic] elite must achieve something to gain acceptance; this does not arise for the nobleman [i.e. he cannot join such an inferior group] as long as he remains

noble.' Jung also claimed that, as one could not deliberately breed aristocrats, it was necessary to 'gather [nobility] together wherever it is found, group it around a leader, and facilitate its sociological circumstances'. Such a project had, he claimed, been thwarted by the party state and its 'excessive elections', both of which he accused of giving equal weight to the 'periodic boozer [*Quartalsäufer*] and the world-renowned scholar' and placing the 'war profiteer' on an equal footing with the 'heroic front-line warrior'.[41] Assembling a new aristocracy could only take place, he asserted, when this party system had been put out of action. By 1934, Jung had wholeheartedly staked his hopes for the future of the nation on the 'aristocratic currents' within the political Right.[42]

Another model for the new elite was proposed by middle-class thinkers who believed in the ennobling powers of the mind and the benefits of education. This idea was echoed in similar concepts advocated by a select group of deeply influential aristocratic intellectuals, including the eminent philosopher and globetrotter Count Hermann Keyserling[43] and two figures—Prince Karl Anton von Rohan[44] and Count Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi[45]—who numbered among the most prominent proponents of a noble brand of fascism that had been tailored to suit a European audience. Although the term 'nobility' played a crucial role in this general school of thought, its significance no longer bore much resemblance to the traditional meaning of the word 'nobility' itself.[46] Coudenhove's vision of an 'international and intersocial noble race', for example, placed the 'intellectual aristocracy' at the centre of the new 'ruling class'. Rohan, for his part, preached a new brand of *Führertum* that would be composed of 'intellectual nobles' and business leaders who knew how to act in a 'cool', collected manner.[47]

A number of second- and third-rate right-wing intellectuals also made regular use of similar vocabulary and ideas. The writings of Ernst Mayer—a legal historian and conservative lawyer from the city of Würzburg—provide a typical example of the frequent attempts made by journalists and university professors to give themselves noble status through their texts. In his work, Mayer described the discussion surrounding the future of the aristocracy as the 'crux of all political disputes'. He also called for the establishment of a 'conscious, federation-like gathering of the noble and the erudite' which would result in a 'new German nobility' that would emerge from the storms of the age. According to Mayer, this new breed of aristocracy would represent 'nothing other than the affectionately ruling elder sibling of all the

younger brothers among the German people as a whole'. Governing the nation in accordance with 'the most ancient German spirit', this new class would be 'courageous and finely educated'. Although they would 'feel no financial pressure', they would 'also not be extravagant'. In addition, Mayer used the common *völkisch* imagery of the vampire to recommend that the old nobility should take 'fresh blood from other classes' in order to supplement their 'losses'. He also made positive mention of the 'elasticity' of the English gentry.[48] Finally, Mayer demanded that the future elite should undergo a course of 'relentless training' and that anyone who could not endure this 'unsparing' selection process should be cast aside 'without mercy'.[49] Mayer, himself a member of the educated middle class, clearly rated his own abilities to succeed in this genre of punishing pedagogical ordeal.

Of course, members of the right-wing intelligentsia were not all quite so convinced of the suitability of the educated middle class when it came to forming the future aristocratic elite. One example of this less enthusiastic reaction can be found in a text written in 1926 by Gustav Steinbömer, a retired military officer who expressed his own opinions from within the 'Ring Circle', a leading New Right group. Steinbömer—a figure who had grown up with the Prussian Crown Prince and changed career paths to take a doctorate in art history after the war—regarded both the middle class (which he referred to as the 'chattering class') and the working class as singly unfit to lead. He therefore considered finding what remnants of value still lingered in the aristocracy to be one of the vital projects of the age. In an extremely vague article, Steinbömer—the son of a merchant—also urged the aristocracy to renounce materialism and move towards 'spiritual leadership' via a process of 'spiritualization'. 'For herein' he wrote, 'lies the significance of the awareness that a spiritualized nobility contributes its authentic, deep life instincts to the genesis of a new upper class.' Although Steinbömer's readers would have found the exact meaning of these words as opaque as modern readers, the text unmistakably contained the standard line that right-wing intellectuals always proposed when they addressed the nobility as a whole: namely, that the aristocracy needed the educated middle class to help them bring about a noble renaissance and create a new aristocracy that would be equal to the challenges that lay ahead. Steinbömer also claimed that the aristocracy possessed the unique ability to bring forth a blend of spirituality, simplicity, and mythology into society that would create fresh bonds with the German people and pave the way for a future Führer who would vanquish the dreary masters of democracy. 'From this trio', he claimed

in characteristically abstruse style, 'comes forth the stuff of the born leader and the great man, who rises from unknown depths.'[50] This belief in the irrational, charismatic capabilities displayed in Steinbömer's text was one of the hallmarks of the debates about the future of the nobility as a whole.

In a similar vein, Heinrich von Gleichen—a journalist and landowner from the ancient nobility who also numbered among the principal thinkers of the Ring Circle—expressed his own opposition to an upper class composed of scholars and academics in 1924. Although doubtless one of the German aristocracy's most prominent intellectuals, Gleichen argued that the new elite should emulate the 'warlike, political caste of Führers' that the old nobility had supposedly represented in the past. He also believed that the nucleus of the newly forged political upper class should come from the old 'aristocracy with a Nordic and Christian disposition'. Although the historical nobility would not be in a position to provide sufficient numbers of such recruits on its own, Gleichen was convinced that 'the Nordic man' was a valuable commodity, no matter the social strata from which it emerged. As a result, he was highly optimistic about the chances of gathering together a new class of Führers from society at large. 'The ideal of the Führer', he wrote, 'has come to life everywhere. Longing for superior leadership is awakening in the masses.... It was a different story before the war. Back then, one actually discussed the nobility only rarely, and their vocation to lead was not spoken of at all.'[51]

The rapprochement between right-wing intellectuals and members of the aristocracy often existed less as an agreement about concrete political objectives, and more as the tacit closeness of their words and deeds. This rather formless understanding was founded, among other things, on the basis of a resentment both groups felt towards the forms of middle-class culture that had emerged during the long years of the nineteenth century. Despite only being a marginal force in German politics, the circle of individuals surrounding the charismatic poet Stefan George provides a key example of the nebulous common ground both parties shared. This group, which stood 'above' or at a tangent to the political turmoil of the age, took the elitist, right-wing intellectual sense of messianic purpose to an extreme in their carefully cultivated sense of aestheticism. This idea is encapsulated in two lines from *The Star of the Covenant*, an influential collection of poetry that George—a figure described as 'that phenomenon in intellectual history with the single most irradiative power'[52]—published in 1913. 'Aus der sohnschaft der erlosten / Kür ich meine herrn der welt',[53] he wrote: 'From

the sons I have redeemed / I choose my lords of the world'.[54] Despite its apparently esoteric nature, George's aestheticism was certainly not conceived as something removed from reality. Instead, as was demonstrated in his early collection *Algabal*, it was created to stand as a literary alternative to the constraints of the rational middle-class world. At least, this was how George's initiates understood the work. Interestingly, *Algabal* also blended aesthetics, male homosexuality, charismatic leadership, and noble and middle-class elitism together in a unique form that resembled far broader trends in the collection of intellectual fashions and milieus that historians have described as 'aristocraticness'.[55]

Various aspects of *The Star of the Covenant*—including its elitist, anti-materialist, anti-middle class attitude, its emphasis on George's pedagogical role as the 'Meister',[56] and its description of the almost chivalric order-like group of individuals that surrounded the poet himself[57]—must have had a magnetic effect on the intellectually curious members of the aristocracy. Indeed, George, the son of a wine merchant from the provincial town of Bingen am Rhein, embodied a combination of longing, mystery, and aristocratic bearing that was appreciated by both the nobility and the middle class alike. This appeal that transcended the boundaries of class is exemplified by the Stauffenberg brothers, two young counts described as 'blonde heirs of the Ottonians [ancient Saxon kings]' who were permanently marked—and possibly even inspired to join the Resistance and mastermind their celebrated attempt on Hitler's life—as a result of the time they spent amongst George's hand-picked circle of initiates.[58] The magnetism that drew these men to their *Meister* was no rare case. On the contrary, the Stauffenbergs' experience bears witness to the auratic power of attraction that right-wing intellectuals and adherents of the noble way of life exerted upon one another. Tellingly, the surviving adherents of George's 'circle without a *Meister*' were still firmly influenced by their leader's elitist ideas and dreams about a new nobility long after his death in December 1933.[59]

It is perhaps tempting to view all these rambling discussions about the future of the 'new nobility' as mere intellectual exchanges that were bandied about by learned members of the middle class. However, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, by expressing such views, various members of the middle class unquestionably extended a hand to the old aristocracy in their hour of greatest need. This was not an offer the historical nobility could possibly afford to refuse.

The Nobility Revalued

> The aristocracy is an institution that deserves to be preserved.
>
> —Frederick the Great[60]

Although middle-class intellectuals regarded the *idea* of the 'nobility' as an attractive concept after the end of the First World War, they were not particularly drawn to the actual institution of the aristocracy that existed at that time. As a result, non-nobles started discussing semi-fictional versions of the nobility that more closely matched their desires. Aristocrats soon recognized that a sea change was taking place, and even attempted to embellish the image of a new nobility themselves. This shift away from reality intensified over time as the nobility increasingly began to accept middle-class criticism of their class and interacted more and more openly with their critics. A prime example of this latter development is presented by the figure of the warrior-intellectual Oswald Spengler, the epitome of a right-wing thinker who successfully wooed the landowning aristocracy and was ultimately wooed by the aristocracy in turn. Spengler enjoyed an unrivalled renown among the nobility in the complex political landscape after 1918. As well as being widely accepted into noble discussion groups, he also appeared as a speaker at conferences held by a number of aristocratic associations, served as a political advisor to south German princes, and had his propaganda trips funded by members of the Westphalian and the Bavarian aristocracy. In 1929, the German Noble Society even sent a collection of his quotations to its members.[61] The ultimate speech venerating Spengler was delivered, however, by Baron Engelbert von Kerckerinck-Borg, one of the most influential representatives of the Westphalian aristocracy who, in 1924, described the former mathematics teacher as the 'most significant German alive today'.[62]

The private correspondence and records of charitable donations held in noble family archives contain numerous similar instances of increasing aristocratic support for major and minor intellectuals who believed that the nobility had a role to play in establishing the new German elite.[63] Aristocratic authors were also given plenty of space in the New Right press to discuss various proposals for the composition of the future aristocracy. In 1927, the *Adelsblatt* published a text by one Dr von Stegmann who issued a metaphorical rallying cry to his noble peers: 'We must leave the tower of our partly outmoded notions' he stated, and head 'out onto the open field where a war of intellectual movement is being waged. All we can take with us are

our old chivalric weapons: German thought, German honour, German character.'[64] Even Kaiser Wilhelm II—a man who had stumbled deeper and deeper into a thicket of *völkisch* fantasy and self-justification during his exile and spent most of his days in the Netherlands chopping wood—could be seen moving in a similar reformist direction, at least in the infamously vituperative notes he added to the margins of texts. 'The nobility no longer holds its leading position of old', he wrote in 1929: 'In some respects it has even totally broken down. It is now only of use as part of a general, major movement.'[65]

These nascent reformist ideas all came to a head in early 1930 when an author by the name of Walter von Zeddelmann published 'Twilight of the Aristocracy—Aristocratic Renaissance', a piece in the *Adelsblatt* that sparked a lively debate about the establishment of a 'new nobility'. The text, which included a blend of New Right and traditional middle-class motifs of aristocratic criticism, firmly placed responsibility for the failures of 1918 at the nobility's door and openly asked 'whether that which we call the nobility is actually still noble.' Zeddelmann asserted that the ideal 'new nobility' could be created by replenishing old noble families with 'fresh blood' from the successful middle class. This concept of a 'new nobility'—a group that would, he claimed, be created under aristocratic supervision—did not just envisage adding recruits to the old aristocracy's existing ranks, however. Crucially, it also assumed that the sons of old noble families who were no longer in a social or professional position to lead an 'elevated lifestyle' would be excluded from the new elite. Zeddelmann believed that the modern ideal of *Führertum*—a notion that, as usual, remained loosely defined—should be the key criterion of inclusion in the German aristocracy of the future. 'Anyone who is to be a member of the new nobility must be a Führer', he declared, even if their leadership abilities only revealed themselves 'in small circles of people, on his estate, in his business.' 'Admittedly', he continued, 'this excludes from the nobility all those who have to live their lives in positions of servitude.'[66] Overall, Zeddelmann's article received encouragement from a number of authors who found the idea of using the 'good middle classes' to help establish a restructured 'ruling elite' appealing. Nevertheless, the same figures also rejected the suggestion that aristocrats in 'positions of servitude' should be cast out due to their perceived unworthiness. In their opinion, both the nobility and the middle class should instead continue to exist as separate groups within the coming 'Third Reich' and contribute their most capable members to a new upper class or a 'Führer elite with an aristocratic disposition'.[67]

For the most part, it was agreed that the nobility had to open up to other groups in society to a greater extent than ever before. No one could see eye to eye, however, about which groups that should entail. For example, noble critics who held fast to the anti-middle class line—a position the *Adelsblatt* had already been cultivating during the era of the German Empire—continued to warn the aristocracy against getting too close to the upper echelons of the middle class for fear of sinking into 'materialism'. Such voices maintained that keeping their distance from the middle class and building bridges 'to the people [*Volk*]' was the only way the nobility could become true Führers and fulfil their purpose in life.[68]

Interestingly, Zeddlemann's article was one of the last proponents of an old conviction that membership of the nobility required one to maintain certain minimum standards of wealth. A not dissimilar version of this idea had been in circulation since the Prussian Reforms of the early nineteenth century. Although it might seem rather old-fashioned, the necessity of such exclusivity has also been proclaimed by modern sociology, which states that four intertwining factors—selection, separation, openness, and exclusion—are all required to sustain the existence of an 'elite'. According to the sociologist Arnold Gehlen, an elite needs to 'have the moral and mental strength to cast out unsuitable or compromised elements'.[69] Indeed, the twentieth-century nobility's failure to prune their membership can be seen as one of the key reasons why a majority of their number could no longer be meaningfully classed as part of an 'elite'. As a result of this failure, ever-growing groups of aristocrats began sinking further and further into poverty. This, in turn, progressively created an ideological divide within the nobility as a group. Some aristocrats tried to retain a semblance of class integrity by reinforcing the old benchmarks regarding minimum standards of wealth. In fact, many rich, prescient nobles would have agreed with the sentiment of Max Weber's claim that, for a class to function as an 'aristocracy in the political sense', it needed to be devoid of 'anxiety', 'free of economic troubles', and live *for* the state, not *from* it.[70] Nevertheless, such opinions became increasingly drowned out by the growing clamour of minor noble agitators.

As was often the case with intra-aristocratic discussions, the south German Catholics took the lead in mounting opposition to the minor nobility's demands. While serving as the Bavarian representative at the DAG's annual meeting in Berlin in 1911, for example, Count Drechsel—a doctor of law and the owner of southern castles and estates—advocated reforms of the nobility that would have 'relieved' the DAG of a considerable proportion of

its membership. Drechsel's suggested plan concluded with the striking proposal to eject 'two classes of aristocrats'—namely, criminals and the poor—from the nobility's ranks in future. Similar selectivity could also be detected in broader noble discussions about the model of marriage and primogeniture followed by the English gentry. Indeed, many commentators consistently praised their English counterparts' ability to impede the 'degeneration' of the nobility and filter out unworthy individuals by 'continually accepting [new] members from the general population and continually casting out members to mingle among the populace.'[71]

By the time the First World War came to an end, however, the opportunity to put such reforms into practice had vanished for good. Shortly before the conflict began, there still seemed to be a desire to protect the social nucleus of the aristocracy from being weakened by its members on the fringe. Just two decades later, however, the aristocracy took to dismantling the historical nobility's traditions and guiding principles of their own free will. Indeed, a number of texts that appeared in the youth supplement of the *Adelsblatt* in 1930 provide striking examples of this trajectory of self-destruction. In an attempt to match the militaristic camaraderie apparent in right-wing organizations, the publication stated that a 'man is worth what he accomplishes, minus his vanity'. Another article by Count Eulenberg, the leader of the East Prussian aristocratic youth organization, called for solidarity with the working classes. In Eulenberg's estimation, aristocrats who 'might always be visible on the ballroom floor' but were nowhere to be seen when it came to supporting their 'working comrades on the street' by 'nailing their colours to the mast and demonstrating their civic courage' were utterly worthless as Führers.[72]

Count Rüdiger von der Goltz, a retired major general who served as the chairman of the United Patriotic Associations, voiced comparable views in a trailblazing work he published in 1928. The vision Goltz laid out for the future of his country asserted that the 'Third Reich'—an empire he described as 'pan-German [*großdeutsch*], *völkisch* and social'—should be steered by a newly established 'Führer elite' that would be aligned with the values established by the community of soldiers who had fought at the front. Crucially, Goltz's text also expressed an unequivocal rejection of traditional notions of *Führertum*. 'In the hearts of we soldiers who fought at the front', he wrote, lies the 'inalienable experience and deepest conviction that we Germans of all classes, frontiers, and clans are a united population of brothers that belongs together through thick and thin. He who still holds prejudices based on

birth, class, education or anything else belongs, in our eyes, on the scrap heap. We have no use for him in building the future of Germany. This applies to the upper and lower sections of society alike ….'[73]

The amalgam of *völkisch* ideology and the mythical 'trench spirit' that was invoked in such utterances was intended to serve as the cornerstone of a new noble identity. As will be demonstrated in more detail below, however, this would prove to be an extremely problematic proposition.

In 1928, Walter von Bogen, the editor of the *Adelsblatt*, had already privately conceded that the old nobility would have to supplement its ranks with new members and work hard to form the social core of the coming Führer elite. 'Although I do not believe that the nobility alone will be the upper class of the future', he wrote, 'we must endeavour to ensure that it makes up its nucleus and that, thanks to its traditions, thanks to its moral fibre, it will show this upper class the way forward.'[74] In contrast, the opinions Bogen espoused in public were altogether different. For a number of months in 1930, the pages of the *Adelsblatt* had been fuelling the debate about the new nobility with controversial articles. Eventually, however, Bogen and the periodical's editorial staff decided to put an end to this discussion by dismissing all notions of ostracizing weak, old aristocrats and accepting strong, new members into the noble fold. They also declared that the composition of the historical nobility should not be allowed to change as a result of co-operation with non-aristocratic 'Führers'. Bogen followed this renewed rejection of the 'English' model of primogeniture and more inclusive marriage with an attempt to show how the power of the old German nobility could be consolidated. In so doing, however, he resorted to crude racism rather than laying out any promising concepts for the future of the German elite. He wrote, for instance, of erecting a 'barricade against families with Jewish relatives' and of fighting against all the 'foreign influences that have overrun the German soul in the guise of Americanism, Westernism and Judaism'. The text then concluded with a question—'Creation of a new nobility?'—which Bogen answered with a resounding 'No!'[75]

A few months after this article was published, the editor of the *Adelsblatt* also naively introduced his readership to the vision of a new nobility contained in Richard Walther Darré's 1930 work, *The New Nobility from Blood and Soil*.[76] This was rather surprising. Indeed, the views promulgated in the pages of this book proved unpalatable to the entire old aristocracy and probably represented the most significant conceptual challenge ever mounted against the nobility's traditional claims to leadership. Nevertheless,

Bogen's astonishingly positive review of the work extolled Darré's fantasy of breeding a new, racially pure nobility that would have a connection to the land and declared it to be an idea that very closely echoed the aspirations of the DAG. In his reading of the book, Bogen had apparently skipped over Darré's extraordinarily biting criticism of the old aristocracy. He had also seemingly failed to notice the very crux of Darré's argument in which the author contended that replacing the old nobility with a new one was nothing short of a necessity. Admittedly, Darré did applaud the old aristocracy's ability to pass certain ideals on to other sections of society and produce a handful of individual leaders. However, he also believed that the old nobility as a whole would be utterly useless when it came to establishing the future Führer elite. Darré's book meant that, from 1930 onwards, there existed a politically relevant concept of the new nobility that amplified older models of *völkisch* criticism of the aristocracy and laid down a detailed plan for the creation of an alternative noble class. It thus represented the moment when older dreams about forming and 'breeding' a new nobility stopped being mere fantasies and became a key part of the Nazis' vast plans to reshape the population of Europe and its future ruling elites.

Generally speaking, the debates surrounding the creation of a new nobility were based around a trio of distinct, frequently modified, differently weighted criteria that the old aristocracy would henceforth have to satisfy in order to remain relevant in future. These three stipulations were: education (*Bildung*), property (*Besitz*) and 'pure' blood (*'reines' Blut*). The first pair of criteria exposed two of the minor nobility's greatest areas of weakness. Nevertheless (or, perhaps, even as a result), they were gradually expunged from discussions held between aristocrats themselves. At the same time, however, the demand for racial purity—a requirement plucked from the imaginative realm of *völkisch* thought—was increasingly pushed to the fore. This was a fatal mistake for two main reasons. Firstly, the aristocracy's discussions about blood distracted them from making any realistic evaluations about their prospects of rising to power in an industrialized, modern society. And, secondly, focusing on blood purity prompted the nobility to replace any genuine ideas about aristocratic reform with notions of racial betterment at a very early stage. This laid the foundations for a particular strand of racial reasoning that would soon come back to haunt them.

A particularly drastic version of the call for racial purity can be located in an article that Baron Börries von Münchhausen wrote in 1924, a full six years before Darré published his own fantasy of breeding an aristocracy and

almost a decade before the National Socialists ascended to political power. In his text, Münchhausen—a prominent aristocrat, writer, castle owner, and the holder of two doctorates—summed up the nobility's *raison d'être* in one simple statement. 'If the aristocracy is to have a purpose and a value that exceeds the superficial glitter of their names', he wrote, 'there can only be one option: *breeding humans*.' Without mincing his words, this man of letters then calmly compared the task of rearing 'favourably built natural races' of English thoroughbred horses with the idea of selecting aristocratic wives based on 'breederly' criteria. The baron's argument—which made reference to the central tenets of Nordicist racial theory and, in particular, to a *völkisch* bestseller by Hans F. K. Günther[77]—also cheerfully dismantled the traditional concept of equal noble birth (*Ebenbürtigkeit*), a notion that had been a key tenet of aristocratic thought for centuries. 'There is definitely only one type of equal birth', he declared, that of 'still-pure Nordic blood. For example, the cross-bred aristocrat is, in racial terms, not of equal birth to a purebred Nordic farmer's daughter. If the aristocracy is to regain any racial significance, its first task is to attain Nordic racial purity.' Münchhausen went on to demand that aristocrats who were not 'purebred' should cast off their noble titles. This was necessary, he explained, because unions between Jews and 'Aryans' invariably resulted in 'mongrels' (*Bastarde*). Münchhausen then expanded on this theme in a passage that simultaneously represents the rhetorical zenith of his article and the intellectual nadir of the debate about the future of the aristocracy as a whole. 'I can breed pugs and I can breed dachshunds', he declared, 'but when misfortune befalls me and I get a basket filled with young dachshund-pug crosses, they are quite rightly drowned. That is nothing against pugs or dachshunds per se, just the upshot of centuries-old experience that all mongrels are inferior.'[78]

For hundreds of years, the aristocracy had claimed to be endowed with unique, inborn abilities that justified their status as leaders. Increasingly, however, this cornerstone of their superiority became superseded by the criteria of racial purity. As a consequence, the boundaries the nobility had previously worked so hard to maintain between themselves and the general populace began inexorably to blur. Indeed, over time, noble debates started reducing leadership to little more than a product of certain favourable genetic formulae. The aristocracy's position was ineluctably undermined as a result. The reason for this was simple: 'pure blood', the bedrock of this vision of a new elite, could also be readily located outside the nobility's ranks. One apparently only had to look to Germany's 'larger farmsteads', for

example, to find instances of 'innate lordly consciousness' that had often resided there unseen for 'centuries'.[79]

Rather unsurprisingly, this exceptionally crude requirement for joining the new aristocracy proved to be an attractive proposition for members of the minor nobility. In the past, far more complex models had suggested asking individuals to demonstrate minimum levels of property, education, and professional qualifications to justify their continued noble status. The idea of racial purity seemed to sidestep such demands, however, and even allowed socially bankrupt minor nobles to feel like proper aristocrats once again. Moreover, by the time Münchhausen published his *Adelsblatt* article in 1924, discussions of racial purity had long left the realms of theoretical debate and had started triggering concrete alterations within the aristocratic associations themselves. The next section of this chapter will examine these developments in more detail.

Imagined Communities

The figure of the 'man of action' (*Tatmensch*)—a favourite archetype among the ranks of the political Right—was often extolled by authors whose own deeds were limited to sitting at their desks and writing about people who actually got things done. The combined aristocratic and middle-class discourse about these 'men of action', 'Führers', and the 'new nobility' did not just lead to the spilling of a great deal of ink, however. Crucially, it also resulted in the foundation of new organizations, some of which will be investigated below. The focus of this analysis will revolve around the German Noble Society (the DAG), an association that was founded in 1874. Although the DAG was not an organization that possessed any great political weight, it is a useful subject to examine here for two main reasons. Firstly, it offers an unrivalled opportunity to observe the decline, desperation, and radicalization experienced by the minor nobility. And secondly, it was the organization that strove most consistently to establish a union of the German aristocracy based on their imagined homogeneity in the period between the two wars.

The astonishing confidence the leaders of the DAG exhibited after the end of the First World War largely stemmed from the size of their society in comparison to other aristocratic organizations. Even though their membership total sank below 2,000 individuals during the international conflict, the

DAG was still numerically superior to anything all the Catholic associations combined would be able to muster at a later date. The DAG was also the only noble organization that enjoyed promising ties to the high nobility, could boast a nationwide network of branches stretching from Holstein in the north to Bavaria in the south, and produced its own periodical, a publication that had set out its ideological stall for no less than thirty-five years. Another reason why the DAG gained superiority over other aristocratic organizations was due to its ideological alignment. During the era of the German Empire, the society had opened its doors to a number of *völkisch* and anti-Semitic tendencies. Over time, this decision allowed it to become the aristocracy's most significant representative of a radical, right-wing trajectory.[80] An example of this emerged in 1919, when the DAG became the very first aristocratic organization to declare its intention to 'cast off the Jewish spirit and its culture' and follow a plan to unite 'the German nobility' as a whole. As far as the society was concerned, the future nobility should be made up of 'those who have still kept tradition in their flesh and their coat of arms [i.e. their bloodlines] pure. Whether higher or lower, whether ancient nobility [*Uradel*] or nobles from "younger" families whose status had been granted by latters patent issued by a monarch [*Briefadel*], whether major landowners, minor landowners, or those without any land, whether rich or poor, all must belong to [the aristocracy].'[81] This unifying mission statement was in line with a deep desire to unite 'the German nobility' after the end of the First World War. As a result, the DAG began to swell its ranks at a phenomenal rate,[82] growing to over eight times its former size in the space of just six years. The peak of its membership was reached in 1925, when approximately 17,000 (male and female) individuals were signed up to the society. By a rough estimate, around one third of all adult aristocrats probably belonged to the organization at that time.

In spite of this success, the German Noble Society's attempt to bring about ideological unity and form an allied 'German nobility' was at odds with the ceaseless rise of social heterogeneity that could be detected among their class. The gap between the richest and poorest aristocratic families was constantly widening. As a result, the DAG's plan to unify the nobility explicitly attempted to bring the two extremes of the nobility's social spectrum closer together. For example, in a bid to convey a sense of shared ideological belonging to aristocrats experiencing vastly different social realities, the DAG started broadening the applicability of various noble guiding principles and cultural codes. This increasingly transformed the nobility into an

'imagined community' that became more and more willing to overlook the internal barriers that had previously kept its members apart. In fact, all of the DAG's surviving sources that were written after 1918 are saturated with signs of a desire to bring different noble groups together[83] and rally them around the idea of a 'new aristocratic man'.[84] In 1930, for example, Baron Wilhelm von Leonrod—a figure who, as a board member of the Bavarian branch of the DAG, was operating far away from the unifying impulse of his organization's headquarters in Berlin—wrote an article highlighting the (by Bavarian standards, relatively enthusiastic) support the south German mediatized princes were showing for the DAG. Notably, however, he also remarked that 'some of the mediatized princes have unfortunately not yet come to the realization that it is absolutely necessary in this day and age for the whole aristocracy, both high and low, to stick together.'[85] Numerous similar appeals were also articulated by the German princes and by influential Catholic aristocrats from Bavaria and Westphalia alike.[86]

In order to achieve its goal of uniting the nobility, the DAG had to overcome four key boundaries that distanced aristocrats from their peers, namely: regional differences; the division between the old nobility and the *Briefadel*; the profound contrasts that existed between rich and poor families; and the sense of alienation that kept various generations of aristocrats apart. One of the major sources of intra-aristocratic division arose from the vast range of local traditions that existed among the nobility as a whole. These distinguishing customs were distributed throughout the DAG's twenty-four regional branches, each of which was further subdivided into district and municipal groups.[87] The society did make efforts to bring these cultures together. For example, the DAG's annual meetings were held in a different town or city every January. These events were the society's best opportunity to decide on a host of fundamental issues, including how the DAG should present itself both within the nobility and to the outside world. Crucially, proceedings were always hosted by the branch of the region where the conference was taking place. This gave them the opportunity to highlight traditions and customs from their local area. The *Adelsblatt* also offered the DAG's individual chapters the chance to publish articles and produced occasional issues created by different regional branches that were dedicated to the territories under their control. This allowed them to introduce readers to local idiosyncrasies and use a variety of images, photos, statistics, and articles to present families, prestigious castles, exceptional individuals, and specific traditions from the area they called home.

Despite such endeavours, however, the DAG never succeeded in unifying the wide range of German aristocratic cultures that were represented by its collection of over twenty regional branches. Indeed, the correspondence between the society's local executive boards betrays fundamental differences in the basic ideological outlooks of the various regional groups. The most significant divides were undoubtedly those that existed between the organizations in Old Prussia and their opposite numbers from the largely Catholic south of the country. For instance, some of the northern regional branches took up an extremely aggressive, anti-republican stance that stood in stark contrast to the more moderate views espoused by their counterparts in the southern states of Bavaria, Baden, and Württemberg. Unlike many Prussian members of the society, for example, the DAG's branch in Baden argued in favour of showing 'restraint' when it came to research into modern 'racial science' (*Rassenforschung*).[88] The Bavarian nobility also had its own organization—the Association of Catholic Nobles in Bavaria—which remained much closer to the values of traditional Catholic conservatism than the *völkisch* radicalization that was evident in much of the north. Indeed, southern German opposition to the *völkisch*, 'unifying and levelling' tendencies of the DAG's executive board up in Berlin continuously erupted in acrimonious disputes.[89] Moreover, members of the DAG's southern regional branches repeatedly expressed the opinion that their society should primarily provide 'welfare' to fellow aristocrats in need and leave the aristocracy's political interests in the care of other institutions. This view was regularly met with fierce rejection from the leaders of the DAG in the capital, however.[90]

If one wished to pin the responsibility for the aggressive trajectory that prevailed among the DAG's leaders on certain individuals, two aristocrats would immediately spring to mind. Both were from Prussia and numbered among the members of the more recently created *Briefadel*, a group that played an exceptionally active role in the DAG's upper echelons and produced some of the most zealous proponents of a restructured, nationalist-*völkisch* aristocracy. The first of these figures was Walter von Bogen who had served as a colonel and was the son of a lieutenant colonel from a family that had first been granted noble status in 1867. Bogen lived in Berlin and worked as the indefatigable managing director of the DAG. Indeed, it was only thanks to his ability to work hard at a desk that a significant proportion of the society's menial organizational tasks were ever carried out. After 1918, Bogen was indubitably the most enthusiastic representative of a *völkisch* approach within the upper echelons of the DAG.

He was especially instrumental in attempting to transform his organization into a *völkisch* pressure group that would gather together all the right-wing parties into a radically racist movement that would be opposed to 'internationalism, Americanism, Frenchification, and Judaism'. In 1928, Bogen also argued against objections to his plan of following in the footsteps of the men who had founded the DAG back in the 1870s. These individuals, Bogen claimed, had always stood against 'mammonism'—a phrase he used to express contempt for the mercantile, financial, and banking sectors that remained foreign to a majority of the Prussian minor nobility. 'After all', Bogen wrote, 'those men who founded the DAG in 1874 did not want to establish a welfare organization or a social club.'[91] According to Bogen and other aristocrats who dominated the DAG, the society should instead serve as a combative, strictly political organization that existed to attack the Republic and the ideological bedrock on which it stood.

The second individual alluded to above—Bogen's most important, energetic ally on the DAG's executive board—was also not a descendant of the ancient nobility himself. Baron Albrecht von Houwald, a retired chief legal counsel (*Oberjustizrat*) and erstwhile official at the Prussian Heraldry Office, was born to a family from the *Briefadel* in Saxony that had been granted its noble status in the seventeenth century. Houwald had worked as a lawyer, resided in Potsdam since 1919, and enjoyed both a professional career and a lifestyle that were typical of the *Briefadel*, many of whom had to earn a living from a profession rather than from the bounty of a hereditary estate.[92]

In 1928, these two men and their ennobled kind who served on the society's executive board came under fire from one Baron Kurt von Reibnitz, a member of the *Uradel* and an exceptionally well-informed critic of the DAG. Reibnitz launched a damning, disparaging attack on the organization, calling it a 'collection of the most recent members of the *Briefadel*' who had 'little or no blue blood' in their veins.[93] If one looks at the DAG's founders, at its membership structure, and at the executive boards of its individual regional branches, however, this judgement can be seen to be nothing more than a polemical thrust.

For one thing, the *Briefadel* did not hold the most prominent positions within the organization. The DAG's symbolic leader, for example, was Field Marshal General Paul von Hindenburg, who became the society's honorary chairman after the First World War. Similarly, in 1920, the actual chairmanship of the organization—an office whose holder was dubbed the *Adelsmarschall* ('Marshal of the Nobility') in the jargon of the DAG—had

been granted to the fifty-four-year-old Friedrich von Berg-Markienen. Berg-Markienen was a retired military officer, a civil servant, and the owner of a knight's estate from the ancient nobility of the Uckermark region in north-eastern Germany. He had served as the last head of the Imperial Privy Civil Cabinet and, from 1921–26, worked as the plenipotentiary of the Prussian royal household. As a result of this employment history, he was a firm fixture among the Prussian nobility's inner circle. A representative of the generation born and educated before 1914, he had also spent the duration of the German Empire rising through the highest ranks of the Prussian state apparatus, climbing from posts in the 1st Guards Infantry Regiment up to the governorship of East Prussia itself.

It would also be inaccurate to suggest that the DAG was entirely dominated by 'impoverished' noblemen who had been forced to excel in middle-class careers. Indeed, a simple analysis of the different professions that were represented in the DAG during the mid-1920s demonstrates that, even after the war, the organization was largely made up of aristocrats who worked in the nobility's three main traditional fields. In fact, active landowners, tenant farmers, military officers, and civil servants represented approximately 40 per cent of the society's membership overall.[94] Moreover, the DAG's lists of members included a mix of the *Briefadel* and the *Uradel*, and unknown aristocrats featured alongside some of the old nobility's most prominent names. Crucially, half of all the major noble landowners from the northern state of Mecklenburg who held estates of over 100 hectares in size also numbered among the ranks of the DAG in the 1930s.[95] This statistic is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it reveals that Mecklenburg's significant aristocratic landowners were almost twice as likely join the organization than the average of the aristocracy as a whole. And secondly, it supports the thesis that the DAG was sustained both by the social fringes and the social core of the nobility in equal measure. Similar observations could also be made about the southern German aristocracy. In Bavaria, for example, the executive boards of the DAG's regional branch, its honorary council, its court of honour, its press office, and all its other significant offices right down to the district departments themselves were occupied by members of old, prestigious families from the Bavarian aristocracy who served under their 'patron', Crown Prince Rupprecht von Bayern.[96]

Of course, the DAG was not exclusively populated by individuals from the old nobility. Indeed, the society's Bavarian chapter also provides an example of how different sections of the aristocracy intermingled among

the organization's ranks. It is true, for instance, that the Bavarian branch of the society saw its (already high) number of unemployed members growing steadily after 1918 as a result of the influx of hard-up peers from Austria and northern Germany.[97] It is also accurate to say that the poorest sections of the Bavarian aristocracy attempted to use the DAG as a well-organized lobby group. Nevertheless, one only has to look at the Bavarian *grands seigneurs*' significant involvement in the society's regional branch to realize that this was clearly not the whole story. In fact, the considerable presence of Bavaria's old, landowning families in the local organization was echoed in the management levels of the regional branch. As a result, the institution was at no point controlled by the socially unstable minor nobility. In addition—and unlike the DAG's head office in Berlin and most of its chapters in the north of the country—the chairmanship of the society's Bavarian branch was occupied by no fewer than three mediatized princes in succession.

The third of these mediatized princes who took control of Bavaria's regional branch was Prince Eugen zu Öttingen-Wallerstein, a figure who ascended to the chairmanship in 1930 at the age of forty-five after the death of his older brother (also a prince) who had replaced their father (another prince) in turn.[98] Although Öttingen-Wallerstein was a man whose education and path through life was fairly typical of a southern German *grand seigneur*,[99] his considerable social standing singled him out as a preeminent member of his peer group from the start. Born in Prague in 1885, the prince had been a pupil at the prestigious Jesuit boarding school in Feldkirch before graduating in law after attending university in Bavaria and Bonn. He then completed a traineeship at the London branch of Deutsche Bank, spent time studying languages, and served as a diplomat in Saint Petersburg, Luxembourg, and Greece. In addition, he took a leading role in various major landowners' interest groups, married Princess Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, and, in 1923, was appointed the head administrator of Crown Prince Rupprecht's court and assets, a position he held until taking over his own hereditary estates in 1930. The prince was also an ardent traditionalist who was an active force in the Bavarian Home and King's League, served as a member of the Bavarian Crown Prince's senior political staff, and played a key role in planning the Bavarian monarchists' military coup in February 1933.

Although he became a member of the *Stahlhelm* paramilitary organization as late as September 1932 and there is some evidence that he held 'moderate' anti-Semitic views that were rather typical in Catholic, conservative circles at that time,[100] such problematic facts pale into insignificance

next to the clear distance he kept from the racial theories of the New Right and from the National Socialist movement itself.[101] Indeed, as a financially independent *grand seigneur* who was deeply invested in the traditional aristocratic way of life, Prince Öttingen-Wallerstein provides a prime example of the kind of nobleman that continued to set the ideological tone in the southern German aristocracy for many years after the First World War. Interestingly, the unique combination of wealth, social stability, and a peculiarly southern blend of patriotism, monarchism, and Catholicism that was maintained by such individuals often led them to occupy relatively moderate political positions among the nobility as a whole. This becomes particularly apparent if one compares the likes of Öttingen-Wallerstein with the radicalized, Protestant minor nobility that shaped the discourse in the northern reaches of the country and consistently clashed with their southern counterparts within the institutions of the DAG.[102]

The high nobility's involvement in the DAG was by no means limited to Bavaria, however. Indeed, certain regional branches received symbolic support from various princes and princesses (many of whom numbered among the society's honorary members) and symbolic visits from mediatized princes and representatives of the erstwhile ruling houses. The society's Westphalian chapter was also run by mediatized princes—first by Prince von Ratibor und Corvey and, later, by Prince zu Bentheim-Tecklenburg-Rheda[103]—and the chairmanship of the Schleswig-Holstein branch in the far north was assumed by Prince Waldemar von Preußen in 1925. In fact, by 1920, the DAG's almanac could already boast that thirty-three sons of the high nobility belonged to the organization overall. By 1931, this figure had swollen to ninety dukes, princes, and the eldest sons of princes who were directly involved in the DAG or affiliated with it as honorary members.[104]

In addition, various figures from the high nobility showed outward solidarity with the DAG by making appearances at the society's modest social soirées. This was even the case when the events themselves were not up to these individuals' usual lofty standards. For example, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg attended his local branch's evening dances despite the fact that the invitations the DAG sent out to people of his rank invariably drew attention to the limited resources at their disposal. One such invitation promised 'a very simple buffet, where buttered bread, salad and refreshments' could be 'purchased at the cheapest prices'. This rather meagre repast was offered in conjunction with an understated programme of entertainment of the aristocrats' own devising. 'Fräulein von Dewitz will play piano',

they promised, 'then Fräulein Schniewind will sing and a daughter from Frau von Malachowski's first marriage . . . will play the violin. Frau von Oertzen, née Hackwitz, will provide piano accompaniment. Finally, Frau von Bülow will accompany a waltz by Strauss on the flute to transition into the evening's dancing.'[105]

Despite being superficially impressive—and although it went some way to balancing out the fact that the DAG also served as the minor nobility's most important interest group—the *grands seigneurs*' engagement in the organization seldom exceeded the realms of the symbolic. Indeed, although they did actively involve themselves in the DAG's activities on occasion, these lofty figures considered lending a hand with the day-to-day running of the society to be beneath them. This was far less difficult a blow for the DAG to bear, however, than the economic reticence of the *grands seigneurs* as a group. In fact, there is no evidence at all that the high nobility ever gave the society any financial support that was proportional to their (often considerable) means. In 1926, for instance, the Bavarian regional branch was able to raise just 850 marks to support 450 needy peers. That same year, however, the German princes clubbed together 55,000 marks—an indecent sum considering the prevailing economic climate—for a lavish present for Wilhelm II.[106] A simple comparison between the two amounts shows what the high nobility could have helped the DAG attain had they been committed to providing it with serious financial assistance. An even more striking example of the almost entirely unrealized potential for intra-aristocratic aid is presented by the overall fortune of the Hohenzollern dynasty which, in 1941, was estimated to stand at around 84 million marks.[107]

Although the DAG was more successful in bringing different noble factions and groups together than any other aristocratic association, significant dividing lines still remained visible among the organization's ranks. One key obstacle that hampered the society's unifying efforts was the rift that existed between different generations. In the eyes of some critics, this was not a hurdle the DAG ever successfully managed to overcome. In 1933, for example, Bodo von der Marwitz, a landowner from the Mark Brandenburg region of northern Germany, made the enraged claim that the DAG was little more than 'a club scattered with downright conceited old fogeys . . . who arrange tedious balls once a year and only just about manage to look after their needy peers'.[108] Such venomous appraisals were inaccurate for a number of reasons. For one thing, the DAG's positions of leadership in Berlin and throughout its regional executive boards were not dominated by reactionary

'old fogeys' who were trying to preserve the status quo of a bygone age. Moreover, the DAG's activists were not particularly old, nor were they reticent to enter into new forms of collaboration with dynamic, right-wing, non-noble organizations. In fact, as the DAG became increasingly infused with *völkisch* tendencies and fostered cooperation between the generations, the sense of conceited fogeyism that had traditionally pervaded the association started melting away and was replaced by a real sense of ideological vitality that spread throughout the organization.

Although its head office and individual regional branches were dominated by men between forty and fifty-five years of age, the DAG enjoyed remarkable success in reaching out to younger members of the nobility. In 1932, for example, the society's nationwide youth wing included 10,000 'young aristocrats', around 7,000 of whom were full members of the DAG. The society also organized 'aristocratic youth gatherings' (*Jungadelstagungen*) in castles, at rural estates, and in large towns and cities across the country that brought young members from various regional branches of the DAG together. These events invariably consisted of a mix of political speeches and collective trips into the local area.[109] The success of such endeavours was only undermined by the relative failure on the part of the DAG's leaders to achieve their goal of 'establish[ing] closer ties with southern Germany in general and Old Bavaria [*Altbayern*] in particular'. This largely came to pass because Bavaria had been home to the Munich Noble Youth—its own movement for young aristocrats—ever since 1922 and because, unlike most of the society's other regional departments, the local branch of the DAG chose not to establish its own youth organization in the state.[110]

Part of the DAG's youth appeal stemmed from the contemporary, *völkisch* message they communicated to younger aristocrats in particular. The intensity with which they aimed this new, aggressive style at young nobles can be detected in the youth supplement the *Adelsblatt* produced from the late 1920s. The symbolism, language, and content seen throughout this supplement were all designed to speak to the stylistic preferences of the DAG's more youthful members. In contrast to the Christian-infused imagery of the *Adelsblatt*'s main publication, for instance, the youth supplement's front page was emblazoned with a portrait of a young, 'Nordic' man with a slender, delicate face and a warrior-like stare. Its pages explicitly gave the aristocratic youth the right to 'speak their minds without a care for once'. In early 1930, the supplement jovially gave its young readership permission to be like 'fermenting grape juice' (*gärender Most*) for the time being, and not to feel

pressure to be like 'aged wine' (*firner Wein*) right from the word go. The *Adelsblatt* supplement was also able to see a more positive side to the radicalism of their young audience than other aristocratic publications. In 1930, a Catholic article aimed at young aristocrats with an affinity for the National Socialist movement scolded them with the patriarchal reprimand not to 'regard their own claptrap' as real 'thoughts'.[111] In contrast, a text that appeared in the *Adelsblatt* supplement in the same year stated that the turbulent 'storm and stress [*Sturm und Drang*]' of youth had 'always been the precursor to valuable new [ideas]'.[112] Any doubt as to exactly what was meant by this was cleared up just two pages further on. Indeed, in a move that was unusual even for the *Adelsblatt*, the youth supplement followed this statement with a piece calling for its readers to support the National Socialist movement. The article in question was penned by Baron Kuno von Eltz-Rübenach, a young estate manager from the Rhenish aristocracy who also belonged to the Catholic nobility (albeit from the west rather than the south of the country). His appeal addressed 'the blue-blooded revolutionaries' who were prepared to come to the aid of their National Socialist 'comrades' on all 'fronts of the battle'. 'Who', the baron asked, 'will join the fight?'[113]

Purifying the Blood

In order to describe the mechanisms of political radicalization that existed among the German aristocracy, it is necessary to make a distinction between two phenomena that were present in both the DAG and other noble organizations. The first was the tendency to exaggerate patches of symbolic common ground that were shared between aristocrats to a degree that was inversely proportional to their real-world significance. In other words, the more tenuous a common noble attribute was, the more it was inflated. This tendency was evident among nearly all sections of the nobility and was visible throughout the DAG itself. The actual radicalization of the nobility stemmed, however, from a second phenomenon that existed as a subset of this broader trend. Indeed, the nobility's ideological trajectory was ultimately altered by a small but highly energetic minority that actively endeavoured to combine all of the largest German aristocratic organizations together into a single, radical, right-wing association. The development, key proponents, and opponents of this transformation will be discussed in more detail below. The practical implementation of *völkisch* racial theories within

the aristocracy will also be explored by examining the introduction of 'Aryan clauses' (*Arierparagraphen*) to a variety of aristocratic associations and investigating various plans that were afoot to set up a racially-motivated 'registry of the nobility' (*Adelsmatrikel*).

On 22 June 1920, the German Noble Society held its thirty-fourth annual aristocratic conference in Berlin. During the event, the assembled delegates were tasked with deciding whether or not to acquiesce with the wishes of some *völkisch*-leaning aristocrats and change the society's statutes to include an 'Aryan clause', a regulation designed to bar any individual with Jewish ancestry from the organization. As had been the case with the *völkisch* 'registry of the nobility' (*Adelsmatrikel*)—a project that had already been launched by this point in time—discussions degenerated into a heated debate that saw a number of members threatening to resign. During the talks, Friedrich von Berg, the chairman of the DAG, assumed that the measure would prevent only *future* marriages to Jews and would not 'offend peers who feel entirely German and have Jewish blood in their veins'.[114] He was, however, sorely mistaken in this belief.

The racial, anti-Semitic side of the debate was spearheaded by three individuals: Gerzlaff von Hertzberg, the executive chairman of the German-*Völkisch* Protection and Defence League (DVSTB); Baron Leopold von Vietinghoff, one of the leading members of the Pan-German League; and Jürgen von Ramin, a former cavalry captain who also presided over a *völkisch* organization himself. Vietinghoff placed his own stamp on the debate by espousing views about the inferiority of 'mixed' blood in all its forms and warning those present against the dangers of 'Slavic blood' in particular.[115] This added a nuance to the racial discussion that must have proved especially uncomfortable for aristocratic families from East Elbia, a handful of whom had a centuries-old history of intermarriage with a number of ethnic groups from the east.

During the crux of the debate, DAG chairman Friedrich von Berg's increasingly isolated pleas not to show 'cruelty' towards 'German-feeling', 'deserving' peers were rebuffed by the *völkisch* rebels whose statements had, by now, taken on an entirely new, aggressive tone. Writing in the *Adelsblatt*, for example, one Herr von Bodelschwingh dismissed the aristocracy's customary disregard for 'gutter anti-Semitism' (*Radauantisemitismus*) and demanded that a morally untethered 'hatred' of the Jews be unleashed to rescue the 'Germanic lion' that had been benumbed by 'oriental [i.e. Jewish] poison'.[116] Indeed, no surviving record from the DAG's conference includes

mention of any individual who voiced fundamental objections to the introduction of an Aryan clause. The only detectable bone of contention was how severe such a clause should be. In fact, the official minutes of the debate published in the *Adelsblatt* clearly document how attendees quibbled over such terms as *Volljuden* ('full Jews') and *Volljüdinnen* ('full Jewesses') and quarrelled about just how many generations the *Ahnenprobe*—the test that required one to prove one's aristocratic heritage—should delve back into the past.

The amendment the conference ultimately adopted into the DAG's statutes reads as follows: 'Anyone whose male ancestral line includes a non-Aryan born after the year 1800, or is more than a quarter non-Aryan, or who is married to someone to whom this applies cannot become a member of the DAG.'[117] A new item was also added to the society's charter, a document that outlined the organization's objectives. According to this altered text, the DAG would henceforth lead the 'fight against fogeyism, materialism, self-interest and the alien racial influence on the German national character [*Volkstum*]'.[118] A short while later, an insidious extension of the Aryanising amendment to the society's statutes made sure that any aristocrat who '*is or was* married to a person' who was not 'racially pure' would also be excluded from the organization in future.[119] This alteration apparently embraced a notion popularized by Artur Dinter's novel *The Sin against the Blood*, a trashy bestseller in which Nordic blood was portrayed as being irrevocably damaged by a single instance of sexual contact with a Jewish partner.[120] The DAG's leaders followed up this amendment by issuing a proud statement in April 1926. 'In view of the original meaning of the nobility, of the historical German nobleman [*Edeling*], of that which sprang from noble, i.e. pure, blood', they declared,

> the DAG has made it its special mission to attend to the racial question and heed the results of racial science. It is the first of all the *völkisch* organizations to require proof of certain standards of blood purity and to attempt to improve the ability to identify racial purity by enlightening and instructing its youth.[121]

Crucially, the amendment to the DAG's statutes did not contain any provision for retrospective powers. As a result, the organization still included aristocrats who, due to their lineage or marriage, did not comply with the new rules of racial purity. Nevertheless, the Aryan clause cannot simply be dismissed as a showy *völkisch* initiative whose bark was worse than its bite. Indeed, many of the racially 'impure' individuals who remained within the

DAG started being resolutely cut off by a number of their fellow members.[122] The fact that the nation's largest aristocratic association had suddenly declared a part of the nobility unequal to their peers also created an atmosphere of considerable tension and led to numerous aristocrats being subjected to discrimination.[123]

Although the more 'moderate' anti-Semitic views held by the high nobility and the Catholic aristocracy did not betray anything like the same tone or resolve as the opinions exhibited by the rest of their class, these groups certainly did not limit their prejudices to the realm of theoretical debate. As early as November 1921, the German Association of Princely Houses had already made the decision—expressed in §2 of a registry of the mediatized princes called the *Constitution of the Golden Book*—to exclude 'members of the Semitic and coloured [*farbigen*] races' in order to promote 'purity of blood'.[124] Similarly, the Munich Noble Youth—the Bavarian organization whose statutes called for members to prepare themselves mentally and physically for the 'battle for Germanness'—also added an Aryan clause to their constitution that barred entry to any aristocrats who were married to Jews.[125] In spite of such decisions, however, the old Bavarian nobility still engaged in their customary moral tightrope walk by accepting anti-Semitic codes in principle and rejecting their racist excesses in practice. In 1926, Baron Erwein von Aretin, a man who would later number among National Socialism's most steadfast opponents, expressed a wish to embark on a 'defensive crusade' against the distorted 'Jewish-Marxist' worldview. At the same time, however, he also explicitly warned against directing anti-Semitic 'hatred' towards one's fellow human beings.[126] Indeed, although all of the large Catholic aristocratic associations debated the introduction of Aryan clauses at length, the majority of them ultimately rejected the idea. This was true of the Association of Catholic Aristocrats, for instance, the most exclusive organization within the Bavarian nobility. Although they held heated internal discussions on the subject, the Association of German Catholic Aristocrats from Westphalia also dismissed the proposition. In fact, compared to the DAG, the Bavarian aristocratic associations—most of which were steered by rich landowners—kept themselves at a relatively healthy distance from organized anti-Semitism and, later on, from the National Socialist movement itself.[127]

The introduction of the Aryan clause was a symptom of how *völkisch* trends were managing to redefine the meaning of the word 'nobility'. An even more striking example of this transformation can be seen, however, in

the project to establish the *Adelsmatrikel*, an overarching noble registry that set out to include every single racially eligible member of the German aristocracy in its pages. This undertaking was made necessary by two legal developments that emerged in the early days of the Weimar Republic and threatened to strip the aristocracy of the official foundations of their rank. The first of these was Article 109 of the Weimar Constitution, a piece of legislation that abolished the aristocracy and decreed that their titles would henceforth become mere components of their family names. The second development arose when the Prussian Heraldry Office was broken up on 31 March 1920. This event permanently deprived the nobility of their most important defence against the emergence of a phoney aristocracy that could falsely lay claim to noble names and titles.[128] In fact, no longer hindered by any state institution, the number of poverty-stricken aristocrats who offered their titles for sale on the public market now rose considerably. One advertisement stated: 'High noble—princely—married couple seeks to adopt prosperous young man. Compensation 200,000 Marks.' Another declared: 'Stony broke devil, aristocrat, seeks filthy rich angel for marriage.' Aristocratic organizations noticed adverts of this kind with concern. The DAG and various family associations even ostracized their creators.[129]

Ever since 1919, the noble organizations' answer to this kind of threat had included various attempts to set up a registry of the nobility that would shield them from the 'inauthentic dynasties' that could now be freely founded by 'fortune-hunters, marriage swindlers, con artists and whores'.[130] One such attempt took the form of the *völkisch*-leaning *Adelsmatrikel*—an initiative that emerged among members of the Pomeranian aristocracy and rapidly established a permanent following among the nobility from East Elbia. This scheme was launched in January 1920, when some aristocrats from Pomerania issued an appeal for the 'nobility to be cleansed of Jewish blood up to a clear-cut threshold', a feat that was, they claimed, '*still possible*'. The initial signatories of this declaration included a figure named Prince Putbus and a range of landowners and military officers from ancient Pomeranian aristocratic clans. According to this group, 'the nobility, including many highly respected, historically prestigious dynasties' had 'already' been 'severely Judaized'. As a result, it would be necessary to create a new *Adelsmatrikel* based on requirements of 'strict racial purity'. Such a noble registry would, they stated, only accept aristocrats who had no more than '1/8 Jewish blood' flowing through their veins.[131]

Ernst von Hertzberg-Lottin and his sons Gertzlaff and Rüdiger were largely responsible for overseeing the practical implementation of this racist scheme. All three were members of both the old agricultural ruling elite and the loftiest leadership ranks of various extreme-right, anti-Semitic organizations in Pomerania.[132] Interestingly, neither the father nor his sons numbered among the ranks of the livid young men who had been radicalized by their experience of the revolution and the war. In 1918, for instance, Ernst von Hertzberg-Lottin—a landowner, a retired regional administrator (*Landschaftsdirektor*), and an erstwhile member of the Prussian House of Lords—was seventy-six years old. His sons, for their part, were thirty-eight and forty-one years of age. Ernst was also a close confidant of Heinrich Claß—one of the main leaders of the extreme, anti-Semitic Right before and after the First World War—and an active member of various agricultural associations and the Pan-German League. As a result, he had been extremely familiar with the ideologies and methods of New Right politics since long before 1914. After the war, his sons also took up leading roles in a variety of radical, right-wing organizations. As was the case with their father, however, their own familiarity with the racism of the extreme Right was more the result of their family's ideological predisposition than any sense of radicalization brought about by the collapse of 1918.[133]

Another individual was Baron Albrecht von Houwald, one of the leading champions of the *völkisch* redefinition of the nobility who learnt about the idea via the DVSTB. By his own admission, Houwald—a chief legal counsel who stepped down from public service seemingly of his own volition in 1918—had already been a member of the DVSTB and a range of other anti-Semitic organizations before he accommodated thirty men from an SA unit at his house in the autumn of 1931 and was prompted by the experience to join the NSDAP.[134]

In October 1920, Houwald presented an urgent case in favour of the *völkisch* version of the *Adelsmatrikel* to the leaders of the DAG. Arguing that even someone who was 'one thirty-second' Jewish could be contaminated with serious 'racial defects', the fifty-four-year-old former civil servant advocated an 'unrestricted blood declaration [*Blutsbekenntnis*]' that would be required of all members of the aristocracy. This was necessary, he claimed, because even a small 'mix of blood with the baser instincts of alien, inferior races' would compromise the nobility's status as the 'innate Führers of the masses of their people'. The baron spoke regretfully of the resultant 'cruelties' that would have to be inflicted even on noble 'crossbreeds' whose forebears

had 'committed the sin against [their] blood'. Houwald's proposal met a mixed reception. According to statements he made at a later date, the *völkisch* version of the *Adelsmatrikel* found particular support among the Pomeranian and the Baltic aristocracy. In contrast, however, the high nobility and 'the rich, newly minted nobles who, due to blood or other ties, are close to the Jewry' proved to be 'almost entirely dismissive' of the idea.[135]

Ultimately, the decision about the type of *Adelsmatrikel* the aristocracy would impose upon themselves fell to 'over 300 nobles from all parts of Germany' who travelled to Berlin to attend a fateful meeting that was held on 1 December 1920. After a heated debate, the *völkisch* version proposed by the Pan-German Baron Leopold von Vietinghoff was accepted with a majority of 130 votes to sixty-eight. The registry the nobility subsequently established was christened with 'the beautiful name "Eisernes Buch deutschen Adels Deutscher Art" [Iron Book of German Aristocracy of German Origin]', which was shortened to the 'contemporary abbreviation' EDDA. To be included in the EDDA, an aristocrat had to present a 'written statement that the applicant . . . has, to the best of their knowledge and belief, no or, at most, one Semite or coloured individual [*Farbigen*] among their or their spouse's direct line of 32 paternal or maternal ancestors [i.e. a dynasty reaching five generations into the past].'[136] The DAG's leaders decided to provide 'help' to any unsuccessful applicants by pointing out that advisory facilities had been set up to give guidance on 'blood decontamination'. These cynical-sounding—but entirely earnest—institutions helped aristocrats ascertain whether or not they had a hope of improving their bloodline by selecting suitable mates, thus allowing future generations to retake their place among the 'pure' ranks of their peers. Alternatively, if it seemed sensible, the advisors would also recommend abstinence as a method of allowing 'tainted' branches of one's family to 'die off'.[137] This 'advice' was broadly based on a contemporary strand of pseudo-science that proclaimed the possibility of breeding out 'harmful' blood from one's lineage.

In 1912, a *völkisch* publication by the name of the *Semi-Gotha* had accused the aristocracy of having been 'Judaized' to a considerable extent. At the time, members of the nobility had expended a great deal of effort refuting the shoddily compiled collection of denunciations it contained.[138] Only a decade passed, however, before the aristocracy inflicted a much more finely crafted version of the *Semi-Gotha* on themselves in the guise of the EDDA registry, a document under aristocratic control that modified—or, to be precise, bankrupted—the definition of the term 'nobility' itself. Although

some older aristocrats objected that the EDDA's policy of excluding Jews who had been ennobled by the king was an affront to the legitimacy and the will of the monarch, Houwald and his *völkisch* companions countered with the observation that neither the Kaiser nor the Crown Prince had voiced any concerns about the *völkisch* noble register themselves.[139]

Creating genealogical tables was a rather demanding feat of printing technology, so the EDDA's first volume did not see publication until the autumn of 1925. When the document finally appeared, however, it opened with the family tree of no less prestigious a figure than Wilhelm II, the exiled Kaiser himself. This use of the Kaiser as the figurehead of the racist registry is rather interesting. Indeed, it can be interpreted as a direct attempt to counter the popular *völkisch* allegation that the Hohenzollern dynasty had entered into unions with Jews. During the era of the German Empire and immediately after the German Revolution, the high nobility and the Kaiser had both been targeted by two anti-Semitic publications, the aforementioned *Semi-Gotha* and the *Semi-Imperator*.[140] The latter, which was released by a right-wing publisher in Munich in 1919, represented the pinnacle of the *völkisch*, journalistic attacks that were frequently aimed at the high nobility's ranks. Even the work's title implied that the high nobility had a close relationship with 'Semitic peoples'—a vague term that, for all intents and purposes, really meant 'the Jews'. Ultimately, the EDDA was launched six years later as an attempt by a number of diligent, racist researchers to disprove such assertions for good. As far as they were concerned, shielding the Kaiser against these allegations would help to protect the reputation of the nobility as a whole. In addition to Wilhelm II's family tree—an entry designed to demolish the *völkisch* gossip mill by dint of genealogical force—the first edition of the EDDA also included the genetic records of 340 other 'probands' (individuals who served as springboards for investigating the history of a particular lineage) in an attempt to further salvage the aristocracy's racial good name.

While it is unlikely that the German royal household actually took part in the production of the anti-Semitic EDDA, there is also no known evidence that they protested against its use of their family tree. Indeed, by the time the first volume of the registry was published, Wilhelm II had developed radical anti-Semitic convictions that can be seen in a number of letters he wrote to his confidants. In 1926, for example, the exiled monarch included his own personal version of a common anti-Semitic diatribe in a letter he sent to Georg Sylvester Viereck, an American writer who would

later become an infamous supporter of Adolf Hitler. According to the Kaiser, the Jews had variously crucified the Messiah, triggered an international revolution, murdered a number of state leaders and kings, and led Europe into war. Originally from Africa, they also apparently belonged to what he termed the 'dark races' and were, as such, consumed by an intense hatred of the 'Aryan race' in general and the Germans in particular. One year after dispatching this missive, the fallen king expressed his vicious, increasingly radicalized fantasies in an even more sinister metaphor that encapsulated his vision for the future. 'Press, Jews & Mosquitoes . . . are a nuisance that humanity must get rid of in some way or another', he wrote in English: 'I believe the best would be gas!'[141]

The EDDA's radical, *völkisch* plan to defend the aristocracy's 'honour' by transforming the meaning of the term 'nobility' was explicitly outlined in the preface to the publication's very first volume. 'The traditional concept of the term "nobility" ', it explained—an idea that was 'incompatible with true *völkisch* beliefs'—had been 'cast off' for 'entries in the EDDA', as 'German middle-class and peasant blood' was 'entirely equal to that of the nobility.' As a result, it declared, the practice of 'isolating the nobility on the basis of class' had been 'abandoned.'[142] In 1929, guidelines published in the EDDA's second volume still admitted entries from probands whose lineage of five generations of forebears contained just one 'alien ancestor'. This was apparently allowed because it was considered 'race-biologically harmless in accordance with Mendel's law (1:63)'.[143]

By the time the third volume of the EDDA was published in 1936, Houwald—who had meanwhile been promoted to the Nazi Party's Office of Racial Policy—was able to boast that 6,000 probands had applied for the registry and 725 family trees had already been printed.[144] The research involved in compiling lineages of five generations of forebears was time-consuming and expensive, however, and the project often ran into serious economic difficulties. When the entirety of the funds set aside for the EDDA were lost as a result of inflation, for example, Houwald was forced to drum up support for the project with tireless the rallying cry '*Ahnenforschung macht frei!*' ('Genealogy sets you free!').[145] Proving the 'purity' of the nobility's blood also turned out to be trickier than anticipated. Indeed, many families found it difficult to trace their lineage back as far as one might expect. According to Walter von Bogen, 'barely 50% of the aristocracy [were able to] verify a line of five generations of their ancestors'.[146] In spite of these difficulties and despite the severely reduced 'leisure and time' the nobility

had for 'such purely cerebral pastimes as genealogy' due to the 'grave war of destiny that Greater Germany [had been engaged in] since 1939', the fourth volume of the EDDA was released in 1942. At the same time, Houwald also announced a project to research the blood purity of nobles who had fallen on the battlefields of the First World War.[147]

Happily for all those involved, the results of the EDDA's laborious genealogical legwork rebuffed the *völkisch* allegation that the German aristocracy had been 'Judaized' to a considerable extent. In 1938, for example, Walter von Bogen assessed the EDDA's many years of research and surmised that, even 'by a liberal estimate,... 3 per cent of the nobility have been Judaized and around 2 per cent of its members should be excluded in accordance with the new regulations.'[148] Admittedly, this was only based on a line of ancestors that reached back to the year 1800. Indeed, as both Houwald and Bogen had previously stated, the 'lamentable alliance with alien blood' could be seen 'mostly in dynasties detached from the native soil' and generally had its origins in the late 1700s.[149]

It is difficult to determine just how many aristocrats actively—or, at the very least, passively—supported the distorted *völkisch* definition of the term 'nobility' that has been sketched out above. What is clear, however, is that such developments did not go entirely unopposed. In fact, this *völkisch* sea change was met with a similar degree of opposition as the transformation of the DAG into a pressure group had been.[150] It is also hard to ascertain just how successful the EDDA project was. By some measures, its achievements were rather limited. In September 1924, for example, the organization was forced to vacate its main office in Berlin's grand Bellevue Palace and relocate to Baron von Houwald's infinitely more modest private residence in Potsdam.[151] To make matters worse, after the second volume of the EDDA was released, Houwald evidently had to edit the publication more or less single-handed.[152] Of course, it is hardly feasible to judge the degree of general approval the 'racial' registry found among the nobility from the size of its editorial staff alone. Indeed, the profound changes to noble terminology that underpinned the EDDA project found support from all sections of the aristocracy, and the publication undoubtedly triggered an ideological momentum that no aristocrat could possibly ignore.

As far as the aristocratic associations were concerned, the greatest amount of resistance to these developments came from the Catholic nobility, who tended to avoid or even stand up to the prevailing rampage of *völkisch* thought. This was particularly true of such southern Catholic organizations

as the Association of Catholic Aristocrats and the executive board of the DAG's Bavarian branch. Generally speaking, these groups' opposition to the *völkisch* worldview was based on their religious connections, their anti-Prussian resentments, and their strong sense of loyalty to the Bavarian royal family. Interestingly, aristocrats from Bavaria and south-western Germany also rejected the aggressive *völkisch* attitude more emphatically than the members of the Association of German Catholic Aristocrats from the north-western state of Westphalia.

This southern, Catholic opposition was not completely devoid of ambivalence and tactical compromise, however. For instance, although the executive board of the DAG's Bavarian chapter consistently challenged plans to require all of its members to register for the EDDA,[153] their regional chairman Prince von Öttingen-Spielberg issued a statement in early 1932 calling for local district departments to continue supporting the registry's 'indispensable research' that knew 'the answer' to 'the widest variety of questions about race and biological conditions,... local history, national history, cultural history, frequently even world history'.[154] A comparably ambiguous response can be seen in the example of Count Karl August von Drechsel, a member of the Bavarian DAG's executive board who registered for the EDDA in the summer of 1932, but claimed to a friend that it was 'purely genealogical, and not *völkisch*, considerations' that led to his decision to apply.[155] Similarly, in September 1933, Baron Karl von Aretin, one of the Nazis' most vociferous opponents on the DAG's Bavarian executive board, relayed the 'highly gratifying message' to Baron Albrecht von Houwald that he would like to be included in his publication. Houwald, the editor and spearhead of the *völkisch* EDDA project, immediately replied that he had received this news with 'joyous satisfaction'—a statement that betrays the sense of triumph he felt upon learning that the opinions he had been championing for more than a decade had now also prevailed in the Catholic south. 'The fact that the southern German aristocracy have been so dismissive on the whole has always caused me pain', he wrote, 'and the explanation once given to me by Prince von der Leyen that "the Eichthal [an ennobled Jewish dynasty that had married into the Bavarian aristocracy] meddle in everything, even in Bavaria" has thankfully not held entirely true.'[156]

Registering for the EDDA was not the only compromise that Aretin—a man who was generally numbered among the conservative opponents of the aristocracy's racist trend—made with the anti-Semitic members of the nobility in Berlin. Indeed, in 1934, he sent one of his peers a list of forty

Franconian and Bavarian families whom he suspected of 'having been infected with non-Aryan blood'.[157] This is rather astonishing, as sources demonstrate that the baron possessed a striking capacity for political perspicacity and repeatedly uttered humorous remarks that made his distance from the *völkisch* ideology quite clear. Even though Aretin's attitude was typically equivocal—in correspondence with his confidants, for instance, he gave Houwald the exquisitely apt moniker 'the racial buffoon' (*der Rassenhanswurst*)[158]—his decision to sign up for the EDDA in the autumn of 1933 and the amicable letters he exchanged with the DAG's leaders show how willing and able the Bavarian nobility were to arrive at an understanding with the new *völkisch* rules of the game.

Overall, the consequences of the *völkisch* distortion of the term 'nobility' can best be assessed by examining the events of 1933. In September of that fateful year, the DAG's leaders hurriedly decided to adopt a pre-emptive position of obedience to the Nazi regime by extending the scope of their Aryan clause. Enacted following a decision by the DAG's executive board, this amendment henceforth required aristocrats to provide proof of ancestry that went right back to the year 1750. This measure—which also applied to individuals who were 'married' and, crucially, 'had been married'—brought the DAG in line with the standards of racial purity demanded of the SS.[159] It also unmistakably drew the society closer to the more paranoid strains of the theory and practice of National Socialist racial politics.[160]

At the same time, the amendment also unleashed conflicts within the DAG that led entire family associations to leave the society and even provoked the ire of Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen and President Hindenburg—a figure who had been a member of the DAG since 1903 and served as its honorary chairman since 1920. Generally speaking, conservative opponents of the new Aryan clause's *völkisch* practice of 'blood screening' were motivated by feelings of solidarity with their peers and deserving military officers who had been ousted from the society. They were also moved by their adherence to what was referred to as the 'true aristocratic sentiment', an ethos of honour and propriety that was largely based on a blend of Christian and monarchist ideals. This latter attitude was invoked by Hindenburg when he urged DAG chairman Prince von Bentheim to allow all aristocrats who had previously been dubbed worthy by the 'ruling princes' (*Landesherren*) to continue to be accepted among the organization's ranks. Despite having expressed his distaste for 'impure' marriages on numerous occasions in the past, Hindenburg was so appalled by the exclusion of

aristocratic military officers from the DAG that he even went so far as to announce his resignation as the honorary chairman of the society. These bold efforts to moderate the DAG's trajectory were unable to make an impact within the organization, however. Indeed, Bentheim brusquely rebuffed Hindenburg's demands and threatened to 'deal with' the enemies within the DAG's ranks by dissolving the society and establishing a new, Hitler-approved organization in its place. Although it could well have led to the dissolution of the DAG, this crises eventually petered out when Hindenburg died in 1934.[161] For a number of months, however, it had caused a climate of denunciation and suspicion to reign over both the DAG and the aristocratic family associations. It had also unleashed a poisonous atmosphere of disunity and intra-aristocratic conflict that had previously been kept in check but now began to spread with increasing speed.

Many aristocrats were reluctant to undertake the arduous research that was required to produce an Aryan certificate for their forebears. To make matters worse, large numbers of those who did make the effort enjoyed only limited success. Contemporary sources also demonstrate that many people regarded the new genetic scrutiny as an affront, an inconvenient imposition, or even a form of intra-aristocratic witch hunt.[162] For example, the second chairman of the DAG's Bavarian branch—a figure who was unsure whether his family tree would be able to yield a flawless lineage going back five generations—angrily declared that the outbreak of *völkisch* snooping would demote the heads of local parishes from pastoral workers to mere genealogical researchers who spent their days hunting for marriage records and birth certificates in their archives. Members of families who were unable to dismiss suspicions of 'impure' blood as mere genealogical errors also saw their career prospects decline considerably after the amended Aryan clause came into effect.[163] Even prestigious clans were not immune to such dangers. Indeed, in 1933, the Bismarck family were forced to commission an expensive report to counter damaging accusations that they had Jewish blood flowing through their veins.[164]

In 1935, one Count Schenk von Stauffenberg-Greifenstein sent a guarded question to Prince Bentheim asking whether it would be possible to make a distinction between immediate and distant 'Jewish bloodlines' in one's family tree. The prince's response rejected this idea in a friendly but firm tone. The strict measures that had been put in place were absolutely necessary, he claimed, in order to establish a pure-blooded German nobility that could one day be placed at the disposal of a Führer.[165] A short while later,

the DAG's Bavarian branch became irritated when Walter von Bogen suggested that a noblewoman who had been cast out of the society because of her non-church marriage could surreptitiously be allowed back into the organization.[166] These examples of growing inflexibility demonstrate just how far the DAG's radical, right-wing leaders had shifted away from conservative thought by the mid-1930s. By this point, the *völkisch* attacks on the nobility that had originally been mounted in such publications as the *Semi-Gotha* and the *Semi-Imperator* had increasingly become attacks that aristocrats waged against their fellow peers. Unfortunately for them, most noble observers were remarkably slow to recognize that this change had occurred. Indeed, when the (relatively moderate) Bavarian Prince zu Löwenstein politely asked the DAG's *Adelsmarschall* if the society wanted to establish its own, official version of the *Semi-Gotha* in November 1933, the opportune moment for staging any meaningful protest had long since elapsed.

A number of individual cases clearly demonstrate that the imposition of intra-aristocratic racial politics was frequently met with significant reluctance and jeopardized the unity of the nobility as a whole. For instance, the ostracism and expulsion of aristocrats triggered by the Aryan clause's new policy of delving back to 1750 unleashed a wave of protests that wracked the DAG. Indeed, the society's southern German chapters and its Catholic-dominated branch in the north-eastern province of Silesia[167] expressed 'very serious concerns' about the demotion of 'valuable members' to mere 'second-class aristocrats'. In order to counter these concerns, the racist ideologues within the organization pointed out that only a very small fraction of members would actually be impacted by the anti-Semitic process of forging a new, 'racially pure' aristocracy. For example, the DAG's managing director Walter von Bogen stated that, although the vital expulsions would result in certain unavoidable 'cruelties', they would ultimately not affect more than an estimated 1.5 per cent of the DAG's membership overall.

Several regional branches, various family associations, and a number of individual aristocrats were scandalized by the DAG's infringement of 'chivalric principles' and nettled by reports that nobles loyal to the Nazis had received preferential treatment and enormous bribes.[168] As a result, many railed against the new regulations, even if they had not felt the pinch of the changes themselves. Prince Bentheim and Walter von Bogen fought back, however, claiming that the DAG's leaders would 'not be led astray' by the protests and a handful of regrettable, isolated incidents. 'If civil servants are required to have 4 Aryan grandparents', they declared, and 'if the new

legislation about entailed estates [*Erbhöfe*] requires one to have Aryan ancestors dating back to 1800, then one can and must subject an aristocrat to considerably higher standards.' While living in a *völkisch* state, they continued, the nobility had to 'rise above the requirements demanded of a ticket collector'. The two men also asserted that future 'science' would be tasked with finding out 'how many generations' it would take to 'breed out Jewish blood' and allow the families of contaminated peers to be considered 'pure-blooded' once more.[169]

Carried out by noble and non-noble informers alike, the actual practice of 'racial snooping' (*Rassenschnüffelei*)[170]—the almost forensic investigation into the bloodlines of aristocratic families—also resulted in conflicts that erupted along old regional fault lines and within family associations themselves. In the autumn of 1933, for example, the issue of extending the *Ahnenprobe* back to 1750 caused a scandal in the association of the von der Marwitz family, a prestigious aristocratic clan from Prussia. The problems started when the family association's chairman and its treasurer were both asked to leave the DAG by the society's leaders because they could not comply with the heightened racial criteria that had been imposed. This prompted one of their relatives, Heinrich von der Marwitz, to protest against the new definition of 'nobility' that such a decision implied. It was outrageous, Heinrich claimed, that the DAG could expel a deserving, well-respected aristocrat and effectively declare him unfit for the nobility just 'because he has the misfortune that one of his or his wife's ancestors had entered into marriage with a Jewess'. 'Where', Heinrich continued, did this leave 'the principles of chivalry, Christianity and justice? It is impossible for the family associations to tolerate.'[171] The DAG's leaders vehemently rejected any such attempts to defend the eligibility of one's relatives, however. The aristocracy must, they maintained, be able to outdo whatever Aryan purity rules the SA and the SS demanded of their own followers.[172]

The figure of Bodo von der Marwitz, a landowner from the Mark Brandenburg region, provides a similar example of resistance to the new racial criteria that emerged within the same family. Although he had donated significant sums to *völkisch* canvassers as a young man after the First World War—a conflict that had claimed the lives of both of his brothers—Marwitz refused the DAG's request to provide proof of his Aryan heritage in February 1935. Despite 'naturally' possessing 'flawless' evidence of his pure-blood status that went back 'significantly further than required by the DAG', he maintained that '*the manner*' in which the society had acted towards 'highly

regarded members of [his] family association' had been 'unseemly'. Here as elsewhere, Marwitz clung fast to his usual esteem for older traditions of what it meant to be an aristocrat. In fact, he professed to being 'convinced' that there were a number of entirely different, equally valid ways of 'making sure [one's] old name keeps its good reputation'.[173] At first glance, it could seem as though Marwitz's response to the DAG's demands was merely born of a conservative's defensive resistance to change. Indeed, he harboured no private sympathies for the National Socialist movement, for instance, and both he and his close family relatives kept themselves at arm's length from the NSDAP even as the years went on.[174] Despite this distance and the fact that the name Marwitz never seems to have been entered into the membership lists of the NSDAP, however, Bodo von der Marwitz did entertain some rather ambivalent opinions. In 1932, for example, he expressed his belief in the necessity of forging a coalition between conservative and National Socialist forces.[175] Moreover, one meeting with Houwald was all it took to convince him that the baron's interpretation of Hitler's demands for 'impure' individuals to be excluded from the nobility's ranks was eminently justified. After their tête-à-tête, Marwitz even volunteered a proposal that simultaneously attempted to promote and attenuate the EDDA project by suggesting that aristocrats who were able to verify their 'pure ancestry (be it noble or middle-class)' back to 1750 should be identified with a 'special emblem' on their coat of arms.[176]

Over time, the EDDA project's racist, anti-Semitic transformation of the term 'nobility' contributed to the increasing radicalization of the minor nobility. This was not the only factor that helped cast considerable swathes of the minor nobility adrift from the shores of aristocratic tradition, however. Indeed, such phenomena as their private rejection of the monarch, their idiosyncratic blend of Führer ideologies, and the new coalitions they sought to form with the lower middle class also played a part in altering the political trajectory of this particular aristocratic group. The shift that occurred among the minor nobility ultimately had a significant impact on the ideological landscape of the aristocracy as a whole. As a result of their radicalization, for instance, the DAG distanced itself from all strands of the restrained, governmental conservatism that had existed in the German National People's Party (DNVP) before 1928 and that lived on in the guise of the doomed Conservative People's Party (KVP) in 1930. Moreover, it also prompted the DAG's leaders to resolutely guide the organization on a path of severe anti-republicanism that departed from all moderate forms of

conservative thought.[177] In 1930/31, this ideological stance led them to join the so-called 'Harzburg Front'—an organization that had created an unstable alliance between National Socialist and conservative forces—and brought them close to the National Socialists, a group they finally aligned themselves with in the summer of 1932.[178]

In 1932, the mismatch that existed in the DAG between the conservative stasis of the south German Catholics and the radical, right-wing agitation of the Prussian Protestants resulted in an odd alliance that saw the Catholic aristocracy of Old Bavaria leaping to the defence of two noblemen who were quintessential examples of the old Protestant nobility from Prussia. This occurred when Friedrich von Berg-Markienen and Reich President Paul von Hindenburg—the DAG's *Adelsmarschall* and its honorary chairman, respectively—were attacked by a radical, right-wing aristocratic faction among the society's ranks. Berg-Markienen, a sixty-six-year-old confidant of the Kaiser, had affronted younger, pro-Nazi members of the DAG by issuing numerous appeals in support of his friend and peer Hindenburg during the electoral campaign of 1932. As a result of the anger that was aimed in his direction, he stepped down as chairman of the DAG in June 1932, thus vacating a position in which he had spent twelve years working to conciliate the reactionary and the *völkisch*, radical, right-wing strands of his organization.[179]

The group of National Socialist supporters that ousted Berg-Markienen selected the much younger Prince Adolf zu Bentheim-Tecklenburg-Rheda—a major landowner, castle owner, and a wealthy,[180] radical, right-wing mediatized prince from Westphalia—to lead the DAG in his place. After being sounded out by the leaders of the DAG's regional branch in Berlin, the prince, who had previously served as the chairman of the society's Westphalian chapter, was unanimously voted the new *Adelsmarschall* at the organization's annual conference in Münster in June 1932.[181] In the run-up to his election, the forty-three-year-old 'monarch' had been backed by a number of increasingly radical, right-wing Westphalian peers from his princely territory (a group centred around the Lüninck brothers) and by Walter von Bogen, the managing director of the DAG. Bentheim—the head of an old princely family and an adherent of the Protestant Calvinist confession—was Bogen's dream candidate for two reasons. Firstly, he held right-wing, radical opinions and, secondly, he had experience serving as the representative of a largely Catholic regional branch. These twin factors would, Bogen hoped, counter southern German moderates while building bridges with the southern aristocracy as a whole. After some initial hesitation,

Prince Öttingen, the head of the DAG's most significant local chapter in the south of the country, also declared his support for Bentheim in turn.[182] The trust he placed in the prince may well have been misguided, however. Indeed, Bentheim, who signed his letters with the Nazi salute *Sieg Heil und Front Heil* in April 1932, summarily dismissed the executive boards of the DAG's southern German branches—bodies that had spoken out against the society's apparently more competent leadership in Berlin—as mere 'bovine idiots'. Furthermore, the prince regarded the widespread southern opinion that the DAG should act as the nobility's apolitical representative to be nothing more than 'moronic drivel'. Bentheim's appointment marked a watershed in the DAG's rapprochement with the National Socialist movement. A few months later, the Westphalian aristocrat and estate owner Franz von Papen accepted the Vice-Chancellorship in Hitler's cabinet in the belief that he could 'restrain' the National Socialists himself. He was not alone in this misguided conviction. Indeed, growing numbers of aristocrats and many members of the DAG's executive board entertained a similar illusion.[183] Moreover, the departure of Friedrich von Berg-Markienen—a man who had long steered a course midway between conservative and fascist positions—marked a significant step towards the radicalization of the largest aristocratic association, an organization whose leadership would henceforth strive openly to forge an alliance with the NSDAP.

Reorganizing Power

The DAG provides historians with an excellent opportunity to reconstruct intra-aristocratic discussions and chart the downfall and subsequent radicalization of the minor nobility that took place after the First World War. Nevertheless, other organizations were of far greater political significance for the creation of a modern *Führertum* in the early twentieth century. Arguably the most important of these establishments was the German Gentlemen's Club (DHK) and its extended network of similar societies that were incorporated into the so-called 'Ring Movement'.[184] In fact, the Ring Movement's efforts to establish a *Führersammlung*—a gathering of influential members of the aristocracy and the middle class who could dominate the future of the nation—represented the most significant political attempt to choke out democracy and replace it with new forms of coalition between aristocrats and the middle class.

As a number of detailed investigations have shown, between 30 and 60 per cent of the members of the individual societies within the Ring Movement were aristocrats. Although the overall size of these remarkable percentages is well documented, no study has ever examined the specific types of aristocrats who joined this collection of clubs. Broadly speaking, however, it is possible to say that the noble adherents of the Ring Movement generally held precisely the kind of elite positions that the lion's share of the DAG's (largely minor noble) members could only dream of. This one of the key reasons why the loftier notions of leadership (*Führung*) that were forged within the Ring Movement tended to differ from the racial chatter evident among the ranks of the DAG.

Two key differences immediately stand out between the DHK and the DAG. The first major distinction can be seen in the ages of the two organizations. The roots of the more venerable DAG stretched right back to the early days of the German Empire. In contrast, the origins of the DHK—or, to be more precise, the June Club, its predecessor—dated back to the First World War. Despite being one of the most significant right-wing intellectual organizations in the immediate post-war period, the June Club folded in late 1924, at which point the DHK was founded in its stead.[185] The June Club's leading light was the author Arthur Moeller van den Bruck. Even before the publication of his magnum opus *The Third Reich* in 1923,[186] Moeller van den Bruck had already become one of the most important masterminds of the New Right movement, a group that explicitly broke away from the style and substance of pre-war conservatism. By the time he committed suicide in May 1925, two of the club's members—Baron Heinrich von Gleichen and Walter Schotte—had already set about establishing the DHK. Creating this new organization was far from a frictionless process and caused some cracks to emerge between the June Club's disparate membership that met in the intellectually vibrant west of Berlin. Indeed, from the very beginning, open conflict broke out between the DHK's founders and the faction surrounding the right-wing intellectuals Eduard Stadtler and Martin Spahn—a circle that was sympathetic to the mighty media tycoon Alfred Hugenberg and believed in whipping up the masses in society. In spite of all this, however, the DHK did manage to prevail and adopted a considerable number of the members, ideas, and organizational structures from its predecessor.[187]

The second key difference between the German Noble Society and the German Gentlemen's Club was that the DHK—unlike the DAG—was

neither exclusively noble nor open to all members of the aristocratic 'masses'. In fact, the DHK was a carefully controlled blend of handpicked individuals who were selected from subsets of the nobility and the middle class. In essence, the club represented an attempt to gather together vast reserves of economic, social, and cultural capital in the guise of a delicately cultivated, invitation-only group of carefully chosen 'gentlemen' who represented political power from almost all of the significant sectors of German society.

This latter difference can be detected in the divergent visions of ideal Führers that both groups espoused. For their part, the DAG envisioned a 'pure-blooded', aristocratic leader who would be connected to the German people and the German soil in equal measure and would 'seize the banner of the Führer' before getting to work out *among* the masses. In contrast, the Ring Movement's explicit aim was—and remained—to establish a new Führer elite that would be exclusively composed of specially selected aristocratic and middle-class 'gentlemen'. These figures would be personally acquainted with one another, would act independently of parliament, and would rise 'above' individual interests, trade unions, associations, political parties, and—most importantly—'the masses'.[188] This ideal was reflected in the DHK's constitution, its manifestos, and its internal debates, all of which consistently stated that the organization existed to establish an association of 'leading personalities from a range of professions'[189]—or, as club member Oswald Spengler put it in 1926, a 'Führersammlung'.[190] In 1924, for example, the club's guidelines announced the organization's intent to assemble a group of 'Christian, nationalist men . . . who are personally independent and have a leading or decisive influence at the top level of German society'. Adolf von Batocki, a retired East Prussian governor who served as a member of the DHK's honorary committee, stated even more clearly that 'cultivating personalities into Führers'—a process later known to club insiders as the 'selection of leaders' (*Führerauslese*)—was one of the Herrenklub's central aims.[191] These aspirations were not destined to remain in vain. Indeed, the DHK arguably represents the most successful attempt to establish a new social 'Führer elite' in Germany after the First World War.[192] Even an outsider like Baron Kurt von Reibnitz, a former social democratic minister who kept himself at arm's length from the club itself, admitted that the Herrenklub had provided the 'younger and cleverer section of the aristocracy' with a 'hothouse' for the creation of 'a new Führertum'.[193]

In theory, the DHK envisaged that its *Führersammlung* would be a non-denominational, non-party-political affair. Indeed, the club's statutes

declared that, as the organization would be built on a foundation of a reliable 'conservative conception of the state' that would be safeguarded by a panel of representatives who would vet the suitability of prospective applicants, the party-political affiliations of its individual members were something of an 'ancillary' consideration. In practice, however, there was only a limited number of parties from which members were drawn, and adherents of movements that did not profess a 'resolute Christian and nationalist world-view' were precluded from joining. In contrast to the June Club,[194] the DHK also rejected the idea of inviting 'speakers from left-wing circles' right from the start.[195]

Unlike the ranks of the DAG, the 'gentlemen' in the DHK were also selected from a rather narrow economic spectrum. The club's original annual fees of 200 marks required members to have a certain level of wealth akin to that demanded by the powerful Düsseldorf Industrial Club.[196] Such sums remained out of the grasp of broad swathes of the minor nobility. In fact, comparing the DHK's fees with the DAG's yearly dues of 6 marks—an amount the organization's leadership had to waive for many of its members—highlights the huge social divide that separated the 'Führers' in the two organizations.[197] Other examples of the Herrenklub's affluence abound. In 1927, for instance, Count von Alvensleben, the DHK's president, created twenty shares of 5,000 marks apiece to support the club's work, one of which he purchased himself.[198] Similarly, a few months earlier, the Herrenklub's executive board authorized a budget of 15,000 marks for administrative costs and 36,000 marks for the 'political work' of the organization.[199] Their peers in the DAG's charitable wings could only dream of having such sums at their disposal. The DHK also had no shortage of wealthy aristocratic and middle-class backers who worked together to fund the club's activities. In 1929, for example, Baron Heinrich von Gleichen—who had previously dipped into his own fortune to cover shortfalls within the organization—founded a sponsors' association chaired by the Silesian Count Heinrich zu Dohna whose members included Prince Oskar von Preußen, Arno von Kriegsheim (the director of the Agrarian League), and Arnold Rechberg (an eccentric political juggler and go-between who forged links between various intellectual, political, and artistic spheres in Germany and France). In addition, the club was also supported by regular contributions from the coffers of the 'Ruhrlade' (the 'Ruhr Treasury'), one of the mightiest industrial pressure groups in the land.[200]

To get an idea of the scale of the DHK, one merely needs to take a few figures into consideration. At the height of its influence in 1932, for example,

the Ring Movement consisted of at least thirteen independent 'gentlemen's societies' (*Herrengesellschaften*). Adding the organization's followers from central, northern, and western Germany (areas where the club's ties were strong) to those from the southern reaches of the country (where the DHK's presence was weak) reveals that the Ring Movement boasted up to 5,000 members from across the nation in 1932.[201] The inner circle of the organization was considerably smaller, however. The DHK's Berlin headquarters, for instance, set itself an upper limit of 500 members when it was founded in 1924.[202] By 1928, it numbered 326 people among its ranks, over 50 per cent of whom belonged to the aristocracy. Carefully expanding the overall size of the DHK was one of the organization's stated aims. In fact, the club's leaders set out to establish outposts in all of Germany's regions. At one point, at least eighteen 'branches' of the DHK were in existence throughout the land.[203] As well as being directly affiliated with a range of other gentlemen's societies, the DHK also arranged youth conferences and exchanged speakers with the right-wing, radical *Nationalklub*[204] and regional branches of the DAG. The DHK's relationships with gentlemen's societies from all over Germany were coordinated by the so-called 'Centre of the Ring' (*Mittelstelle des Rings*). In October 1928, this latter organization took up residence in the rooms of the Casino Society (*Casino-Gesellschaft*), an exclusive, elitist social club founded during the days of the German Empire that resided on Berlin's central Pariser Platz in the shadow of the Brandenburg Gate.[205]

Although the DHK and the DAG were different in many ways, they also shared a myriad of personal and organizational connections. For example, a number of prominent right-wing intellectuals—including the likes of Walter Schotte and Heinrich von Gleichen—wrote both for the *Adelsblatt* and the DHK's own publication, *Der Ring*. Many aristocratic members of the Herrenklub also belonged to the DAG. This was even true of Hans Bodo von Alvensleben and Heinrich von Gleichen, both of whom served as chairman of the DHK.[206] Some individuals, including the Westphalian landowner Baron Ferdinand von Lüninck, were actively involved on both organizations' executive boards. Moreover, in 1928, the DAG's youth wing proposed a collaboration with the DHK and held an event with the Mecklenburg Gentlemen's Society in the same year. In the autumn of 1927, it also organized joint youth conferences in concert with the Herrenklub itself.[207]

Despite such unifying efforts, however, the immense differences between the two organizations were impossible to ignore. For example, the DHK's

claim that it had gathered together a handpicked group of individuals that would form the future 'Führer elite' was based on a realistic foundation. In contrast, when the far less selective DAG made similar assertions, it sounded rather like wishful thinking on the part of a mass organization of aristocrats. Moreover, although the radical, right-wing, *völkisch*, pro-Nazi course steered by the DAG's leaders was also adopted by a number of the Herrenklub's branches, the heads of the DHK in Berlin kept themselves at arm's length from such ideological developments. In fact, as it was becoming increasingly apparent that the DAG's leaders were falling in line behind Hitler in 1932, the DHK maintained a stand-offish attitude towards the Nazis that opened them up to severe attacks from the National Socialist press. Furthermore, although the DAG and the DHK did work together on various political matters, the Herrenklub ultimately cultivated financial and social standards that were beyond the reach of the bulk of the German Noble Society's members. This latter discrepancy is strikingly evident in the biographies of Baron Heinrich von Gleichen and Count Hans Bodo von Alvensleben, two sons of ancient noble families who were born in 1882 and numbered among the most significant founders and central figures of the DHK. Both of their lives featured social and intellectual horizons that exceeded the grasp of the DAG's leaders and considerably outstripped the narrow worlds of the East Elbian landed aristocracy.

Baron Heinrich von Gleichen[208] came from the Thuringian *Uradel* and was the oldest son of a middle-class mother from a landowning family and a court aristocrat who ran the household of a prince. He inherited the Tannroda estate near Weimar from his father in 1920. After passing his school leavers' examination at a humanist grammar school in 1900, he went on to study law, philosophy, and economics in Lausanne, Leipzig, Kiel, and Berlin and spent several months in England on a 'study trip'. While working as a trainee lawyer in 1905, he signed up for a twelve-month stint in an Ulan cavalry regiment. After more than a year's subsequent experience as an agricultural student, he worked in various guises—including as an accountant—for a range of enterprises before becoming a tenant farmer in 1908. During the First World War, he spent a brief period serving as a reservist lieutenant on the front line until 1915, when he was classed unfit for military service due to a cardiac weakness. He then made himself useful by carrying out a number of different economic and propaganda roles for Germany's Supreme Army Command (OHL). In 1916—four years after he had released his very first political publication—Gleichen became chairman of the

Association of German Scholars and Artists at the suggestion of the Jewish industrial tycoon and intellectual Walther Rathenau. Around this time, he became acquainted with a variety of influential right-wing figures, including Arthur Moeller van den Bruck (who composed the paper *The Right of Young Peoples* for the foreign division of the OHL), Max Hildebert Boehm (an intelligence and propaganda officer for the OHL), and Eduard Stadtler (the founder of the Anti-Bolshevik League). The Protestant baron also boasted personal ties to the Catholic aristocracy via his grandmother and the family of his wife, a middle-class woman he married in 1913. As a result of all this life experience, by the time the First World War came to a close, Gleichen—who was now around thirty-five years old—possessed uncommonly broad horizons, a certain understanding of the inner workings of organizations, and a list of crucial contacts to some of the rising stars of the political Right.

The second aristocrat who played a key role in the DHK enjoyed a wide-ranging view of the world that rivalled Gleichen's own. As mentioned above, Count Hans Bodo von Alvensleben[209] was born in the same year as Gleichen and, like the baron, came from an ancient noble family. His father—a man who hosted a number of hunts for his friend the Kaiser—had been granted the position of a hereditary count in 1901. His mother, *née* von Veltheim, was a daughter of the *Uradel* from Lower Saxony. Alvenleben's father, who died in 1929, was the owner of an entailed estate, a mine, and a modern sugar factory. As a consequence, he was involved in a level of industrial activity that far exceeded the traditional scope of aristocratic agribusiness and had a proven track record of surviving in the middle-class-dominated cut and thrust of manufacturing and commerce. His son, a 'gentleman' who stood at a height of over six-and-a-half feet, inherited his estate and title. After taking the school leavers' exam, Alvensleben studied law for a few semesters in Bonn and Halle. During his time at university, he picked up a number of facial scars and a legendary reputation as a fencer in the 'Corps Borussia' student organization. Not unlike Gleichen, he signed up to serve in a Cuirassier cavalry regiment in Münsterland for twelve months in 1904 and spent two years as an agricultural apprentice at a monastery estate. Afterwards, he married one Countess von Korff and worked for nearly four years as a 'merchant' in Canada. Upon returning to Germany, Alvensleben displayed extraordinary courage while serving on the front line as a reservist cavalry captain and was tasked with protecting the royal family at Potsdam's New Palace in 1918. Following the war, he joined the DNVP in 1922 and

served as a state leader of the *Stahlhelm* paramilitary organization in Magdeburg. In his role as a landowner, Alvensleben—who maintained the markedly elegant style his father had cultivated while 'one of the most splendid' figures at the court in Berlin—tended to use populist methods in his dealings with the populace. For example, the president of the DHK could often be seen manning the taps behind the bar at a village hostelry and pulling free beers for local festivities. Indeed, his reputation as a count who served as an obliging 'point of contact for his people' (i.e. the farmers and workers on his estate) seems to have been passed down in the collective memories of the area's rural population—a fact that was still vexing the Marxist narratives of certain historians who were investigating the Junkers long after the Second World War.[210]

In the early 1930s, Alvensleben's older brother Werner enjoyed good relations with the leaders of the NSDAP. In 1932/33, he even acted as a crucial, shadowy intermediary between representatives of heavy industry,[211] Kurt von Schleicher (the political mastermind of the German army), and the National Socialist movement. He soon fell from favour, however, and was arrested on 30 June 1934. Although he did not join the DHK, he seems at least to have maintained casual contact with the organization via his younger sibling. The fact that Werner served as the chairman of the German Federation for the Protection of Western Culture[212] made it far easier for his brother to forge personal ties with the Catholic aristocracy. This is not to say that Hans Bodo had any particular shortage of direct relationships with the denomination himself. Indeed, his first wife was a Catholic countess and his daughter was raised a Catholic. Furthermore, these two individuals likely sharpened his own Catholic sensibilities and seem to have facilitated his eventual conversion to Catholicism after the end of the Second World War.[213]

Despite being exceedingly well connected and boasting the likes of Gleichen and Alvensleben in its ranks, the Herrenklub only ever managed to entice a handful of prominent individuals from the Bavarian and the south-west German aristocracy to join the society. Even the Galen brothers' politically moderate wing of the Catholic Westphalian nobility deliberately kept themselves at a distance from the DHK.[214] The Herrenklub's overwhelmingly northern German, Protestant leanings are perhaps best revealed by examining the geographic distribution of the regional 'gentlemen's societies' within the Ring Movement—a network that was ultimately unsuccessful in its ambition to extend its influence throughout the nation. Although various sources prove that the DHK made several attempts to

develop relationships with the Bavarian nobility, the links they forged in the south of Germany seem not to have evolved very far.[215] In fact, the only good connections the Herrenklub managed to establish among the Catholic nobility were with right-wing aristocrats from the more northerly states of Westphalia and Silesia. Tellingly, a conference the DHK organized to strengthen its ties with the major players of right-wing Catholicism was not held in the south of the country, but took place on the Upper Silesian estate of Count Nikolaus von Ballestrem, the chairman of the Silesian aristocratic association who was also a major landowner, an industrialist, and one of the wealthiest men in the land. Similarly, another conference that was designed to bring together young landowners from all over the country also failed to attract the involvement of any southern German peers.[216]

In spite of all these setbacks, the ranks of the Herrenklub's impressively staffed honorary committee[217]—a body the DHK's leadership and various gentlemen's societies had agreed to establish in 1927—did boast a handful of prominent representatives from the south. Indeed, in addition to the southern politician Georg Escherich, the committee included three members of the southern nobility: one Prince von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, one Prince zu Öttingen-Wallerstein, and a count from the south-west. Although such appointments were striking, however, the fact remains that no leading members of the southern Catholic aristocracy seem to have played a sustained, active role within the DHK itself.

Overall, the Herrenklub can probably be regarded as the only successful attempt of its kind to band together aristocratic and middle-class members of different power elites. As such, it deserves to be examined in considerable detail. During the era of the German Empire, pressure groups had largely been dominated by the educated middle class. In contrast, the DHK's membership lists[218] boasted a striking number of individuals from old, prominent noble families and a noteworthy collection of titled aristocrats, many of whom held the rank of count. In fact, the total of 187 nobles who were active at the club's extremely exclusive Berlin headquarters featured three princes, two sons of princes, one hereditary grand duke, thirty-six counts, twenty-nine barons, and 116 untitled aristocrats. This list even included Friedrich von Berg-Markienen, the *Adelsmarschall* of the DAG.[219] In 1932, no fewer than twenty-three aristocrats—among them Prince zu Stolberg-Roßla and Prince Albrecht von Hohenzollern-Namedy—also numbered among the thirty-six individuals who served on the DHK's board of directors.[220]

Remarkably, this concentration of offspring from eminent noble families who joined the Herrenklub rubbed shoulders with a wide variety of influential middle-class representatives from both state and non-state elites. For example, as well as including numerous senior military officers, civil servants, and diplomats from the middle class, the DHK's membership lists featured particularly high numbers of middle-class entrepreneurs, manufacturers, and industrialists. Numerically speaking, major landowners and officials from the agricultural unions were represented even more strongly. The DHK also included a number of prominent university professors, journalists, and right-wing intellectuals who probably played a significant role in building bridges between the distinct worldviews held by landed aristocrats, industrialists, and members of the New Right. Furthermore, the large percentage of high-ranking civil servants within the organization reflected the Herrenklub's aspiration to function as a *Führersammlung* that could actually serve a practical political purpose.

This unusual blend of aristocratic and middle-class figures was also reflected in the DHK's political activities, which very much kept the traditions of the June Club alive. During its existence, the DHK's predecessor had published *Gewissen*—a distinguished platform for discussion—and boasted its very own training centre in the guise of the Political College in the Spandau district of Berlin. Both institutions were replicated by the DHK, which featured its own network of political training establishments and published *Der Ring*, a high-quality weekly edited by Heinrich von Gleichen. Until 1924, the Political College was run by Martin Spahn, one of the most influential masterminds of the extreme Catholic right. Spahn, who had finished his PhD at the age of twenty-one and had famously been appointed to a professorship at the tender age of twenty-six, had served as a professor of history at the University of Cologne since 1920. He was also an extremely flexible figure who could move effortlessly between the different milieus of academia and politics, between the realms of the Protestants and the Catholics, and feel equally at ease among senior members of the Catholic middle class and the *völkisch* groups that were emerging at German seats of higher learning. Spahn's Political College resembled a high-flying private university designed to transmit New Right ideas to 'young Führers' from various 'professional fields'. While the college itself had dissolved by the time the Herrenklub was founded, its tradition of top quality, non-university-based training for a range of target groups was kept alive in the Ring Movement's own network. In contrast to many of the other grand political

lectures held in the rooms of Berlin's gentlemen's clubs, the 'national-political classes' provided at the college in Spandau were aimed at the middle-management tiers of various professional sectors. Indeed, the institution's multi-week courses—programmes that formed part of a political education intended to prepare individuals to carry out the 'work of a leader' (*Führungsarbeit*) in line with the Herrenklub's views[221]—attracted a rather rare combination of aristocratic and middle-class participants, including university professors, landowners, county commissioners, high-level civil servants, right-wing intellectuals, military officers, students, manufacturers, editors, teachers, 'youth Führers', and merchants. As such, they mirrored the make-up of the DHK's membership itself.[222]

The Herrenklub also cultivated close links with the German University League and various eminent university professors—figures whose significance the organization underscored by placing them at the 'best' tables during their prestigious annual dinners.[223] Indeed, the good relationships the DHK maintained with universities, right-wing intellectuals, and other representatives of the 'cerebral' world represented a key part of their theoretical and practical commitment to the strategy of *Führersammlung*. One brand of thinking that remained alien to the club, however, was the type of esoteric spirituality espoused by the likes of Count Hermann Keyserling at his School of Wisdom in Darmstadt. At first glance, the DHK's and the count's ideas about the groups of Führers they hoped to convene seem to share some common ground. For example, Count Keyserling echoed the Herrenklub's own opinions when he proclaimed that 'the Führers who are rudderless today' should be readied for their duties at new 'private establishments' instead of state institutions.[224] Despite such similarities, however, the DHK was ultimately much too down-to-earth for the rather wild blend of political and philosophical ideas that Keyserling gathered together in his opulent Baltic manor house and gleaned in his famous conversations with various Indian gurus. Indeed, comparing the count's arcane concept of a new scholarly nobility[225] with the Ring Movement's own ideas highlights the extent to which the latter's methods and objectives were part of an effective strategy of *Realpolitik*. A number of similar institutions of 'independent' education and training equally did not share a relationship with the DHK because of their severe lack of significance and intellectual prowess. One such example was the *Schulgemeinde Ellena*, a curious new Führer training institute that was founded in the state of Thuringia in 1927. Set up by a number of noble families as a private establishment of rural education

for young aristocrats, the *Ellena* was run by a headmaster called Gustav Huhn (literally 'Gustav Chicken'), a man whose surname would prove exceptionally apt for a school that ended its days in a headless vortex of disorganization, mediocrity, ideological disunity, and radicalization. All in all, the DHK's networks and its educational activities operated many leagues above this institution's own rather paltry level.[226]

Some of the DHK's prestigious annual dinners—events which were invariably held in December in the ballroom of the Kroll Opera House opposite the Reichstag in Berlin—managed to attract well over 500 guests from within and without the organization's own ranks. Their impressive lists of attendees read like a *Who's Who* of significant circles of power. They also document precisely the kind of composite elite the DHK hoped to bring together and which their own roster of members never quite achieved. The dinners' meticulously choreographed table and seating arrangements resembled a fresh brand of courtly hierarchy that, with the help of culinary accompaniment, encouraged the handpicked guests from different walks of life to connect with one another. During the dinner in December 1932, for example, Club President Hans Bodo von Alvensleben sat at the centre of the very 'best' twenty-four-seater table, where he was advantageously positioned between Franz von Papen and Reichsminister Bracht and opposite Lieutenant General Baron von Fritsch, the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, State Secretary Solms, and the Vice-President of the German National Railway. The surviving seating plans of seventy-two tables for a total of 675 diners demonstrate the DHK's delicate feel for social hierarchies and document their attempt to forge links between different bases of power.[227] The guests' high social calibre, the formal white tie dress code, and the prices on the menus also provide further evidence of standards that were well beyond the means of the bulk of the DAG. This political and social rift was pithily summed up by DAG managing director Walter von Bogen in late 1931 when he addressed a letter to the Westphalian landowner Baron Lüninck declining his own invitation to the event. 'I am not coming to the Herrenklub's [annual dinner]', he wrote: 'to be frank, it is too expensive for me and, moreover, there are sure to be plenty of high-ranking individuals there with whom I do not particularly like spending my time.'[228]

The Herrenklub's aim of bringing together spheres of influence that would not otherwise have come into contact was both achieved and widely publicized at their annual dinner events. The relationships that were created at these soirées were facilitated by the hard work of a group of individuals

who had inside knowledge of several of the attendees' professional fields without clearly belonging to any single field themselves. This cadre of rather exceptional, mobile figures included Alvensleben, Gleichen, and a number of active Herrenklub members, all of whom knew how to flit effortlessly between the urban upper middle class, the 'best' families of the landed nobility, and the circles of the right-wing intelligentsia. By building bridges between such differing sections of society, these individuals helped establish a new reservoir of elites who were equal to the challenges of modern life. This was no mean feat. In fact, of all the organizations that were founded after 1918, the DHK—which had been conceived as a kind of 'shadow government' or a 'government-in-waiting'—probably boasted the most significant concentration of power from different levels of society that the nobility and the middle class managed to establish in cooperation with one another. Indeed, the amalgamation of influence that arose within the DHK's network of previously unconnected individuals was probably the closest the political Right ever came to creating their ideal 'government without parties'[229] during the days of the Weimar Republic.

The Herrenklub frequently characterized the leaders it hoped to cultivate by referring to the ideal of the 'multi-purpose Führer' (*Mehrzweckführer*)—a new, flexible type of leader that can be illustrated by examining five individuals from within the DHK's ranks. The first and most prominent of these figures was the polymath club member Franz von Papen. During the course of his extraordinary life, Papen was variously: the son of a Prussian cavalry captain; a member of an old Westphalian noble family; a pupil at a page school; the husband of a rich industrialist's daughter from a wealthy Saarland family; a diplomat; a General Staff officer; an arms smuggler and secret service agent who collaborated with the Mexicans and the Irish; a front-line officer in Turkey; a tenant farmer; an estate owner; a merchant; a candidate for the right wing of the Catholic Centre Party; an active member of Catholic aristocratic associations; the principal stakeholder in a prominent conservative newspaper; a member of the Prussian *Landtag* (provincial legislature); a horseman and successful amateur jockey; a Catholic with good links to the Roman Curia; the trustee of an influential industrial association with excellent ties to heavy industry; and, arguably, the most important architect of the transfer of power that elevated Hitler to the Reich Chancellery in 1933. All of this was enough to make him the purest embodiment of the *Mehrzweckführer* archetype even before he was selected as Paul von Hindenburg's preferred candidate for the German Chancellorship, a

boost which helped him gain and retain the ear of the ageing Reich President himself. Despite this spectacular career, which was initially aided by his father's links to the late Kaiser, Papen was condescendingly dubbed *Fränzchen* ('Little Franz') by his contemporaries, was not taken seriously by his enemies or his friends, and has even been wildly underestimated by historians. Although he did not have any university qualifications and did not display any particularly stunning charisma or intelligence, Papen nevertheless managed to shine in practically all the walks of life that were considered important among the aristocratic and middle-class elite of the age. In short, he was a 'Jack of all trades' of the very highest calibre. Only a handful of people could have pulled off what Papen attained in his work as a flexible mediator and diplomat who shuttled between the spheres of influence dominated by the aristocracy and the middle class. As such, he was living proof of the DHK's ability to establish connections between a variety of opposite poles: the young and the old; the nobility and the middle class; Catholics and Protestants; General Staff officers and parliamentarians; right-wing intellectuals and farmers' leaders (*Bauernführer*); and major landowners and the heads of heavy industry. He also personified what the DHK was able to achieve when it took the concept of the *Führersammlung* from the realm of hollow words and began implementing it in the tangible domain of practical politics.[230]

A second figure who bore similarities to Papen was Baron Tilo von Wilmowsky,[231] a man who, on a number of levels, embodied the relationship the DHK built between (aristocratic) landownership and (middle-class) major industry. In 1907, Wilmowsky—a lawyer, a county commissioner, and a landowner from an ancient Silesian noble clan—married Barbara Krupp, the second daughter of the steel magnate Friedrich Alfred Krupp. This made him 20 million marks richer and earned him a promotion to the Krupp company's supervisory board just four years later. One of the most influential landowners in the province of Saxony, Wilmowsky distinguished himself by setting up an *Orgesch* paramilitary shock troop after 1918. He later served as chairman of the Saxon Agricultural League, vice-chairman of the Chamber of Agriculture, and chairman of the DNVP faction in the provincial legislature (*Provinziallandtag*). Wilmowsky also occupied leading positions in the Committee for Agricultural Technology and the League for the Renewal of the Reich (a.k.a. the 'Luther Bund'), and served as president of the Economic Association of Central Germany. Moreover, the baron was a member of the so-called 'Smoking Club', an established quarterly meeting

that was held in Berlin's Hotel Esplanade between six high-calibre captains of industry and six aristocratic representatives of the agricultural sector. In 1929, this group managed to broker an interest-free industrial development loan to the Agrarian League.[232] In the very same year, Wilmowsky—who had access to holders of lavish economic means—also served as a fundraiser for the DHK. One of the financial backers he managed to snare was his wealthy brother-in-law from the city of Essen, whom he managed to win over by claiming that the Herrenklub had 'recently attuned itself to the interests of the industrial sector in a laudable fashion'.[233]

The third exemplary figure within the DHK was Baron Kurt von Schröder, a banker in Cologne and a son of a newly ennobled aristocratic family. Schröder was married to the daughter of a *Kommerzienrat* (an eminent 'Councillor of Commerce') and served as one of the most significant mediators between the Herrenklub and the financial world. The baron, who was one of the most active organizers within the DHK, attempted to woo potential 'Führers' in the Rhineland region who had not yet taken the leap into the realm of politics. His house in Cologne also provided the setting for the infamous discussion that took place between Hitler and Papen in January 1933. This notorious summit, during which an agreement was struck between the two men, was arranged when Papen gave his speech at the DHK's annual meeting. After the address, Schröder approached Papen and suggested he could serve as a go-between between Papen and Hitler himself.[234] Like Papen and Wilmowsky, Schröder can also be said to have possessed multiple qualities. He had, for example, been an active member of the Corps Borussia Bonn—the most exclusive of the German aristocratic student corps—and rose to the rank of executive director and accounting officer at the corps' alumni association.[235] Joining the corps proved to be an excellent decision for Schröder. Indeed, the good relationships he enjoyed with the Prussian nobility can likely be attributed more to his status as an old boy of the organization than the effect of his baronial title. In November 1932, Schröder also became one of the most active members of the pro-Nazi group of businessmen known as the 'Keppler Circle'. During his time with this organization, he was involved in persuading prominent members of the Ruhr Treasury pressure group to put their considerable influence behind a petition addressed to Hindenburg asking him to come out in support of Adolf Hitler.

Another breed of mediator that was of no less importance among the political Right was represented by a fourth individual, the Bavarian Forestry

Commissioner George Escherich. In 1919/20, Escherich was responsible for establishing the *Orgesch* (a portmanteau of 'Organisation Escherich'), the umbrella association of the paramilitary Home Guards. As a result, he enjoyed good relations with the radical Right. This was particularly true in the state of Bavaria. Since 1919, he had also served as the special envoy for the Association of Mediatized Princes and as a member of the 'Gäa', a powerful group of major landowners that will be discussed in more detail below. Both of these organizations were supported by the wealthy high nobility from the south of the country.[236] While working for the DHK, Escherich was able to use all of these influential connections in combination with his friendship with the writer Oswald Spengler, his close relationship with Alfred Hugenberg, and his good ties with a wide range of paramilitary organizations in Prussia and Bavaria[237] to forge links between divergent worlds that would never normally have interacted.

The fifth and final example of a 'multi-purpose Führer' existed in the form of Hans-Hasso von Veltheim-Ostrau, a figure who embodied the connection between the noble and middle-class elites and espoused an exceptionally refined brand of an elitist, uncompromisingly masculine worldview. Born in 1885 to a middle-class mother and a father who owned a knight's estate, Veltheim received an education in archaeology, art history, and philosophy, graduated with a doctorate in 1913, and—like his brother, a Rhodes scholar—spent time studying abroad. After serving as a lieutenant colonel and a balloon pilot in the First World War, he joined a *Freikorps* unit in 1919. Upon his father's death in 1927, he took possession of Ostrau Palace near the city of Halle and set about adding lavish, tasteful extensions that were widely considered to have set a benchmark for architectural design. Veltheim also enjoyed a direct link with the most cutting-edge branches of the German economy thanks to his wife, Hildegard Duisberg. Hildegard was the daughter of Carl Duisberg, the director of the pharmaceutical giant *Bayer- und IG-Farben* who furnished his son-in-law with financial advice. Over time, Veltheim further developed the already exceptional education he had received by indulging in long visits to East Asia. As the years went on, he became a renowned Indologist, a member of various East Asian and European cultural associations, and entered into correspondence with such influential intellectuals as Oswald Spengler, Stefan George, Count Keyserling, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, and Rudolf Steiner, the father of anthroposophy. He also held international discussion groups at his castle on topics of a spiritual, cultural, and political nature. Veltheim joined the

NSDAP in 1937 and had his property confiscated by the Soviets in 1945. Overall, he was one of the most fascinating figures in both the DHK and the German nobility as a whole. His most important role within the Ring Movement, however, was his ability to act as an intermediary who could easily traverse and build relationships across frontiers to diametrically opposite worlds. As such, he was an impressive example of exactly the kind of consummate bridge builder the organization had been looking for.[238]

The aristocrats within the DHK can be viewed as the social antithesis of those nobles who were faithful to the DAG. Generally speaking, this dichotomy was also echoed in the different political paths the two organizations followed. Although the Ring Movement's precise relationship with National Socialism remains a highly controversial topic among historians,[239] the DHK's leaders unquestionably maintained a far greater distance between themselves and the NSDAP than existed between the Nazis and the DAG. As with all right-wing organizations in the Weimar Republic, detecting anti-Semitic traits within the Ring Movement is a simple task. Nevertheless, the organization—which even included a handful of Jewish members—never made anti-Semitism an essential ingredient of the ideal of 'unfettered lordliness' it chose to cultivate. Apart from their shared anti-democratic orientation, the Herrenklub and the National Socialists also differed considerably in terms of their political objectives and social make-up. Indeed, the DHK's overarching aim was to gather together non-partisan Führers who would operate 'above the masses' and, as a logical consequence, would remain 'above' the Nazis' ranks. Such differences became particularly visible during the short-lived Papen cabinet in 1932, when National Socialist publications began to launch vicious attacks against the DHK itself.

The methods and objectives espoused by the DHK's headquarters in Berlin formed what can be described as an independent, well-organized plan to restructure the state along authoritarian lines. This plan clearly differed from the aims of National Socialism and from the destructive strategy of Alfred Hugenberg and his right-wing conservative followers who refused to brook any compromise with the Republic. Based on a foundation of unmistakably pro-capitalist convictions, the DHK concentrated its political efforts on four key objectives: gaining influence over the Reich President and expanding his powers; establishing a kind of House of Lords that would be able to tame parliament; revising the policy of universal suffrage; and launching a programme of reforms (the *Reichsreform*) that would put an end to parliamentary democracy and do away with the Social Democratic Party

(SPD) in Prussia.[240] The Herrenklub's overarching belief in restructuring the state and putting it under the authoritarian leadership of a ruling elite that would be independent of 'the masses' resulted in an on-going conflict with the National Socialists. This friction intensified during the elections of 1932, when the DHK backed Hindenburg's bid to retain his position as Reich President.[241] In the same year, Papen's elitist 'Cabinet of Barons'—a nickname based on the high number of aristocrats who served as Papen's senior ministers—adopted all of the DHK's central aims. Ultimately, however, the government did not have enough time or popular support to put these plans into practice.[242]

Hostilities between the Nazis and the Cabinet of Barons reached their peak in the autumn of 1932. Around this time, Goebbels declared that a 'ruthless fight' would be waged against the 'type of aristocrat' who dismissed the German people as a 'stinking mass' while reclining in their 'gentlemen's club armchairs'. Hitler himself gave polemical speeches opposing the 'high-born ladies and gentlemen who belong to a totally different humanity as a result of their birth'.[243] Goebbels also mounted a campaign in the major National Socialist newspapers that even encouraged prominent aristocratic members of his party—including Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen, Prince Friedrich Christian von Schaumburg-Lippe, and Count Ernst zu Reventlow—to attack members of their own class.[244] At the same time, *The SA Man*, a Nazi weekly, published caricatures of Papen clad in a top hat and clamping the working classes in a vice while quaffing champagne with other top hat–wielding men.[245]

Despite being supported by a prodigious concentration of powerful figures, the DHK's elitist ideology was completely unsuccessful in practice. In fact, it got no further than Papen's cabinet—a group that was isolated in parliament and lacked popular support—and was destroyed by the Night of the Long Knives in the summer of 1934. This bloody event also marked the demise of the conviction that it would be possible to 'restrain' National Socialism and steer it in an elitist direction. Although this view had been shared by a number of aristocrats and intellectuals in the Ring Movement, the last remnants of the idea were expunged when the Nazis' opponents were assassinated or ousted from power between January 1933 and July 1934.[246]

A variety of studies have discussed the vast gulf that existed between the DHK's notion of a non-partisan *Führersammlung* that would rule *over* the masses and the National Socialists' concept of a movement that would both consist of and act from *within* the masses. At first glance, this interpretation

seems difficult to dispute. Indeed, a particularly wide ideological rift doubtless emerged between the Nazis and some of the individuals who were active at the DHK's headquarters in Berlin. This was particularly true of a handful of the society's leaders and the small knot of people who masterminded *Der Ring* magazine and the club's activities in the capital city. This sense of political disparity was also especially visible when the National Socialists attacked Papen's cabinet—a body that simultaneously served as a social forum, a think tank, and a substitutes' bench for the Herrenklub rolled into one. In spite of such evidence, however, if one widens one's gaze to include the Ring Movement's nationwide web of gentlemen's clubs and the *Nationalklubs* that belonged to the Pan-German network, it would appear as though the existing assessments of the distance between the Nazis and the DHK[247] should be modified. In fact, a number of phenomena—including the club's self-imposed adoption of the National Socialist line, the opportunism shown by Alvensleben and Gleichen after Hitler took power, and the same two men's decision to join the NSDAP—can all be viewed as part of an evolutionary process of rapprochement that began in 1928 at the latest and went hand-in-hand with the establishment of the regional 'gentlemen's societies' throughout the land. From this point of view, the dream of creating a non-partisan coalition of aristocratic and middle-class power elites was not shattered by the Nazis' rise to power in 1933, but had already begun to dismantle itself within the Ring Movement at a much earlier date.[248]

The Mecklenburg Gentlemen's Society (HGM) offers a well-documented example of this radical, right-wing departure from the trajectory plotted by the Herrenklub's leaders in Berlin. It also provides a significant insight into the balance of power that existed within the Ring Movement itself.[249] When it was founded on a knight's estate in the summer of 1926, the society from Mecklenburg had just twenty-three members to its name. By 1932, however, it boasted around 300 individuals among its ranks, making it one of the largest affiliates of the Herrenklub in Berlin. The aristocracy were a very strong presence within the HGM. In fact, the important role that landed sons of old noble families played within the organization is reflected both in its lists of members[250] and in the figure of its founder and chairman, Wilhelm von Oertzen-Roggow, a man who was forty-three years old when the club was created and, as the son of one of Mecklenburg's envoys to the court in Berlin, had spent two decades living in the capital. The HGM also received support from the high nobility in the guise of Duke Adolf Friedrich von Mecklenburg, the former governor of Togo, who

joined the organization in the year it was established. Despite having such a lofty aristocratic centre of gravity, however, the HGM retained a 'provincial' character in both senses of the word when compared to the DHK's headquarters in Berlin. This was evidenced by the clear dominance that representatives from the agricultural sector enjoyed within the society,[251] and by its annual membership fees which, at just 10 marks, were ten times lower than the amount demanded in the capital.

In many ways, the HGM's ideology was similar to that espoused by the DHK in Berlin. Following in the footsteps of the Herrenklub's headquarters, for instance, Oertzen-Roggow worked exceedingly hard to convince representatives of the financial and industrial sectors to join or come and speak to his society. In fact, as well as cultivating relationships with Mecklenburg's high nobility,[252] with the regional aristocracy's traditional organizations, and with the DAG (an organization that supported several youth conferences in the local area), Oertzen-Roggow also invested a great deal of energy in making sure that the HGM did not merely become a lobby group for aristocratic landowners. For example, he successfully strove from the outset to seek members from urban circles—namely, 'merchants' and individuals who played an active role in 'industry'—in order to broaden the rather narrow view of the world he and his members saw through the lenses of what he described as their 'agrarian spectacles'. Armed with the explicit goal of establishing a version of the 'English gentry' that would be adapted to suit the prevailing conditions in Germany, he not only started winning over business representatives, professors, bankers, and editors from the local Mecklenburg area, but also began approaching middle-class financial and industrial groups located hundreds of miles away in the Ruhr Valley.[253] In addition, Oetzen-Roggow contributed articles to the *Adelsblatt* that roundly criticized his peers who did not view 'valuable Führers' from the middle class as equal to themselves.[254] In one of his texts, he sketched out the working methods of his organization as follows: 'We are a thoroughly aristocratic movement', he stated, 'insofar as we attract people from all walks of life who are willing and able to provide leadership, train and educate them via our events, and then, above all, expect them to use what they have learned on themselves and in their spheres of influence. That is the essence of leadership [*Führertum*]!' Although he believed that the 'great Führer' would be born, not raised, he still considered it vital to shape the thought and sensibilities of 'lesser Führers' and mould them into a new kind

of elite 'so that there exists an atmosphere in which the Führer can live in the first place' and 'in which he can prevail'.[255]

Some of Oertzen-Roggow's efforts bore fruit. Indeed, he actually succeeded in using various contacts to forge links between Mecklenburg's landed aristocratic youth and the industrial middle class from far-off Rhineland-Westphalia. At one point, for example, he worked with a Düsseldorf factory owner named Carl vom Bruck to organize trips to the Ruhr Valley that let young aristocratic landowners visit steel and armaments plants and build relationships with the 'Führers' in the local area.[256] This kind of networking also helped promote the 'economic policy courses' the HGM organized every year. These events made use of the society's ties with university professors and prominent right-wing intellectuals on the one hand, and with figures from Germany's industry on the other. Held just eight months after the organization was founded, the very first economic policy conference attracted fifty-three aristocrats and thirty-six members of the middle class. Sons of the most prestigious clans of the old Mecklenburg nobility could also often be seen in attendance.[257] Another significant part of the society's work consisted in organizing monthly lectures and discussion events that lasted one to three days and generally attracted fifty to a hundred participants. By 1942, no fewer than 134 of these events had taken place, allowing the HGM to reach out to a total of over 11,000 people.[258] These gatherings also followed the example set by the DHK in Berlin in that they invited rightist ministers, party members, and representatives from industrial and agricultural associations to speak alongside the usual roster of university lecturers and individuals from the right-wing intelligentsia.

By no means all of Oertzen-Roggow's endeavours were successful, however. For example, he failed on numerous occasions to entice 'Führers' from the upper echelons of the political Right to speak at his events. In such cases, he had to content himself with local figures who were certainly not among his first choice. This again highlights how provincial the HGM was in comparison to the DHK in Berlin. Indeed, despite all of his many concerted efforts, he never managed to book such high-ranking representatives of the political, financial, industrial, and intellectual sectors as Franz von Papen, Hjalmar Schacht, Albert Vögler, Wilhelm Cuno, Othmar Spann, Oswald Spengler, and Franz Ritter von Epp to speak to his society.[259] Oertzen-Roggow had also been trying to convince Hitler to give a speech to his members ever since 1927. His own initial fruitless attempts were eventually

supplemented by the intervention of Adolf Friedrich von Mecklenburg, a pro-Nazi duke who bowed and scraped to the National Socialist leader on Oertzen-Roggow's behalf, but whose own petitions ultimately remained equally vain.[260]

The HGM's swerve to the Right that saw them shift away from the politics of the DHK started to take shape just one year after the society was founded in 1926. The first signs of this deviation emerged when the organization rebelled against the form and content of the youth work that was being coordinated by the Herrenklub in Berlin. Even at this early stage, the HGM's criticism was largely focused on the figure of Baron Heinrich von Gleichen, the chairman of the DHK and the editor of *Der Ring*. Particular ire was reserved for Gleichen's overtly intellectual style. Indeed, Oertzen-Roggow and his aristocratic comrades-in-arms voiced concerns that Gleichen's policy of gathering Führers together from a wide variety of backgrounds in the hope of uniting the upper classes and protecting them against perceived threats from the lower orders had 'steered into wimpish intellectual waters'. They also claimed that Gleichen wanted to cultivate 'hyperintellectual embryos' rather than Führers. Such anti-intellectual allegations show that, despite his best efforts to broaden his 'horizons', Oertzen-Roggow remained in thrall to the worldview of a typical landowner. The extent of his cognitive rigidity is illustrated by a letter he wrote expressing his fear that too much intellectual stimulation would lead to a 'softening of the brain' and explicitly praising a more 'swashbuckling' (*draufgängerisch*) style of discourse that he, like many of his peers, mistook for the hard-headed pragmatism of '*Realpolitik*'. Oertzen-Roggow also complained that, when attending one of the DHK's youth conferences, he had heard people 'throwing around foreign words and specialist economic terms that I was unable to keep up with'. His lack of mental ability was further revealed by the third-rate poems he composed after a trip to Italy that professed his preference for the 'bald fields' and the chickens of his homeland over the 'magic' of the city of Florence.[261]

Interestingly, the HGM's 'swashbuckling' early opposition to cultivating intellectual individuality would later evolve into a fundamentally positive opinion of the National Socialist movement. At least initially, Oertzen-Roggow's relationship with the Nazis was dominated by three conflicting strands of thought. Firstly, as an aristocrat who had become accustomed to holding positions of leadership, he was intrigued by their nascent success when it came to gathering together recruits for a mass political movement based on anti-democratic ideas. Secondly, he held an arrogant view of the

'plebeian' nature of their organization. And thirdly, he was sceptical of the vague, ambiguous stance on property ownership contained within the National Socialist agenda. Until the end of the 1920s, this rather ambivalent blend of views was typical of the attitude towards the Nazis that was held by the nobility in general and by the aristocratic members of the Ring Movement in particular.

The question of property ownership was especially close to Oertzen-Roggow's heart. As early as the summer of 1928, he had tried to get Hitler to make a clear, public statement of his position on the issue. A short time later, this move was echoed by various noble landowners from Brandenburg and Bavaria who also attempted to gain clarification on the matter. When writing to the Nazi leader, Oertzen-Roggow noted that he would have preferred a speech on 'National Socialism and Agriculture' that Hitler had promised to give to be about 'National Socialism and Property' instead.[262] In letters he addressed to Hitler and the high-ranking Nazi officer Franz Ritter von Epp, Oertzen-Roggow also stressed his opinion that many aristocrats had 'legitimate reservations' about the Nazi Party. 'Of all the parties', he claimed, the NSDAP 'is the party that puts up the fiercest fight against Marxism and, at the same time, the one that incorporates the most of the Marxist worldview'.[263]

Hitler ultimately avoided giving the clarification Oertzen-Roggow was demanding by reneging on a number of speeches that had already been arranged. One of the many excuses he gave was that his voice needed to be spared. In 1928, Oertzen-Roggow wrote a letter to the *Gauleiter* (district official) of the NSDAP's Mecklenburg branch that reveals the extent to which he still considered Hitler's cancellations to be the behaviour of an arrogant parvenu at that point in time. Writing in a haughty style that would have been at home in any officer's mess, the frustrated missive from the founder of the HGM declared that, 'Although I certainly do not wish to importune [Hitler], I am of the opinion that it would also be in his interest to someday give a speech in front of the intellectuals and Führers here in Mecklenburg.'[264] Oertzen-Roggow's words struck the self-same 'lordly', openly smug tone that DHK Chairman Heinrich von Gleichen used in the 'open letter to Adolf Hitler' he composed and published in *Der Ring* magazine at the end of 1931. 'At any rate', Gleichen wrote,

> I observe that your call is not reaching—and will not reach—men who have not merely belonged to Germany's leading elite for the present generation because, even though they are just as passionate patriots as you, you do not place any value on these men whatsoever. For you demand and desire:

> unconditional allegiance! But you will not get that from men who assume responsibility for their own actions.[265]

Even from an early stage—and in spite of their continued supercilious tone—Oertzen-Roggow's extensive, dogged efforts to secure a lecture from Hitler were already starting to resemble humble entreaties to the unyielding leaders of the NSDAP. Frustration followed frustration until the 'gentlemen' of the HGM were forced to content themselves with Oertzen-Roggow's second-choice speakers. In 1929, for example, the society was addressed by Gottfried Feder, a representative of the anti-capitalist wing of the NSDAP. Although he had once been the pioneer of a prominent party propaganda slogan that promised to 'break the shackles of monetary interest' in German society, his career was already well past its prime by the time he spoke to the HGM. Later on, the organization also hosted a lecture by a retired Austrian military captain by the name of von Oberwurzer who was active 'in the industrial sector' on behalf of the NSDAP. He, too, was evidence of the HGM having failed to attract any National Socialists of note.[266]

As a result of his concerns about the Nazis' stance towards questions of noble property and landed estates, Oertzen-Roggow was initially unsure about the National Socialist movement itself. Early on, for example, he began to voice doubts about whether the HGM's members were ideologically resilient enough to resist Hitler's siren call and avoid joining the NSDAP outright. In an attempt to combat this anticipated development in 1928, he asked his industrialist friend Friedrich Carl vom Bruck to supply him with precise, potentially damaging information as to when and where leading National Socialists had spoken out in favour of confiscating landed estates. He also asked Bruck to assemble some 'material' that could be used against Hitler himself. 'I actually fear', Oertzen-Roggow wrote, 'that he will use his powers of suggestion to completely beguile the gathering and, for that reason, I would like to have a little twitch [a device placed around a horse's upper lip to subdue them in stressful situations] ready to hand.'[267]

In spite of these initial misgivings, however, just three years passed before Oertzen-Roggow attempted to join the National Socialist movement himself. By this point, no equine device could have stopped the HGM's founder in his tracks. He first tried to sign up for the NSDAP in November 1931, but was strategically blocked by the leadership of his local Nazi Party district (*Gau*) until 1934. Before then, it seems, admitting prominent noble 'gentlemen' to the movement was still seen as a threat to the party's reputation as

a national 'revolutionary' and a national 'socialist' organization. Despite this lengthy setback, Oertzen-Roggow could no longer be deterred from his belief that the National Socialist movement was the right partner for his own political plans. Indeed, even the indignity of having to knock in vain at the door of a 'mass party' he had previously disdained was obviously not enough to deprive him of this conviction. Although the HGM and the leaders of the NSDAP's local chapter were constantly at loggerheads with one another, the overarching relationship between Oertzen-Roggow's society and the National Socialist movement remained intact and retained its potential for development as the years progressed.[268] In fact, by February 1934, over half of the 'gentlemen' from the HGM had already joined National Socialist organizations, with the SA's Leaders' Reserve (*Führerreserve*) proving the most popular choice.[269]

As can be seen from the evolution of the Mecklenburg Gentlemen's Society, even the most influential aristocrats within the Ring Movement were by no means stuck on the path of conservative stasis. To find out just how far this kind of ideological transformation could travel along the political spectrum, the following pages will now turn to another network of organizations known as the 'National Clubs'—a group of radicalized, extreme right-wing societies that took the Ring Movement's combination of aristocratic and middle-class attempts to create a new Führer elite well beyond the political limits of the (relatively moderate) HGM.

When it comes to the political history of the German aristocracy, the *Nationalklub* in Berlin is not merely of interest due to its relationship with the DHK, but also simply because of the range of particularly prestigious noblemen who served as its chairman. Going in chronological order, the following eminent aristocrats succeeded each other as president of the organization: Prince Otto zu Salm-Horstmar, General Oskar von Hutier, Prince Karl zu Löwenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg, Duke Carl Eduard von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, and, from 1936, SS Brigadier General Ewald von Massow. Field Marshal von Hindenburg and Field Marshal von Mackensen were also both honorary members of the club. Duke Carl Eduard von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha—the fourth president mentioned above and a man who belonged to the high nobility's National Socialist avant-garde[270]—is of particular interest here. A long-time supporter of the club, the duke took over as *Nationalklub* president in early 1932, by which point two Nazis had already gained control of the organization's day-to-day operations. Carl Eduard lived a very full life even before taking the *Nationalklub*'s reins.

Married to Princess von Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, he was crowned a reigning prince in 1905, studied at Oxford and the Lichterfelde cadet academy, and, at the age of thirty-five, became a Prussian Infantry general and a Saxon Cavalry general during the First World War. After returning home from the conflict, he joined various *Freikorps* units—including the right-wing terrorist 'Erhardt Brigade'—and signed up to the *Stahlhelm* paramilitary organization in 1926. The duke first met Hitler at the German Day (*Deutscher Tag*)—a violent, radical right-wing procession held in Coburg in October 1922.[271] Almost a decade later, he participated in an SA march in the city of Braunschweig, by which time he had certainly become an active supporter of the National Socialist movement himself. Shortly before the elections of November 1932, he sent a personal telegram to Hitler signed 'Warmest Wishes—Your Carl Eduard' in which he declared himself 'unreservedly at the disposal' of the NSDAP.[272] He finally joined the party in May 1933 and signed up for the SA just three months later. In subsequent years, the duke—who rose to become one of the high nobility's key supporters of National Socialism—would also serve as one of the high-noble go-betweens who sought to smooth out Third Reich's appearance on the diplomatic stage. As the historian Karin Urbach has commandingly demonstrated, he played a particularly active role in improving relations with Great Britain.[273]

The duke's political leanings give a taste of the extreme right-wing trajectory the club he presided over would ultimately take. Indeed, although the *Nationalklub* echoed the DHK in theory by defining itself as the 'intellectual rallying point for activist warriors against the Weimar system',[274] it revealed its true political stripes in January 1932 by appointing Major Waldemar Pabst to oversee the day-to-day running of the organization. Pabst had never demonstrated any particular affinity with the right-wing intelligentsia and had instead risen to prominence as an orchestrator of violence and a key presence in a number of military, radical, right-wing circles. While serving as a General Staff officer for the Division of Cavalry and Riflemen in 1919, for example, he had played a key role in the assassination of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the two central figures in the German Communist Party. He also worked as the military coordinator of the counter-revolution in various parts of the country before, during, and after the Kapp Putsch and was a leading light in the German armaments industry from 1931.[275] During the winter following his appointment to the *Nationalklub*, the major drew up extremely convoluted plans for reshaping

'the intellectual elite of *all* nationalist groups' which, he proposed, would henceforth be governed by his club and run following an 'orderly structure' based on 'soldierly principles of absolute obedience'.[276]

Pabst's involvement was not the only indication of just how far sections of the Ring Movement could shift towards to the Right of the political spectrum, however. Indeed, similar proof is provided by the extensively researched life of Werner Best, a young lawyer from Darmstadt who had already established himself as an up-and-coming figure in radical, right-wing circles by the age of twenty-two. Best had switched to the NSDAP from the DNVP in 1927 and, by 1933, had risen to become an SS-Major General and head of the 'Inland Department' (*Amt II*) at the Reich Main Security Office, the nexus of SS power and influence. In 1925, he had cemented his early rightist credentials by founding an umbrella organization for right-wing associations along with Count Georg Friedrich zu Solms-Laubach, a mediatized prince from Hesse.[277] Crucially for this narrative, Best also served as the chairman of the *Nationalklub* in the city of Mainz.

Overall, the *Nationalklub* was not slow to embrace Nazi politics, nor was it shy of trumpeting its transformation to anyone who would listen. In 1934, for example, the club made a proud boast that a 'good 70%' of its members had already become National Socialists by the end of 1932. There is no reason to mistrust this claim. In a sideswipe aimed at the DHK, State Secretary Hans Pfundtner also asserted that it had never been necessary to force the *Nationalklub* to get in line with National Socialist ideals. 'The club', he wrote, 'did not need to change its name or cast out considerable portions of its members as all other clubs hurried to do'.[278] In 1933/34, both the *Nationalklub* and the DAG—two organizations that had been shifting ever closer towards National Socialism for quite some time—were granted the privilege of being able to continue their activities in the Third Reich. By 1936, the *Nationalklub* consisted of 583 members and was presided over by Ewald von Massow,[279] a former general who had risen to the rank of SS-Brigadier General during his retirement from the military.

Another body that shared close ideological and organizational ties with the *Nationalklub* was the Society for the Study of Fascism (GSF). Indeed, the ties between the two clubs were so strong that Duke Carl Eduard von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha and Major Waldemar Pabst both served at the top levels of the two organizations. If one takes all of its more and less active adherents into consideration, the GSF boasted around 290 members by 1933, over a quarter of whom hailed from the aristocracy.[280] The old nobility

were particularly well represented among the society's ranks. For example, the GSF's group of seventy-eight noble members was dominated by sons of old East Elbian families, landowners, and former military officers, the last of whom almost exclusively lived in Berlin. It also featured a collection of representatives from the historical aristocracy in Westphalia and southern Germany who acted as points of contact with noble circles in some of the more far-flung corners of the land.[281] Moreover, the GSF's list of 'full members' included the name of no less a figure than Prussian Crown Prince Wilhelm himself. Neither the Crown Prince nor Wilhelm II, his father, were strangers to fascist affinities. Indeed, the Crown Prince first voiced his enthusiasm for the Italian ideology in 1924, for example, and excitedly told his father about the 'fabulous institution' of fascism that had 'eradicated' socialism and democracy 'root and branch' thanks to its '*ingenious brutality*' in 1928.[282] Even the exiled Kaiser had openly expressed his enthusiasm for Mussolini on numerous occasions.[283] In terms of its activities, the GSF—whose membership lists also included former Reich Bank President Hjalmar Schacht and DHK President Count Hans Bodo von Alvensleben—served as a hub for bringing together powerful rightist leaders from different backgrounds who wanted to analyse Italian fascism, adapt its ideology for German minds, and learn from its rise to power. Noble intermediaries also used the society as a forum for reactivating and reinvigorating the DAG's older discussions about what Germany's aristocrats could glean from Italian fascism's ideas.[284] Finally, the society produced articles, held lectures, and organized political debates that laid the theoretical groundwork for regular 'study trips' to fascist Italy.[285]

The examples of the HGM, the *Nationalklub*, and the GSF all provide evidence of just how effortlessly many Germans moved away from the Ring Movement's elitist conservatism and shifted into open alliances with National Socialism. In fact, although individuals showed different levels of commitment and opposition to the Nazis on a personal level, the complex web of relationships that were forged with the fascist movement itself meant that none of these organizations could ultimately resist the inexorable force that dragged them ever further into the National Socialist fold. Even the anti-Nazi stance maintained by the Berlin headquarters of the DHK ultimately crumbled when it was fed through the mangle of *Selbstgleichschaltung*—the self-imposed adoption of the National Socialist line. As early as August 1933, the DHK had dropped the notion of being an organization for 'gentlemen' from both its political worldview and its name, which was changed

from the *Deutscher Herrenklub* (the 'German Gentlemen's Club') to the *Deutscher Klub* (the 'German Club'). At first glance, this move seems to have paid dividends for the club. Indeed, with the backing of Viktoria von Dirksen—Hitler's long-standing patroness who had run one of the most significant Nazi salons in German society—the freshly renamed institution was permitted to retain its official status and play host to prominent members of the old and new orders, including Crown Prince Wilhelm, Vice-Chancellor Papen, and even Heinrich Himmler himself. The newly christened version of the DHK also maintained the same executive board and carried on operating from a house owned by the influential Dirksen family near Pariser Platz in central Berlin. Despite such outward signs of continuity, however, the club had, in fact, been swiftly transformed into a mere hub for the National Socialist *Führernachwuchs*—the group of up-and-coming Nazi leaders who were being groomed for greater things.[286]

By the time DHK President Count von Alvensleben professed his 'allegiance' to Hitler and urged his members to put their full weight behind the new regime, no trace of a 'conservative' opposition to National Socialism was anywhere to be found among the ranks of the Ring Movement itself. At the end of 1932, Carl von Jordans—an independent scholar and lawyer who had been one Nazism's most influential conservative opponents among the *Herrenklub*'s ranks—wrote a letter to a Westphalian baron which perfectly encapsulated the prevailing sense of ideological confusion that led to this collapse. 'To date', he wrote,

> neither I, nor my friends, nor the public have been made aware of a single National Socialist who gives any reason to believe they have statesmanly abilities. . . . But if you, [whose every third] word is 'conservative', can [look at] this mass movement that wages an unbridled, ruthless war against the state, authority, tradition, the nobility, etc. . . . and find even a shadow of a conservative trait, we would be very interested to hear about it.[287]

Here as elsewhere, there were considerable differences between the paths followed by the nobility from the (more impoverished) north and the (more socially stable) south. Despite the fact that politically active members of the Bavarian aristocracy were particularly resistant to being included in the Ring Movement's northern-dominated network, however, a superficially similar alliance between members of the aristocracy and the middle class known as the 'Gäa'[288]—a rather odd moniker that was formed by abbreviating its full name, the *Gemeinsamer Ausschuß von Industrie und Landwirtschaft*

(the 'Joint Committee of Industry and Agriculture')—did emerge in Munich as early as 1922. Like the Ring Movement, this group aimed to gather together potential leaders in its very own brand of *Führersammlung*. Indeed, although the association cannot be described as southern Germany's answer to the DHK, it did maintain at least casual contact with the 'Führers' the *Herrenklub* had assembled in the capital city.[289] Not unlike the DHK, the *Gäa* was also founded by a small collection of affluent aristocrats—most of whom were rich Ruhr Valley industrialists and major landowners from the south—and a handful of higher-ranking military officers and right-wing intellectuals. In terms of their prestige, wealth, and influence, these sixty-one founding members were at least equal to their counterparts who established the DHK in Berlin.[290]

At first glance, the *Gäa*'s systematic amalgamation of various organizations and individuals—including key political figures from the Bavarian aristocracy and the pressure groups of high-ranking officers, prominent right-wing intellectuals, major southern landowners, and powerful industrial players—make it seem like a form of combined aristocratic and middle-class *Führersammlung* with similarities to the DHK. In contrast to the *Herrenklub* in Berlin, however, the *Gäa* never attempted to establish any fixed organizational structures, club activities, or its own publication. In fact, the group's scant number of surviving records[291] rather suggest that it was a loose alliance of extremely wealthy, aristocratic, and middle-class representatives from a variety of different associations who primarily wanted to finance demagogical, anti-republican mass propaganda to voice right-wing concerns that typically arose during the Weimar Republic. According to the committee's inaugural meeting, the *Gäa* intended for this propaganda to be compiled centrally, 'edited' by writers, and presented to a wide-ranging readership in 'bite-sized' chunks.[292]

Overall, the *Gäa* exhibited traits of a backstairs pressure group that most closely resembled the major landowners' associations from the south of the country—organizations with which it shared close personal and practical ties. Thanks to their contact with the industrial magnate Paul Reusch, the *Gäa* also maintained close links with financiers from heavy industry and even helped distribute the donations such figures made throughout Bavaria. In addition, the alliance received financial contributions from the German Association of Princely Houses[293] and controlled the *Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten* and the *Süddeutschen Monatsheften*—two of the most significant right-wing newspapers in the south of the country—until 1933. Moreover,

the *Gäa* was able to exert significant influence over Bavarian state politics via the economic committee of the Bavarian People's Party.

If it were placed on a political spectrum, the *Gäa* would sit towards the extreme right-hand side of all the southern German organizations that were dominated by the aristocracy. Nevertheless, even such a rightist group showed no signs of having undergone a development similar in form or content to the radicalization experienced by the East Elbian minor nobility. Indeed, the *Gäa*'s cool, calculated, behind-the-scenes lobbying that was nourished by phenomenal financial resources stood in stark contrast to the strident activities carried out by minor nobles from the north.

This chapter has examined the debates that emerged regarding a modern form of *Führertum* and the countless attempts that were made to turn this dream into a reality after 1918. It has also shown how a wide spectrum of new connections were forged between middle-class and aristocratic groups and demonstrated how societies were established that had a considerable impact on the history of the German elite. Many, if not all, of these new organizations had a tendency to overestimate their own value and their capacity to put novel forms of *Führersammlung* into practice. Ultimately, this aristocratic belief in their own importance and their starry-eyed inability to judge the feasibility of triggering a noble renaissance played a significant role in the advent of the Nazis' Third Reich. A prime example of this can be seen in a famous statement uttered by Franz von Papen—a figure who stands as the mightiest, the most pompous, and the most misguided of all the representatives of the German aristocracy. In Papen's erroneous estimation, the old elites would be perfectly able to 'control' Hitler, saying that they had 'engaged' him to do their bidding, and would soon have 'pushed [him] so far into a corner that he'll squeak'.[294] The grandiose sense of inflated self-confidence echoed in these words is not merely indicative of one individual's ignorance, however. It also encapsulates the aspirations of many aristocrats in the DHK, the Ring Movement, and the DAG who dreamt up a whole raft of ideas that would supposedly allow the nobility to survive within—or even rise above—the National Socialist state. Crucially, however, only very few of these individuals made practical attempts to invoke aristocratic traditions and marshal noble resources in order to mount serious opposition to the burgeoning power of the Nazi regime.

4

Nazis and Nobles: Conflicts

This book tells the story of an encounter between two sections of German society that were diametrically opposed to one another at first. Claiming that the nobility were not naturally drawn to Nazism is not a controversial statement. Indeed, the aristocracy harboured a number of objections that had to be overcome and nurtured a range of traditions that had to be bent out of shape—largely, it transpired, by their own hand—before they could even consider getting on board with the National Socialist cause. Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to the conflicts that set up obstacles between the two groups and the common ground that eventually helped to tear them down, leaving the road clear for their unexpected rapprochement. They will shed light on the driving forces, the limits, and the scope of the nobility's relationship with the National Socialist movement before concluding that, in the final analysis, the two groups' affinities ultimately outweighed their differences.

The tangle of attraction, repulsion, conflict, and compromise that marked the nobility's relationship with the Nazis followed predictable patterns and revolved around a small stock of unvarying themes, including questions of 'racial purity', landownership, and the aristocracy's sense of in-born superiority. The following sections of Chapter 4 will outline the frictions that most frequently feature in the historical sources, starting with the fundamental barriers that obstructed the aristocracy's assimilation into the National Socialist *Volksgemeinschaft* itself.

Reactionaries without a Cause

The first verse of the *Horst-Wessel Lied*—the SA's battle song that later became Germany's unofficial national anthem[1]—pays homage to the SA

men who were gunned down by communists and reactionaries in the violent conflicts that overshadowed the entire history of the Weimar Republic. It will come as no surprise that the Nazis detested their communist foes. What is perhaps less well appreciated, however, is that they also regarded reactionaries—figures who were loyal to the monarchy and the Kaiser, who were unable to get to grips with the tenor of the new age, and who clung to the pre-war status quo—as sworn enemies of their cause. In some respects, this was a rather disproportionate response to the threat that such individuals actually posed. Monarchist loyalties lacked political representation in Prussia and other parts of the country, for instance, and Germany's aristocratic reactionaries did not have the crucial rallying point that monarchs and monarchies provided in other European states.[2] At the same time, however, this vilification was not entirely without justification. Indeed, 'vagabond monarchism'—an untethered royalist sentiment that was looking for a new spiritual home—remained a strong, emotional force among the older generations of German conservatives and is significant enough to merit examination as a potential obstacle between the nobility and National Socialism after the First World War.

One of the most common (and most commonly unsubstantiated) claims made about the German aristocracy is that the majority of their ranks 'sought salvation in the monarchy'[3] after 1918. If this statement were accurate, it should be possible to unearth proof that monarchist attitudes established a significant obstacle between the Nazis and the nobility throughout the country. Interestingly, pockets of such evidence can be found wherever groups of reactionary aristocrats banded together and acted together. The most prominent example is provided by the Bavarian nobility, a group that enjoyed a strong position in the mightiest monarchist movement in the land. Although some Bavarian aristocrats were tempted by the opportunities that a tactical alliance with National Socialism might bring, this was clearly not the dominant attitude among the nobility in the state. In fact, a number of examples—including the Bavarian Crown Prince's refusal to join Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch in November 1923, the Bavarian monarchists' plans for a military coup in February 1933, the detention of members of the Bavarian royal family in concentration camps, and the consideration that no Bavarian princes ever followed in their northern peers' footsteps and joined the NSDAP[4]—all show that monarchism remained a relevant barrier between National Socialism and the bulk of the aristocracy from Old Bavaria (*Altbayern*).[5]

This southern German reticence to side with the fascist regime did not go unnoticed by its leaders. The day after Georg Elser attempted to assassinate Hitler by planting a bomb at a Munich beer hall in November 1939, for instance, Joseph Goebbels noted in his diary that the strike was 'probably carried out by Bavarian legitimists'.[6] The Nazis' chief propagandist would not have levelled the same assertion at members of the Prussian aristocracy at that particular moment. Indeed, unlike the Bavarian royalists whose plans to restore the crown in early 1933 were 'conceived as a defence against the National Socialist dictatorship', 'monarchists in the rest of Germany' hoped that 'the restoration' would be carried out by 'the National Socialists' themselves.[7]

To get a more detailed picture of just how unusual this southern attitude to Nazism was, one can compare the Bavarian Baron Erwein von Aretin with Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, a prominent aristocrat from Prussia. Although monarchist motives were fundamental to both individuals' world-views, the two men were divided by a striking set of divergent opinions that far outweighed any common ground they shared. For his part, Aretin's opposition to the Nazis was unflinching. During the Third Reich, for instance, he spent multiple spells locked up by the Gestapo in a castle in Württemberg, 'worlds away', as he put it, 'from all politics'.[8] Although the majority of the southern nobility did not share Aretin's blistering commitment to such an uncompromisingly courageous stance, the contents of his opinions—which stemmed from his belief in tradition, conservatism, Catholicism, and monarchism—would not have been alien to large numbers of his Bavarian peers. A contrasting, more typically northern mentality is revealed by the figure of Kleist-Schmenzin, a man of around Aretin's age whose involvement in the German Resistance culminated in his execution in April 1945.[9] In contrast to Aretin's unambiguous royalism, Kleist-Schmenzin's own nebulous monarchist beliefs were not focused around any one individual. This was true of many Prussian nobles, who had no figure to rally around to match the Bavarians' uncontested pretender to the throne. Moreover, although he had become unusually independent minded by the time he wrote his oft-cited pamphlet *National Socialism—A Threat* in 1932, Kleist-Schmenzin's political views in the 1920s steered a course that ran midway between conservative and extreme right-wing opinions.[10] This characteristically Prussian attitude overlapped with National Socialist ideas in several respects, and thus occupied a position few southern aristocrats would have shared. As such, although both regions retained their monarchist loyalties in some form, only the Bavarian brand of royalist sentiment remained

robust, focused, uniform, and consistent enough to mount any opposition to Nazism after the end of the First World War.[11]

The overall weaknesses of Prussian monarchism were exacerbated by the widespread belief among aristocrats from the north that National Socialism was a monarchist movement at heart. A number of factors triggered the development of this error. In *Mein Kampf*, for example, Hitler left his thoughts about the future form of the 'Germanic state' open to interpretation. Admittedly, the book did contain various warning signs. It had many unfavourable things to say about monarchies, for instance, and depicted the royal courts in Vienna and Berlin as rotten institutions where 'crawlers, cowards, lickspittles and parasitic worms' had frolicked around.[12] Crucially, however, *Mein Kampf* did not completely rule out the creation of a monarchical state. The same was also true of the NSDAP's Twenty-Five Point Programme, the vaguely worded final item of which merely called for the establishment of a 'strong central authority'. Although the Nazis' largely anti-monarchist tone did not go entirely unnoticed, they 'deliberately maintained' their views in an indistinct 'republican-monarchist half-light'[13] that was murky enough to allow (mainly older, extremely politically short-sighted) sections of the Prussian nobility to side with the NSDAP until 1934. At the end of 1929, for example, the Prussian Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg wrote, 'I currently view the National Socialist movement as the only possible route to a monarchy, as their manifesto states that the people should vote on whether to have a monarchy or a republic'.[14] The count remained the prisoner of this misconception until as late as April 1933, by which point he had long been a member of the NSDAP himself: 'That Hitler wants the monarchy as a keystone [of National Socialism]', he claimed, 'is beyond all doubt.'[15] This was not the only misjudged opinion that reigned among the nobility's ranks, however. Indeed, another belief—even more widespread than Schulenberg's own—held that it would even be possible to subvert National Socialism's intentions and use the movement as a Trojan Horse to bring about the restoration of the monarchy by clandestine means.

One of the key reasons why Prussian monarchism raised no effective obstacles against the National Socialist movement can be detected in the political orientation of the Kaiser's own family. Curiously enough, the initial research into this topic was conducted in 1984 by a member of the House of Hohenzollern.[16] In a textbook example of the noble art of manipulating memory, this study attempted to preserve the overall glory of the Hohenzollern name by 'sacrificing' two family members who had been

irremediably compromised by their early, unambiguously fervent support for National Socialism. The first of these individuals was the 'Empress' Hermine, a figure whose reputation would be considered 'unsalvageable' by even the most forgiving of observers. Born Princess Reuß (Elder Line), Hermine married her second husband Wilhelm II—a man who was, incidentally, twenty-eight years her senior—in November 1922, just one-and-a-half years after the death of his first wife, the Kaiserin Auguste Viktoria. The Hohenzollern study goes out of its way to portray Hermine as a relentlessly scheming widow,[17] pointing out, for instance, that she had already started building bridges between the exiled Kaiser and National Socialism in Doorn, Munich, and Berlin in the late 1920s and remarking that the sons from her first marriage joined the SA long before 1933.[18] The second disgraced figure who was extensively expunged from his position of honour in the family's memory banks was Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen. The fourth son of the Kaiser, he joined the NSDAP in April 1930, embarked on a new career as an agitator for the Nazi party, and ultimately rose to the rank of Major General in the SA.

All in all, the study produced by the House of Hohenzollern was written in an effort to rehabilitate the honour of Kaiser Wilhelm II, of the Crown Prince, and of the Crown Prince's sons. The document, which concluded with a section on the dynasty's apparent 'Links with the Resistance Movement', was one of the studies championed by the Hohenzollern family that is still endeavouring to portray the Crown Prince as Hitler's rival and link him with the German Resistance. Such efforts run into a certain degree of difficulty for two main reasons, however.[19] For one thing, Crown Prince Wilhelm von Preußen declared himself an opponent of Hindenburg and a supporter of Hitler in a public appeal he issued in April 1932. To make matters worse, a short time earlier, he was also directly involved in a nervously improvised plan to rally the political Right around him, become Reich President, and appoint Hitler as his Chancellor.[20] This latter incident arguably marks the quiet zenith of the relationship between National Socialism and the heir to the German throne. Overall, three things can be said about these problematic attempts to use Hitler's influence to restore the monarchy in the post-war period. Firstly, they were doomed to failure. Secondly, they seriously damaged the Crown Prince's reputation as far as posterity is concerned. And thirdly, they ultimately left all notions of promoting the monarchy as an alternative to National Socialism in tatters.

Similar revisionist efforts have also tried to rehabilitate the Kaiser and justify the extremely variable stance[21] he maintained towards the National Socialist movement overall. One such attempt revolved around Wilhelm II's attitude to Hermann Göring, a flamboyant, highly decorated war hero and flying ace whose first wife was a Swedish aristocrat. Göring was close to numerous members of the Prussian nobility and arguably served as one of the most important brokers between the Nazis, the old elites, and—above all—the high nobility. Nevertheless, various aristocratic accounts and anecdotes that emerged after 1945 attempted to distance the Kaiser from this central National Socialist figure. Detailed reports documented Wilhelm II's alleged antipathy towards Göring's knickerbockers and table manners, for example, and numerous sources show him rejecting National Socialism with a gruff, unerringly lordly hubris. Despite their best efforts, however, such accounts cannot hope to mask what is clearly revealed in the historical records: namely, that the Kaiser dearly wanted an alliance with the National Socialist movement himself. Wilhelm II was not alone in this ambition. Indeed, although he and the Crown Prince fought bitterly over their claim to the throne, both father and son were united in this one, overarching desire. It was also shared, in varying degrees, by some of the Kaiser's other male offspring (who were active members of the *Stahlhelm* from 1929) and a number of his grandchildren (who openly demonstrated their closeness to the National Socialist movement). This readiness to forge an alliance with the Nazis resulted in systematic attempts by the majority of the Hohenzollerns to sound out the National Socialists between 1930 and October 1932. This investigative process reached its symbolic zenith when Hermann Göring was granted audiences in Doorn in January 1931 and May 1932.[22] Throughout this period, the Kaiser's family frequently imagined that they would be in control of the relationship, dominating the Nazis as a rider treats a steed and using them as pawns in their plot to bring the monarchy back. In fact, it was not until the horse had unequivocally outsmarted its would-be masters and their fantasies had blatantly come crashing down that the Hohenzollern clan finally stopped placing their hopes in National Socialism.[23]

The notion that the exiled Kaiser's miniature court in the Netherlands served as a conservative bastion of opposition to the Nazis was unequivocally debunked decades ago.[24] Indeed, a great deal of evidence supports this view. In the summer of 1928, for instance, Wilhelm II selected Magnus von Levetzow—a retired admiral from the ancient Mecklenburg aristocracy—to serve as his political representative. As part of this role, Levetzow was

tasked with attempting to coordinate anti-republican groups with a view to restoring power to the crown. After spending a long time among right-wing, nationalist networks and meeting Hitler himself, however, Levetzow became a staunch National Socialist in the autumn of 1930. Following consultations with his Imperial employer, he then joined the Nazi party and successfully sought election to the Reichstag in July 1932. All of this meant that, until Levetzow and Leopold von Kleist were both dismissed by the Kaiser in December 1932, an alliance with the National Socialist movement was nothing short of an explicit goal that was deliberately pursued by Wilhelm II, his sons, his wife, and the figures who served as his leading advisors.[25]

Although the misalliance that sprang up between the House of Hohenzollern and the National Socialist movement collapsed even before Hitler was named Chancellor, there was a period of many months after their affections had cooled during which those faithful to the Kaiser tried to push forward their plans for the restoration one final time. Indeed, after the so-called 'Day of Potsdam'—the opening ceremony for the new Reichstag in March 1933 which saw the leaders of the Nazi party staging a pseudo-monarchist masquerade[26]—Wilhelm II's official representatives made multiple attempts to bring the matter of the monarchy to Hitler's attention. In fact, between May 1933 and April 1934, leading royalists approached Hitler on no fewer than four occasions to sound out the possibility of a restoration. Prince Bentheim—the chairman of the DAG who had won his organization immunity from the ban on monarchist associations in February 1934 by hurriedly toeing the Nazi line—even raised the issue in a private conversation he held with the Führer in person. Although Bentheim, himself a National Socialist, received a somewhat more amicable response than his peers, Hitler left the monarchist envoys feeling as though they were banging their heads against a brick wall. In the spring of 1933, for instance, Hitler met with Friedrich von Berg, one of the Kaiser's loyal supporters, and fobbed him off with vague assurances about a future monarchy and claims that such an institution could only be established after Germany had won a war. By the time the retired General Wilhelm von Dommes met Hitler in October 1933, the Nazi leader's tone had already become far more aggressive. 'Passionately' rebuffing his interlocutor's monarchist requests, Hitler stated that his objective was to crush communism and Judaism, a task neither the Crown Prince as an individual nor the monarchy as an institution would ever be 'tough enough' to carry out. Finally, in February 1934, Hitler dismissed the monarchist delegates in no uncertain terms with an imperious

declaration that he would no longer permit his 'reconstruction work' (*Aufbauarbeit*)—a twelve- to fifteen-year-long programme of strengthening the army and 'exterminating the perpetrators of the November Revolution'—to be continually interrupted by the German princes' advances.[27]

Although the petitions and enquiries made by these senior monarchists revealed an astounding degree of political naivety, it was nothing compared to the credulity of some of their prominent peers. In October 1933, for example, the retired Lieutenant General August von Cramon wrote an absurdly ingenuous memorandum in which he suggested that Wilhelm II should have his royal rights reinstated, almost by way of a gift for his seventy-fifth birthday in January 1934. According to the seventy-three-year-old former officer, this would be desirable as the Kaiser would now be in a position to unite the 'hereditary wisdom' of his 'dynasty' with the sagacity and dignity that came with age. Cramon also revealed his opinion that the National Socialists would end up restoring the monarchy themselves. This idea was based on two beliefs: firstly, his conviction that 'Adolf Hitler himself is, insofar as is known, a monarchist', and, secondly, his notion that the search for an 'ideal Führer' would necessarily alight on the 'immortal' bastion of '*Führertum*' that the hereditary monarchy represented.[28] Although Cramon's worldview had become completely unreal by this time, his views were by no means unique among the aristocracy's ranks. In fact, his text can be seen as the high-water mark of a broader shift towards implausible leadership fantasies that afflicted an ever-shrinking group of noble monarchists who became lost in their longing for a bygone era.[29]

A few months after the appearance of Cramon's memorandum, bitter clashes broke out between members of the old and the new political Right at monarchist celebrations that were held to mark Wilhelm II's seventy-fifth birthday in Berlin. In contrast to the tranquil festivities in faraway Doorn—genteel parties where one could still 'admire' the assembled 'princely personages in their old, colourful uniforms' and the 'fabulous jewellery' worn by the 'ladies'[30]—the main event held at Berlin Zoo on 27 January 1934 was stormed by bands of marauding SA thugs and seized upon by Hitler as an opportunity to ban all monarchist associations for good. A report written about the incident by Count Rüdiger von der Goltz—the chairman of the Reich Association of German Officers who had been a member of the Nazi party since 1933[31]—provides a prime example of the older generation's tendency to be scandalized by superficial vulgarities. In tones of outrage, the seventy-year-old retired Major General sketched out the violent scenes that

unfolded after he gave a birthday address dedicated to the Kaiser, a figure he referred to as 'our former Supreme Warlord'. 'Two hours after the speech', he wrote,

> a horde broke in—some in civilian clothes, some besmirching the reputation of the brown shirt—and rampaged like the Bolsheviks, mistreating officers and their wives, demolishing furniture, and ruining ladies' clothes by shooting starter pistols and firecrackers with a loud bang.... I then said to those gathered: Adolf Hitler will never endorse what we have just experienced. Do not let your loyalty to him go awry.[32]

Crucially, the horror felt by the ageing aristocratic monarchists who witnessed the incident was inspired less by a sense of political incompatibility with the Nazis and more by the shock that they had drastically misjudged both the National Socialists' aims and the brutality of their methods. It did not take them long to realize the error of their ways, however. Indeed, any remaining notions of using National Socialism as a vehicle that would one day carry Wilhelm II to the throne were finally dashed in the months following the event.

According to a report by the columnist Bella Fromm, a brown-uniformed 'horde' also invaded a ball that the DAG held in Berlin in January 1934. The intruders knocked down a number of old men, played football with noble officers' helmets, and threatened the ladies present with a revolver.[33] An old-fashioned letter of protest written after the event by the ageing August von Cramon and the aggressive response he received from a young Nazi nobleman again demonstrate just how poorly aristocratic monarchists had understood the new era and the modus operandi of the fascists. They also provide a perfect example of the clash that was erupting all over Germany between the conservative old guard and their more youthful National Socialist compatriots at that time. Cramon's letter of complaint echoed the typical objections that were being raised by a number of former military commanders who had dramatically misread and underestimated the kind of warfare the Nazis were about to unleash upon Germany and the wider world.[34] If they were expecting Hitler's acolytes to grovel or apologize in response to their protestations, however, they were in for a serious shock. Indeed, the answer from Johann von Leers—a historian, former SA leader, and prominent NSDAP propagandist—read like a declaration of war to the last surviving remnants of Prussian conservatism. Leers not only stated that National Socialism had always opposed Marxists and reactionaries in equal measure, but

also stated that the movement would actively work to prevent opportunistic members of the old elites from jumping on the bandwagon of Nazi power. 'We did not fight in the streets, get wounded, and be arrested for such people', he declared.[35]

By 1933, this kind of eye-opening revelation had largely taken the wind out of the monarchists' sails. The remarkable speed at which the National Socialists put paid to royalist ambitions is illustrated by two texts that were written less than three years apart. In November 1930, the retired cavalry captain Detlev von Arnim was still able to use glittering imagery to envisage the day 'on which we will ride over the Rhine and bring back the Hohenzollerns' Imperial crown from the blood and the flames'.[36] In contrast, by August 1933, the Nazis' successes had already convinced Achim von Arnim-Cunersdorf—a multiply wounded front-line officer from the 1st Guards Infantry Regiment who latterly joined the NSDAP and served as a General in the SA—to abandon his peer's kitschy, chivalric tones and put plans for a restoration on the backburner. 'All Germans bow down in awe before the memory of the Imperial German Empire', he wrote, 'but as long as our Führer continues to construct the new Germany, the idea of the monarchy lies dormant.'[37]

By the time Hitler acceded to power, monarchism had lost both its logical focal point and the loyalties of the younger generation. As a result, it was now largely useless as a barrier to separate the aristocracy from National Socialism. Nevertheless, other factors—and matters of property ownership in particular—continued to play a prominent role in hampering the rapprochement between the two divergent groups.

Landowners and Settlers

Questions of property ownership—or, to be more precise, how the Nazis dealt with major landholdings both in theory and in practice—formed another obstacle between nobles and National Socialism. A considerable part of aristocratic scepticism towards the NSDAP emerged from the concern that the National *Socialists* might one day actually live up to the second part of their name. Indeed, much of the key terminology used by the Nazis—including words like 'movement', 'revolution', 'national community', and 'socialism'—must have sounded quite horrifying to noble ears. Admittedly, a handful of developments did go some way to assuaging aristocratic fears

on this score. Hitler made official statements about property ownership, for example, the Nazi party opposed a referendum on dispossessing the German princes, and the Strasser brothers' 'left-wing' faction of the NSDAP split off from the rest of the organization in the summer of 1930.[38] Despite these encouraging signs, however, the irritation caused by the Nazis' opaque position on property ownership probably remained the most significant barrier between the landed aristocracy and the National Socialist movement overall.

Although many nobles were sympathetic to the Nazis' fundamental political stance, their scepticism about Hitler's position on property ownership could be detected in such disparate groups as the aristocratic associations of Bavaria and the pro-Nazi ranks of the DAG.[39] In 1930, for example, the pro-fascist analyst Manfred von Binzer gave a speech to the DAG's executive board in which he described the NSDAP's Twenty-Five Point Programme as 'immature, illogical, contradictory and impossible'. Binzer's address, which also later appeared in the *Adelsblatt*, reserved particular ire for the programme's clauses on property ownership (points 11, 13, and 17) and the Nazis' new Agrarian Policy, all of which he dismissed as 'plainly Bolshevist experiments'.[40]

From an early stage, Hitler and various other leaders of the National Socialist movement—a political force that oscillated between espousing socialist-sounding ideas in theory and putting right-wing policies into practice—had understood that issuing reassurances about property would be crucial for gaining the support of the aristocratic and middle-class elites in general and the owners of landed estates in particular. Indeed, Hitler famously took pains to dispel property owners' fears about the National Socialists' vaguely worded agenda and distance himself from the keenly anti-capitalist rhetoric of the left-wing of his organization. In April 1928, for instance, the Nazi leader issued an official party declaration which stated that his movement was rooted in the 'soil of private property' and framed the dispossession clause in point 17 of the Twenty-Five Point Programme as a weapon that would only ever be used 'against Jewish land speculation companies'.[41] In some respects, Hitler was true to his word. In fact, the Nazis never attacked, expropriated, or challenged noble property with any serious plans to partition the largest landed estates over the years that followed.

Back in the 1980s, a series of intense academic debates attempted to assess the accuracy of Marxist claims that Germany's industrial tycoons had been enthusiastic, unconditional supporters of the NSDAP. The scholars involved eventually concluded that the country's captains of industry had not

wholeheartedly backed the fascist project, but instead displayed an attitude towards the National Socialists that could perhaps best be described as a position of 'intrigued mistrust'. Interestingly, this same phrase also neatly encapsulates the scepticism that the nobility—or at least those aristocrats who had any substantial property to their name—felt towards the duplicitous economic policy that was espoused by the NSDAP.[42] Over time, both the industrialists' and the landowning aristocrats' suspicions developed into an obstacle that impeded the Nazis from forging links with large numbers of Germany's most influential citizens. This did not escape Hitler's notice. Indeed, as time went on, the Nazi leader made various overtures to big business[43] and gave a wide range of talks in aristocratic castles and manor houses throughout the land. Hitler was also keenly aware that the landowning nobility essentially craved two main things. Firstly—and most importantly—they wanted a guarantee that noble estates would remain in noble hands. And secondly, they wanted assurances that the Nazis would not revive the settlement programmes (*Siedlungsprogramme*) that had been drawn up by Brüning's and Schleicher's cabinets during the Weimar Republic. These latter policies, they feared, would split up indebted properties and result in what landowners termed a state of 'agrarian bolshevism'. The Nazi leader regularly made positive noises about both concerns. In confidential talks he held with Wilhelm Cuno, Count Rüdiger von der Goltz, and Magnus von Levetzow in the autumn of 1930, for example, he floated the possibility of 'supporting land ownership' and 'reintroducing entailed estates'.[44] This was a clever thing to do. Indeed, protecting entailed estates had been one of the landed aristocracy's major ambitions ever since the nineteenth century, and whether or not they would be safeguarded by National Socialist policies was one of the questions that aristocrats most desired an answer to in the period surrounding Hitler's rise to power.

Time and again, aristocratic landowners approached leading National Socialists in an attempt to clarify matters of landownership and gain assurance that their rights to entailed property would be guaranteed. As was discussed in the previous chapter, for instance, Wilhelm von Oertzen began making attempts to get Hitler to speak about property to the *Herrengesellschaft Mecklenburg* as early as 1928.[45] Similarly, in October 1931, a group of Bavarian aristocrats decided to challenge the Nazi theorist Richard Walther Darré on his Agrarian Policy while he was visiting the estate of one of their National Socialist peers.[46] Although they were generally reticent to discuss the matter overall, the Nazis did give concerned aristocrats the occasional word of

reassurance. For example, Hitler personally told noble landowners on numerous occasions that his intentions were 'never ever' aimed at 'breaking up or confiscating larger estates'. 'I am not thinking of [interfering with] landed property that has been inherited or otherwise legitimately acquired', he once declared. His subsequent comment that 'large estates produce more than parcelled ones' also seemed to suggest that this promise not to disturb property would equally apply to major holdings of land. Moreover, in 1931, the Nazi leader articulated his position on the settlement programmes, stating that such plans would only be practical if 'appropriate space' were made available for their implementation. The pages of *Mein Kampf* left no doubt as to where this extra land would be found.[47] Based on such assurances, even the most sceptical individuals among Prussia's influential major landowners came to view Hitler's Agrarian Policy as a 'rather excellent' prospect.[48]

Of course, not everyone was mollified by Hitler's claims. The ranks of the unconvinced included Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, a middle-aged landowner and one of Prussia's foremost remaining conservatives who enjoyed outstanding links to the New Right and whose own son would later come extremely close to assassinating the Nazi leader himself.[49] In 1932, Kleist-Schmenzin published a remarkable pamphlet entitled *National Socialism—A Threat* that vigorously questioned Nazi notions of property rights in a manner that was uncommonly resolute by the East Elbian nobility's usual standards. Kleist-Schmenzin's text revolved around three key issues: property, religion, and the monarchy. It began by referring to the Nazis' 'hatred of the propertied classes' and dedicated a great deal of space to portraying National Socialism as a 'socialist movement' that was saturated by 'Marxist thought'.[50] Another figure who expressed similar doubts was the Franconian Baron Karl Ludwig von Guttenberg. In 1924, despite having declared himself sympathetic to the NSDAP on numerous occasions, Guttenberg announced that the party was unelectable, in part due to its 'communist economic programme'.[51] Efforts to debunk such negative assessments were primarily taken up by National Socialism's aristocratic supporters. In August 1930, for example, Walter von Corswant-Cuntzow—a Pomeranian *Gauleiter*, a landowner, and one of the so-called 'old fighters' (*Alte Kämpfer*) who joined the Nazi party at an early stage—countered assertions that the NSDAP's Agrarian Policy targeted major landowners. In a statement that echoed Hitler's own repeated claims on the subject, he declared that speculators on the financial markets were the only ones the much-feared policy would one ever hold to account.[52]

Although many aristocrats were suspicious that the Nazis' Agrarian Policy harboured a Bolshevist agenda, their concerns never developed into direct opposition to the NSDAP itself. The simple reason for this was that the National Socialists deftly assuaged the nobility's fears every time they made an effort to pin the party down. Even members of the Bavarian aristocracy were convinced by the Nazis' reassuring tones. In 1931, for instance, the noble leaders of the Bavarian Association for Entailed Landed Property got in touch with the upper echelons of the NSDAP via their intermediary, a university professor from Würzburg by the name of Ludwig Pesl. Remarkably, just one meeting with Richard Walther Darré was all it took to convince Pesl—a man who had previously warned the aristocratic youth of the Nazis' socialist tendencies on a number of occasions[53]—to tell his noble masters to lower their guard. As far as Pesl was concerned, the NSDAP's leaders had buried the 'hatchet' for the time being and disclosed views on key issues of property ownership that were similar to his employers' own. In the wake of this announcement, one Baron Redwitz was inspired to pen a hope-filled note to the influential Prince Öttingen. 'If the NSDAP actually listens to [Pesl]', he wrote, 'then this would give us a very agreeable opportunity to influence their trajectory on matters of property ownership, land rights, soil conservation, and, if need be, property entailment.'[54]

From 1933, all of the landed aristocracy's lobby groups increased their attempts to uncover the National Socialists' true intentions. Acting on behalf of the DAG in June 1933, for example, Prince Bentheim personally went to Hitler to inform him that the nobility would like the mechanisms of entailed property to be reinstated. Although such kowtowing advances rarely came to anything, the aristocracy were given occasional glimmers of hope. Their scepticism about the settlement programmes developed by Reich Farmers' Leader Richard Walther Darré evaporated, for instance, when Germany conquered vast swathes of prime 'settlement land' in the east. Unfortunately for the nobility, however, Darré's romantic, propaganda-friendly vision of dividing land up into parcels of 125 hectares that would be farmed by Aryan 'warrior-peasants' failed to meet the real-world demands of total war, which relied on the efficiencies of industrial production and enormous rural estates. This massively undermined Darré's agenda, and he was pushed out of the centre of power as early as 1938.[55]

For many years, the Nazis dangled tantalizing hints of property security in front of the nobility's eyes. Eventually, however, this charade of false hope had to come to an end. One of the most striking examples of this watershed

moment arose when a section of the National Socialist movement treated the nobility with presumptuous aggression by announcing the creation of a new, racially defined 'peasant elite'. This strand of Nazi policy prized the peasantry, disparaged the nobility, and claimed that the upper echelons of the National Socialist party saw themselves as the offspring of peasant stock rather than the aristocracy.[56] According to this worldview, the peasant elite would outclass the nobility due to the purity of their blood. Crucially, they would also outrank them by taking control of new landed estates. These latter territories, dubbed *Hegehöfe* ('hereditary landholdings' or, more ominously, 'breeding yards'[57]) in the Nazi idiom, would be situated within Germany and in the annexed colonial lands in Eastern Europe.[58] Overall, this provocative concept of forming a new 'nobility' of ideal, purebred 'warrior peasants' who would manage estates in the east was one of the most drastic declarations of war the National Socialists ever aimed at the German aristocracy. The conflict that broke out as a result of this declaration will be explored over the following pages through the writings of Hans Friedrich Karl Günther and Richard Walther Darré, two of the most important National Socialist theorists who worked in this particular ideological field.

As early as 1924, the closing section of Hans F. K. Günther's popular book *The Racial Study of Europe* had called for the establishment of a novel type of 'new aristocracy' that both caught the attention of and spread concern among the old nobility's ranks.[59] This was compounded in 1926 when Günther—a man who held a doctorate in philology and bore the nickname *Rassenpapst* ('Race Pope')—published another, more specific work entitled *Nobility and Race* which attempted to prove that the terms 'nobility' and 'Nordic race' were synonymous with one another. Although Günther stated that the majority of the old nobility would continue to belong to his new aristocracy thanks to their predominantly 'Nordic' blood, he nevertheless also declared that the traditional noble notion of equal birth (*Ebenbürtigkeit*) would henceforth have to be abandoned. 'In the Nordic way of thinking', he wrote, individuals of 'equal birth' were all those who were 'hereditarily healthy, hereditarily capable, and hereditarily intelligent'. Furthermore, only people who met all of these requirements could be regarded as custodians of 'pure Nordic blood'. As far as the nobility were concerned, these ideas had a number of worrying implications. For one thing, anyone who could not fulfil Günther's 'racial' criteria—including such high-ranking aristocrats as princes and dukes—would not belong to the nobility in future. Similarly, racially 'inferior' princely dynasties would never be allowed to regain their

status of old, and genetically 'inferior' individuals could play no part in the project to re-engineer the Germanic race. Moreover, every 'Nordic' farmers' daughter would now be regarded as far more valuable than the non-Nordic daughter of a king.[60] Although Günther explicitly praised the DAG and the EDDA project for the work they had already done, he saw them merely as the first steps in an overarching process of genetic 'screening and selective mating' that the noble youth had already started to adopt.[61] This latter philosophy asked its adherents to reject biologically unsuitable partners in order to protect and improve the nation's 'Nordic' bloodlines. This relentless emphasis on racial purity was particularly vital for the *Rassenpapst*'s worldview. Indeed, despite commending Napoleon's young generals—a group whose careers were famously built on their merits rather than their hereditary standing—Günther wanted to base his new nobility on the strength of one's family line, the calibre of one's biological make-up, and the quality of one's blood alone. Although such attributes could be inherited and protected, they could not be established by displays of accomplishment or success. This view of the family as a biological breeding machine flew in the face of a number of noble concepts and excluded all those aristocratic clans who could not meet the criteria of Nordic racial purity that Günther required.[62]

Günther's theories were supported by a number of particularly enthusiastic eugenicists who used techniques from the natural sciences to promote their racial views. In 1927, for example, a physician by the name of Ernst Müller wrote a text about Wilhelm II which claimed that the concept of equal birth had resulted in a 'glut of inferior genetic material and downright biological degeneracy' that ran right through the nobility as a whole. As a consequence, Müller stated, the historical aristocracy was largely useless for the creation of a fresh ruling elite. In his opinion, following the principles of modern eugenics was now the only way to establish the new 'German nobility'—a caste endowed with 'blonde hair, [a] slender head, blue eyes' a 'good intellect,... a self-assured, reserved nature and a handsome gait' to whom the future would belong.[63]

In 1930, Richard Walther Darré—a Buenos Aires-born merchant's son, a qualified agriculturalist, and a former front-line officer who worked for the NSDAP's so-called 'Agrarian Apparatus'[64]—published a book entitled *The New Nobility from Blood and Soil* which expressed views about the new Nordic nobility that were considerably more far-reaching than Günther's own.[65] Darré put the cat among the old aristocracy's pigeons in three main

ways. Firstly, he threatened to break the economic backbone of their class. Secondly, he probably did more than any individual to scupper the minor nobility's mission of recommending themselves to the Nazis as a natural-born cadre of Führers and the logical avant-garde of *völkisch* thought. And thirdly, his ideas about the new aristocracy effectively branded the old nobility unfit to lead the future Reich by asserting that they were no longer 'healthy', that there were very few of them left, and that their remaining members hardly had enough 'good blood' in their veins to 'compare with a peasant boy from the Nordic race'.[66] This latter concept unquestionably represented one of the most direct challenges to the old aristocracy that ever emerged from the National Socialist movement as a whole.

Thus forced onto the back foot, even aristocrats who had generally been rather keen on the *völkisch* ideology now began opposing Darré's vision of a brave new world where so-called 'breeding wardens' (*Zuchtwarte*) would cultivate the racial purity of the Reich by pairing up husbands with wives and putting them in charge of *Hegehof* estates in the east. For example, one Baron Wolfgang von Gersdorff declared that it would be undignified and foolish to 'breed *homo sapiens* like the best of the mammals in the *Sprunggarten* [a facility where horses procreate]'. 'The *Hegehof* ["breeding yard"] is only one step away from the bordello', he continued, 'because sex . . . is imbued with a one-sided, exaggerated significance there that must surely disgust any man of morals . . . . The breeding warden's unholy lack of sentimentality can produce more vermin, but not valuable humanity. That requires greater dedication. A man's value depends on his spirit and soul, after all.'[67] Similarly emphatic objections also sprang up wherever aristocrats' sense of superiority had not been entirely eroded by fantasies about racial purity and blood. Even a handful of racist journalists from the nobility's ranks recognized the threat that Darré posed and started printing anxious texts that attempted to contain the fire that his views had started.[68]

As a consequence of his opinions, Darré—who had also ruffled noble feathers by mounting particularly vicious attacks against the exiled Kaiser—started being regarded as an 'enemy of the nobility' in aristocratic circles. He was even challenged to a duel, which he refused. Although Darré doubtless came to symbolize various points of contention that exercised the nobility, however, this interpretation of him as the aristocracy's implacable foe is in need of revision.

First, focusing too hard on Darré's rhetoric can lead one to overlook the fact that his views actually gained very little traction within the Third Reich.

Indeed, pragmatism even won out over Darré's romanticism within the *Reichsnährstand*—the Nazi organization tasked with regulating food production in Germany that was under his control. In October 1933, the important *Reichserbhofgesetz* ('land heritage law') had banned the entailed ownership of large forest estates, forced farmers to work their land as independent concerns, and stated that the hereditary farms (*Erbhöfe*) managed by 'warrior-peasants' would be limited to a maximum of 125 hectares in size. Unfortunately for Darré, however, such romantic views were not equal to the Nazis' plans for waging total war. Ultimately, it transpired, a wartime economy relied on the performance and efficiency of large-scale farms. As a result, Darré's ideas for the new nobility decomposed within the belly of the National Socialist beast[69] and his standing within the Nazi polyocracy began to slide after 1938.[70] The political scientist Franz Neumann summed up the reason for Darré's downfall in *Behemoth*, his masterly vivisection of the National Socialist state that was published in 1942. When it came to Darré's ideal of mid-sized farms, he declared, 'National Socialism can hardly be expected to sacrifice efficiency to an anachronism. Only the ideology remains romantic, opposed to the reality, as usual.'[71]

Although they came at it from a very different angle to Neumann—a Jewish scholar who was writing in faraway New York—Germany's major aristocratic landowners also arrived at the same reassuring conclusion. As a result, even aristocratic owners of latifundia (very large estates of over 2,500 acres in size) started becoming more confident of their position within the Third Reich. In a meeting that the major landowner Prince Alexander von Dohna-Schlobitten held with Darré in the summer of 1938, the prince felt emboldened to ask the Reich Farmers' Leader whether it would be possible to register his latifundia in East Prussia as *Erbhof* hereditary farmland. Achieving *Erbhof* status was highly sought-after among the landed aristocracy as it seemed to resemble the older institution of *Fideikommiss* entailed estates, and would allow them to bequeath the entirety of their territories to their eldest sons instead of splitting them up between all their heirs. The only problem with *Erbhof* status was that its proposed limit of 125 hectares was a serious barrier for practically every single landowning aristocratic family, the vast majority of whose estates exceeded this area by far. Nevertheless, during their conversation, Darré assuaged the prince's fears on this score by mentioning the existence of exemption clauses in the *Reichserbhofgesetz*[72] and explicitly claiming that the National Socialist state was interested in 'entailing land holdings of all sizes' that were 'owned by

long-established families with German or related blood.'[73] Following the meeting, Dohna-Schlobitten sent the minutes of the encounter to the relevant authorities with a glee that was, in hindsight, rather too hasty: ultimately, this wealthy landowner did not manage to entail his properties before they were confiscated from him in 1945.

Not all aristocrats had to suffer Dohna-Schlobitten's fate, however. In fact, a far more successful application was submitted in the same year by the Hereditary Prince Josias zu Waldeck-Pyrmont, a figure who had been a member of the NSDAP since 1929 and—thanks in part to his close relationship with Heinrich Himmler—had risen to the rank of SS-General in 1936. This involvement in the Nazi movement seems to have paid dividends for Waldeck-Pyrmont when it came to property rights. Indeed, when he asked to have his 5,000-plus hectares of land given *Erbhof* status in 1938, his request was personally sponsored by the Regional Farmers' Leader for the Province of Kurhessen, who filed a report highlighting the applicant's extraordinary service to the Nazi movement, rating him as 'reputable' and a 'capable farmer', and indicating that his forebears had never expanded their holdings by seizing land from the peasantry. Of course, the hereditary prince did not escape without doing something in exchange, and had to hand over a small portion of the territory he leased out to local peasants as a 'land contribution' for 'resettlement'. Once the SS-General had fulfilled that requirement, however, *Erbhof* status was granted to his mortgage-free land holdings—which, at a total area of 5,044 hectares, exceeded the maximum legal limit of 125 hectares by a factor of forty—as early as December 1938.[74] In a similar vein, Prince Otto von Bismarck and Count Hermann zu Dohna-Finckenstein even managed to have their properties recognized as *Erbhof* estates as far back as 1933. Their own commitment to Nazism was clear. Both men belonged to the NSDAP, for example, and Prince Bismarck—one of the famous Chancellor's grandsons—publicly declared that he would be proud to bear 'the honorary title of *Bauer* [peasant]' in one of the many speeches he gave in favour of Hitler and the Third Reich.[75] Just how useful it was to be accepted by the National Socialist state can be discerned by comparing these success stories with the example of Prince Alois zu Löwenstein, a southern, Catholic aristocrat who never joined the NSDAP himself. In 1940, Löwenstein's request to have his 7,000-plus hectares registered as *Erbhof* land was declined due to his strong 'denominational ties', his lack of 'Germanness', and his dearth of 'farming ability'.[76]

The second reason to revisit Darré's reputation as an 'anti-aristocratic' figure is that, at least superficially, his use of the imagery of 'blood' and 'soil'[77] was strikingly similar to how aristocrats traditionally saw themselves. The words *Blut* ('blood') and *Boden* ('soil') were essential elements of the nobility's self-image. In fact, it is hard to imagine a section of society that would have been more familiar with Darré's basic terminology than the aristocracy—a group that, for over a millennium, had been claiming to possess specific attributes that were passed down from generation to generation via their high-quality 'blood'. It is also difficult to think of another demographic that would have felt more at ease with Darré's vision of a hierarchical, anti-metropolitan way of life that was rooted in German soil and linked to military ideals.

More recent analyses of Darré's symbolism have correctly shown how he radicalized the discourse on 'breeding' that was circulating during the early decades of the twentieth century. A qualified horse breeder, Darré took the nebulous discussions of such right-wing intellectuals as Langbehn, Chamberlain, Spengler, and Günther[78] and used them to construct his own rigorous system of biological determinism.[79] He then ruthlessly applied this theory both to his examination of the historical aristocracy and his vision for the new nobility of the future. This led him to view the ideal German aristocracy as the outcome of a sophisticated process of breeding that followed the same methods employed by producers of thoroughbred horses. In Darré's eyes, the aristocracy were therefore a racial distillate that had arisen from the peasantry via 'selective breeding'. This idea had two main implications: firstly, that the aristocracy and the peasantry were directly related to each other, and secondly, that the nobility could be regarded as an 'ennobled peasantry'.[80]

At first glance, one might expect that the nobility would have detested these views. As was demonstrated by Baron Münchhausen's discussion of drowning 'dachshund-pug crosses' in Chapter 3, however, the radical imagery of biological determinist breeding was not merely the preserve of eccentric horse breeders, but was also espoused by members of the old nobility themselves. Moreover, Darré's vision for the future had more in common with the lifestyles and warrior-ideals of independent landowners than with the desk-bound existences of right-wing intellectuals. After all, his ideas were uttered in the idiom of the pigsty rather than composed in the language of academic debate, and his discussions of horses, breeding, and nature would generally have made more sense to animal-rearing agriculturalists than

metropolitan desk-jockeys. Ascertaining whether the nobility would actually have been able to follow the 'downright astonishing' mental shortcuts Darré took when he extrapolated the conventions of horse breeding into rules for creating a 'noble race of men' is beyond the scope of this book.[81] What is clear, however, is that by transferring practical equine advice directly into the political domain,[82] Darré inarguably transformed a mere metaphor that had been dreamt up by right-wing intellectuals into a concrete plan for how to alter the biological make-up of entire populations. Indeed, to borrow the words of the philosopher Ernst Bloch, as a result of Darré's efforts, 'the metaphor [has] drunk blood and lives'.[83]

A third factor that underscores the need to reassess Darré's supposedly anti-noble stance can be found in the extremely close connection he enjoyed with the old aristocracy on a personal level. A year after publishing *The New Nobility from Blood and Soil*, Darré divorced his first wife and married Baronness Charlotte von Vietinghoff-Scheel—a noblewoman who worked as his secretary at the 'Brown House', the NSDAP's Munich headquarters—in August 1931.[84] In addition, Darré's own sister was married to Manfred von Knobelsdorff, an aristocratic SS officer whom Heinrich Himmler named the first *Burghauptmann* ('castle captain') of an *SS-Ordensburg*, an SS training facility and cult site located in an impressive Renaissance castle in Westphalia.

On the face of it, there hardly seems to be any link between the genetic plans espoused by the architect of the new nobility—a man who categorized women into four ranked breeding groups—[85]and his marriage to a member of the ancient aristocracy. Nevertheless, this connection holds the key to the most important consideration that made Darré's concept at least partially palatable to the noble old guard. Of course, it is true that Darré did many things to devalue the German nobility. For instance, the book he published in 1930 borrowed the slogan 'We need a new nobility!' from the Artaman League[86] that was undoubtedly targeted at the aristocracy. The text also answered the question of whether Germany still possessed a nobility at all 'with a pitiless no' and claimed that, after their total breakdown in 1918, there was 'less than nothing' of the aristocracy left.[87] Despite this, however, the fact that Darré chose to marry a woman from the old nobility shows that he was not unflinchingly opposed to all of their kind. Indeed, when read from the perspective of the dispossessed, struggling minor nobility, his writings even gave them reason to hope.

Crucially, Darré's disparaging comments about the nobility merely deplored the institution's *current* condition and did not exclude the possibility

of future improvement. As such, he was not calling for the historical aristocracy to be abolished outright, but merely echoed an older *völkisch* tradition that discussed the future of Germany's elite 'out loud'[88] and happened to use the term 'nobility' to describe the caste it hoped to create. Admittedly, there can be no doubt that Darré's ideas completely invalidated the traditional definition of the word 'nobility' overall. At the same time, his genetically defined concept for the 'new nobility' seemed to give individual aristocrats and entire branches of noble families the opportunity to re-emerge from their lower-middle-class positions and establish themselves as permanent fixtures of the fresh elite. The schism caused by Darré's ideas can hardly have seemed any more drastic than the deep scars the DAG—an organization for which he reserved explicit praise[89]—had been making in the stock of noble ideas for decades. The minor nobility in particular saw Darré's views as a prime opportunity. After all, their ranks included thousands of exactly the kind of 'racially pure', militaristic, colonization-hungry 'warrior-peasants' he wanted to unleash on conquered territories 'in the east'. Moreover, his dream of increasing the level of 'Nordic' genetic material among the German *Volk*[90] was founded on a fertile concept of selective breeding that many members of old aristocratic clans could have complied with straight away.

Overall, Darré's ideas did include definite barbs that were aimed at the minority of aristocrats who owned large latifundia estates. Simply put, the Reich Farmers' Leader wanted to 'restructure' noble latifundia and break them up into various 'hereditary landholdings' (*Hegehöfe*) that would be shared out between different members of a family.[91] As might be expected, Germany's princes and *grands seigneurs* viewed this proposal as a threat. As far as second and subsequent noble offspring and downcast former military officers were concerned, however, it represented nothing less than the promise of a future paradise. Indeed, Darré's ideology seemed to give these disenfranchized individuals the chance to acquire a *Hegehof*, retain their names and titles, and marry the kind of 'racially high-grade woman' who could help them join the kinds of 'Führer dynasties' that would carry on producing down-to-earth leaders for many generations to come.

Ultimately, a new amalgamation of Darré's and the aristocracy's ideas about racial purity took root within the SS and found expression in their plans for the future of the territories that Germany had chosen to annex. Various strands of noble thought had been veering ever closer to the SS's ideology for some time. For instance, long before Darré ever published his

texts, the DAG's leaders had discussed the idea of electing 'breeding wardens' who would advise 'race-conscious, German-blooded young noblemen' by verifying the 'pure-bloodedness' of their future brides. Baron Houwald even built upon the work of his racist EDDA lists by offering the noble youth a verification facility where 'specialist' race inspectors would make 'confidential enquiries' in order to 'warn in advance' any individuals who were looking to get engaged and thus protect 'future generations from a covert influx of Jewish blood'.[92] By the time such extreme ideas had been proposed, the nobility were only a few steps away from forging open links with the SS themselves. In fact, the EDDA's and the SS's genealogical tables were already very much alike, and inclusion in the EDDA already made it easier for aristocrats to join, gain promotions within, and be granted marriage permits by the SS.[93] For its part, the SS also began to close the ideological gap between the two institutions by encroaching ever further into the aristocracy's traditional domain. For example, Himmler explicitly referred to the SS as a 'chivalric order' and the 'new nobility'[94] on numerous occasions and liberally helped himself to various guiding principles and symbols of authority from the aristocracy's well-stocked arsenal. Moreover, unambiguous references to the SS as an increasingly powerful elite that would rival the old aristocracy, decide who could join the 'new nobility', and set a benchmark for the future upper class became increasingly common after 1933.[95]

Over time, this ideological shift towards *völkisch* notions of racial purity pushed the nobility further and further along the road to self-destruction. Indeed, as the traditional foundations of noble leadership were replaced by genetic criteria, the painstakingly preserved boundary line that had once separated them from the *Volk* started to be rubbed away. After all, the aristocracy were not the only demographic that could supply the future elite with 'pure-blooded' recruits, and any elite that was predominantly defined by race would necessarily only include a homeopathic number of nobles that was equal to the tiny percentage they represented in Germany's population as a whole. To make matters worse, the *völkisch* claim that the largest currents of pure blood flowed outside the nobility's veins also gradually called into question every specific claim the historical nobility had ever made about their own innate 'superiority' across the centuries.

As the years went by, the SS's criteria for the formation of a 'new nobility' were increasingly upheld as the benchmark standards the old aristocracy would also have to observe. In 1935, for example, the Bavarian Count Kuno von Dürckheim urged the nobility to take up the SS's 'noble gauntlet' and

compete with them over the creation of the future elite. Potential wives should be 'tested' in the same way that breeders checked their animals, he claimed, and 'pure-blooded' men should prove their mettle by engaging in 'hard' professions.[96] In a similar vein, the DAG remarked in 1938 that, although the SS were in a position to form a ruling elite, the all-male nature of the organization placed certain biological constraints on their reproductive capacities. As a result, they declared that the aristocracy's objective should be to work 'in concert with hereditarily healthy, valuable non-noble families' to 'form the wellspring from which the state and the party [will] draw their best performers'.[97] This latter decision signed the old nobility's death warrant by finally accepting the most insidious idea that the National Socialists ever had to bring the historical aristocracy to their knees.

Presumptuousness

> We are eager to contribute to the Third Reich—I, at least, am unreservedly ready and willing to do so—but I will not allow my faith, my social stratum, and historical truth to be dragged through the mud. Who will pass this message on to the key people in charge if we aristocrats do not?
>
> —Count Franz von Galen, March 1934[98]

Both the nobles and the National Socialists frequently accused one another of presumptuousness. The aristocracy's claim to wield hereditary might was often viewed as arrogance by members of the NSDAP, for example, and many aristocrats disliked the 'presumptuous' way in which Nazi peasants, workers, and lower-middle-class citizens grasped at positions of power that had been beyond their reach before 1918. To make matters worse, the Nazis and the nobility both harboured elitist notions that they alone were uniquely deserving of influence and respect. Aristocrats backed up this opinion by invoking their titles and privileges that had been granted by monarchs and handed down to them by many generations of their glorious forebears. The National Socialists, for their part, saw themselves as the representatives of a *Volksgemeinschaft* whose members served as the guardians of their ancestral *Lebensraum* ('living space'), stood out due to their ideological steadfastness and biological superiority, and were bound together across the generations by experience of a shared fate.

At first glance, the two groups appear to have had a fair amount of ideological common ground. For example, the National Socialists' vision of a

Führer surrounded by his followers seemed to go hand in hand with the aristocracy's hierarchical worldview. The Nazis' militaristic, anti-democratic convictions also bore a number of similarities with how the Prussian minor nobility perceived both themselves and society at large. Moreover, both the nobles and the National Socialists used related vocabulary to describe their elite status, such as when the Nazis appropriated the aristocracy's cult of ancestors for their own ends. Upon closer inspection, however, it quickly becomes apparent that their viewpoints clashed considerably in their struggle for political predominance and a number of ideological and practical obstacles stopped noble Führers from fully integrating into the National Socialist movement. In order to overcome these hurdles, one of two things would have to have happened: either the aristocrats had to renounce the pre-eminence of their rank, or the Nazis had to accept that the aristocracy had an inborn ability to rule. Both of these roads to rapprochement were littered with significant stumbling blocks. Nazis from socially modest backgrounds often provoked aristocrats with their bold and strident claims, for example, and many National Socialists took umbrage at the arrogance and disdain much of the nobility displayed towards their ordinary fellow citizens.

Over the years, various theorists have argued that National Socialism was a movement with 'revolutionary' traits.[99] In 1965, for instance, the sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf declared that the concept of the '*Volksgenosse* does not permit the idea of the subjugated subject to return.'[100] A key element of the Nazis' ideological vocabulary, the word *Volksgenosse*—which denotes a full member of the National Socialist 'people's community'—hijacked the term *Genosse* ('comrade') from the political Left and was used to suggest that all 'racially pure' German citizens were equals as far as the Third Reich was concerned. In practice, however, this apparent egalitarianism faltered in a range of different ways. In fact, a number of post-war accounts show that Nazis from modest backgrounds believed aristocrats could never become fully-fledged *Volksgenossen* and that lower-middle-class members of the NSDAP started opposing the noble 'lords' with increasing self-confidence after 1918. Another factor that hampered the aristocrats' position as equal *Volksgenossen* can be seen in the lyrics of the *Horst-Wessel Lied*—the anthem of the largely proletarian, lower-middle-class SA that describes how their comrades who were gunned down 'by the Red Front and reactionaries' still marched with them 'in spirit'. Although the brawling, trigger-happy SA predominantly aimed violent outbursts against what they perceived as the 'Red Front',[101] they also certainly harboured resentments against

'reactionaries'—a group that, in their eyes, was often synonymous with the aristocracy. Of course, such examples of friction, resentment and mistrust only tell one side of the story. In fact, the other side arose from the nobility's ruling habitus itself. In 1932, Reich President Hindenburg perfectly encapsulated the arrogance of this ingrained 'lordly' mindset when he disparagingly described Adolf Hitler as a 'Bohemian Corporal' whom he would never appoint as his chancellor.[102] Among the younger generation, the most prominent example of this same phenomenon was the *Oath* that Count Claus von Stauffenberg composed shortly before he made his famous attempt on Hitler's life in 1944. In the text, the south German count rejected the 'lie of equality' and wrote respectfully of the social 'hierarchies created by nature'.[103] Both sides of this conflict between the aristocracy and their National Socialist compatriots will be examined in more detail over the following pages.

The nobility's contempt for the lower orders can be confirmed by taking another look at the startlingly homogeneous accounts that appeared in aristocratic autobiographies after 1945. As so often with noble self-portrayals, the authors predominantly relied on anecdotal snapshots to get their message across. In this instance, all of the narratives hoped to give a similar impression of how their peers had reacted when confronted with the National Socialist state. One example portrays an encounter between Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin and the Nazi leader himself. Sitting enthroned in a broad armchair and puffing cigar fumes into his (non-smoking) interlocutor's face, the nobleman is described listening with obvious disinterest as Hitler, perched on a low footstool, gauchely declaims his plans for bringing Europe to heel. Another tale set in the Reichstag reports how Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau once grabbed Joseph Goebbels by the scruff of his neck and forced him back down onto his bench like an insolent schoolboy. In a similarly imperious narrative, Oldenburg-Januschau's wife (*née* the Countess von Kanitz), greets an SA man who comes to their manor house to raise money with an officious cry of 'Take your boots off first, boy.' Thus robbed of his militaristic footwear and left padding around in his socks, the submissive young man is forced to stand there while the lord of the manor disparages the impassioned flyer he has just handed him. Spying a passage declaring 'We died for the new Reich!', Oldenburg-Januschau remarks 'But you're still alive for the time being!' and hands the stockinged SA man ten marks. Yet another anecdote recounts how one Prussian landowner refused to fly the Nazi flag above his property despite threats of armed retaliation.

After ignoring several similar commands, one of his peers actually hoisted the Swastika banner above his own estate, but only did so by attaching it to the top of a tall pine tree that he erected in the middle of a pigsty. Hitler himself consistently appears in aristocratic memoirs as a lower-middle-class individual with a pitiful demeanour. Indeed, various accounts describe his 'criminal's face', his brash hairstyle, and the 'waiter-like' appearance of the man who, even when clad in his ill-fitting suits, unfailingly came across as a lowly 'lad' and never a 'lord'. A conspicuous number of noble narratives use similar trifles to highlight the distance that aristocrats naturally kept between themselves and the unthinkable style of the 'repugnant', 'puffed-up proles'. If such tales are to be believed, the aristocracy would never have been able to see eye to eye with the vegetable soup-slurping Führer and his subordinates. The pages of aristocratic autobiographies published after the Second World War are also crowded with descriptions of little symbolic victories in which noble masters allegedly put lower-middle-class Nazis in their place.[104] One story of a group of aristocrats who shot pistols at Hitler's portrait became such a popular feature of the nobility's unflinchingly self-referential 'narrative community' (*Erzählgemeinschaft*) that it soon proved impossible to remember where it had taken place or who had actually taken part.[105]

Of course, it does not require any particularly sophisticated interpretative skill to cast doubt on this batch of post-war noble anecdotes. At the same time, however, it is quite plausible that many of the imperious outbursts they contain really happened. Indeed, although Hitler was generally held in positive regard among the nobility, contemporary aristocratic assessments of the Nazi leader are replete with claims that he was little more than 'a very good drummer'—i.e. a mere herald of the future order who did not have 'what it takes to be a great Führer' himself. In a letter he sent to General Erich Ludendorff in 1923, for instance, Magnus von Levetzow claimed that Hitler 'lacks what it takes to be a commander'.[106] This negative assessment remained popular among the aristocracy as a whole.

Despite the domineering, anti-Nazi tenor they hoped to portray, however, noble autobiographies that were published after the Second World War do not provide evidence of any underlying, collective aristocratic opposition that was specifically aimed against the 'right-wing rabble'. In fact, they merely recycled the self-same lordly tone that noble memoirs had used to discuss the 'left-wing rabble' between 1918 and 1945. As such, these grotesquely distorted anecdotes contain a kernel of truth that reveals a great deal about the aristocracy's attitude towards their inferiors. Indeed, as a

direct result of their caste's thousand-year-old tradition of wielding power, the nobility were actually far more reluctant than other sections of society to integrate into the *Volksgemeinschaft* and bow voluntarily before the lower-middle-class leaders of the NSDAP. Ultimately, when the stability of this aristocratic ruling habitus collided with the palpably swelling self-assurance of the ordinary *Volksgenossen*, it resulted in an explosive combination that turned the nobility into a permanent, alien presence in the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In spite of this antagonism, however, there was no shortage of calls from National Socialists inviting (or commanding) the aristocracy to join their ranks, to accept their rules, and to march alongside them with the same 'calm, steady step' that was enshrined in the SA's *Horst Wessel Song*. Pro-aristocratic Nazis often framed these invitations as extensions of the imagined sense of community that had apparently been forged in the trenches of the First World War. According to one Nazi newspaper in 1932, the only thing that counted on the front line was whether someone was a 'loser' or one of the 'lads'. No matter 'what [you] were called', it claimed, 'whether it was Miller or Jones [*Mayer oder Hintertupfer*] or Count Such-and-Such', everyone was held in the same high regard. 'The baron, who was a *nobleman*, admired the metalworker and had no need to rise "above him" '. By the same token, 'the metalworker', who was also considered a '*nobleman*' himself, 'respected the baron and had no need to hate him'.[107] In 1926, even Hitler made a similar claim at a party rally in Bamberg that was designed to rein in the anti-capitalist wing of the NSDAP. During a speech he gave in opposition to the confiscation of princely property, the Nazi leader declared that 'for us there are today no princes, only Germans'.[108] This phrase, which modified a celebrated quotation by Wilhelm II, effectively cut the aristocracy down to the size of ordinary *Volksgenossen*.

Such statements did not entirely fall on deaf noble ears. Indeed, from around the year 1930, the aristocracy intensified their efforts to draw nearer to the National Socialist movement by ostentatiously distancing themselves from their former privilege. This attitude of self-denial was triggered by the omnipresent concept of the 'new nobility' and the National Socialist notion of an ideal, populist Führer—two ideas that placed increasing pressure on the aristocracy to present themselves as selfless, down-to-earth figures rather than noble lords who were bent on wielding power.[109] As a result, aristocratic National Socialists distorted their caste's stock of existing traditions until they arrived at an exemplary noble image that seemed to make the 'nobility in the Third Reich' a real possibility for the future. Overall, the

most symbolically successful aristocratic attempt to seize opportunities within the Nazis' *Volksgemeinschaft* was mounted by August Wilhelm von Preußen, the Kaiser's fourth son who became a member of the NSDAP several months before the party's election success in September 1930. After assuming the populist moniker 'Prince Auwi', August Wilhelm was able to embark on a career as a speaker to massed crowds in circus tents and beer halls across the country.[110] One of the prince's speeches made reference to a spectacular incident that had taken place six days earlier in the city of Königsberg. According to the tale, the Kaiser's son, who had been clad in an SA uniform at the time, became embroiled in a brawl and suffered several blows from clubs wielded by the republican police. The prince's account described how 'our wounded SA boys' had subsequently called him up to invite him to 'our field hospital'. When he arrived, the men apparently pointed to an empty bed and cried out 'we've reserved it for you, it'd be so great if you'd lie down among us.' Of course, the anecdote was largely for rhetorical effect: the prince is likely to have turned down the offer of an SA dormitory bunk in favour of the Villa Liegnitz, his spacious residence close to Sanssouci Park in Potsdam. Nevertheless, he proudly claimed that all social barriers had been broken down. 'You see', he declared, 'these lads . . . quite clearly feel what inextricably unites us, they do not ask whether [you are] a worker or a prince. After all, we are one united community of warriors, ready to sacrifice whatever it takes, and everyone helps one another out as best they can.'[111]

Despite the romantic power of his words, the prince's speech was doubtless little more than a piece of propaganda that bore few similarities with what nobles actually experienced in National Socialist milieus. Indeed, there was an underlying current of anti-aristocratic sentiment within the Nazi movement that hindered the rapprochement between the two groups.

The first to feel the brunt of this resentment and mistrust were aristocrats who neglected to join the NSDAP or any other Nazi organization. In 1941, for example, the National Socialist *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD)—the intelligence service of the SS—felt compelled to write a report about one Count Finck von Finckenstein which claimed that his father had been 'one of the most active reactionaries in the region'. Finckenstein himself had been fired from his civil service job as an assistant forest supervisor after insulting a member of the SA. In the SD's assessment, the fact that Finckenstein and his brothers 'rubbed people up the wrong way' wherever they went could be traced back 'not least to their . . . arrogant upbringing in their parents' home'.[112] In

another instance, a son of the Upper Bavarian Aretin family—a Catholic clan that evidently all turned their backs on National Socialism—was accused of having an 'arrogant nature' in a denunciatory statement that was written as late as January 1945. The report claimed that the baron in question was apparently ignorant of the Nazi salute because he 'ostentatiously' only hailed people by 'taking off his hat' and saying 'Grüß Gott'—a common south German greeting that was sometimes used in direct opposition to the *Heil Hitler* salute.[113] This kind of stubborn streak was typical of the Catholic nobility. Although it only rarely induced them to challenge the Nazi state outright, they often experienced friction with the totalitarian aspirations of the nation's new leaders as a result of their wilful disposition.

Other forms of conflict arose between aristocratic landowners and Nazi apparatchiks. For example, individual *Gauleiters* and the so-called 'Agrarian Apparatus' led by Richard Walther Darré mounted scathing attacks against large landownership in general and major noble landowners in particular. In 1931, for instance, Wihelm Kube, a *Gauleiter* from a region of Nazi-occupied Austria, described noble landowners as 'a bunch of pigs' who were 'often riddled with Jew-blood'. Similar opinions were expressed in the equally laconic public invectives that Helmuth Brückner, a Silesian *Gauleiter*, launched against 'Herren Rotz von Rotzenstein' (the 'Lords Bogey of Bogeyville').[114] At receptions held in houses owned by the old nobility, one Baron von Brandenstein—the Chamberlain to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg—spread rumours that Hitler wanted to lock up 'all aristocrats who are married to non-Aryans or have Jewish blood in their veins'.[115] Moreover, *The Black Corps*—the periodical founded by the SS in 1935[116]—used the slightest opportunity to put the old aristocracy in their place from its earliest issues. The editors viewed the fact that the DAG still regarded itself as the representative of a particular 'social stratum' as an unacceptable affront against the ideal of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the 'new breed of [National Socialist] human being'.[117] That even the highest echelons of the Nazi hierarchy also felt considerable mistrust towards the old aristocracy's organizations is documented in various sources, including reports written by the SD in 1938 and 1939. These texts not only conveyed misgivings about the high nobility and the aristocratic associations with religious affiliations, but also explicitly harboured suspicions about the DAG, a society they accused of having merely undergone a 'superficial adaptation to National Socialist terminology' rather than embarking on a wholehearted realignment with the National Socialist cause.[118]

One of the ways in which individual aristocrats were affected by this National Socialist mistrust was by having their requests to join the Nazi party delayed or even blocked outright.[119] In July 1938, for example, Hans-Arno von Arnim, a landowner who had been a member of the National Socialist Drivers' Corps (NSKK) since 1933, was refused admission to the NSDAP. The seeds of his rejection were sown when Arnim took an estate clerk to task for purportedly embezzling funds. This disgruntled employee, himself a member of the party, then denounced his boss to the leaders of his local party by claiming that Arnim was not aligned with the spirit of National Socialism and had made derogatory statements about the Führer himself. Subsequent investigations uncovered nothing more incriminating than Arnim's habit of hailing his workers with the common greetings 'Guten Tag!' and 'Mahlzeit!' instead of the official 'Heil Hitler!' Nevertheless, the Nazi Party Court declared that 'he who wants to become a member of the party must himself be a fighter for the movement' and upheld the complaint. Like many aristocrats, Arnim was then forced to defend himself against accusations of *Standesdünkel*, a form of 'lordly arrogance' that was often associated with people of his rank. He eventually went before the Supreme Party Court and managed to gain entry to the NSDAP[120] by pointing out that he had donated 'a pig of 2.5 hundredweight [*Zentner*]' to the party and proven 'that he was able to work with a broom, shovel, scrubbing brush and paintbrush' while helping to build an SA unit's headquarters.[121]

After 1933, noble careerists who tried to work their way up through the NSDAP's ranks also came under particular fire from party members who were known as 'old fighters'—Nazi jargon for individuals who had joined the organization early and had distinguished themselves via their 'services for the movement'. Special ire was reserved for aristocrats who had jumped on the National Socialist bandwagon only in 1933 and managed to secure leading positions in the Nazi state hierarchy. One example is Joseph Goebbels' adjutant, Prince Friedrich Christian von Schaumburg-Lippe. In 1933, the prince appeared in SS uniform and triumphantly announced that he had immediately been elevated to the rather lofty rank of SS-Lieutenant Colonel at Goebbels' own behest. This horrified some of his aristocratic peers who had received military training and moved up through the ranks of the SS in a more conventional way.[122]

Tellingly, some Nazis even mounted anti-noble attacks against aristocrats who had actively supported National Socialism from an early stage. Reich Farmers' Leader Darré, for instance, expressed mistrust towards noble party

comrades who had signed up for the movement before 1933. When aristocratic applicants for leading positions in the *Reichsnährstand* were required to prove that they had joined the NSDAP before September 1930, Darré still claimed that this barrier to entry was insufficient for proving total commitment to the National Socialist worldview. 'When it comes to the landowning nobility', he stated, 'even low membership numbers'—i.e. credentials showing that one had joined the party early on—could not offer 'any guarantees'.[123]

In November 1933, Julius Streicher, the editor of *Der Stürmer*—an aggressively anti-Semitic, National Socialist tabloid—published a piece attacking the *Adelsblatt* and Baron Albrecht von Houwald, one of the DAG's leading aristocrats. The crime they had ostensibly committed was daring to disagree with an article which revived the old accusation that the nobility had been 'Judaized' to a considerable extent. In retaliation for this misdeed, Streicher branded Houwald a liar whose claim to have specialist knowledge as a *völkisch*-leaning 'genealogical researcher' (*Sippenforscher*) was just as baseless as his assertions that there was a long-standing tradition of anti-Semitism within the DAG. Streicher, who had previously worked as a secondary school teacher, also took the opportunity to give Houwald and the nobility a lesson in the tenor of the new age by informing the baron that he could expect to receive 'a couple of slaps in the face' if he ever repeated the same transgressions again. The ferocity of this reaction to Houwald was matched by the scathing attacks that Streicher launched against Baron Erasmus von Malsen-Ponickau, an aristocratic landowner and military officer from Saxony. Although the baron was a member of the NSDAP who, like his brother, had run the local branch of the SS since 1930, he was now accused of not belonging to the National Socialist movement 'with all his heart'. Streicher even went so far as to brand Malsen-Ponickau a 'degenerate pig-dog' both in public and in the presence of Hitler himself.[124]

Reviewing around three hundred personnel files at the repository of Nazi-era records formerly known as the 'Berlin Document Center' reveals that such attacks were not mere isolated incidents but formed part of a far more widespread trend. Indeed, aristocrats who were active within National Socialist organizations were frequently singled out for such negative treatment. For example, one SD report from 1943 described Prince Otto zu Sayn-Wittgenstein as 'distinguished, overbred and degenerate'[125] despite the fact that he had joined the party in April 1932 and was the brother-in-law of Prince Guidotto von Henkel-Donnersmarck, an extremely wealthy patron of the NSDAP.

This situation was certainly not improved by the nobility's tendency to display an imperious 'lordly' attitude and a 'grudging loyalty'[126] towards National Socialism that often fuelled the fire of the fascists' anti-aristocratic sentiment. An example of the nobility's turbulent reaction to Nazism is Hans Balduin von Plessen, a noble landowner from a prestigious family that could trace its origins back to the twelfth century. In 1931, Plessen asked to join the NSDAP, but his application was refused because of the apparent 'Jewish blood' in his genealogical line. Several years later, he was then sentenced to fifteen months in prison for an arrogant outburst in which he made reference to the 'great men' in his own family tree, claimed that the Third Reich 'would be ruled by day labourers', and insulted the Nazi parvenus who had started overcrowding the privileged haunts that he and his peers had once exclusively enjoyed. 'The hotels are now swarming with little Nazi civil servants', he railed: 'one does not feel at ease anywhere anymore.'[127] Plessen was not the only nobleman to have such an ambivalent relationship with the National Socialist state. Indeed, historians have used the term *Eigensinn*—a word that literally means 'sense of self' and can be translated as 'stubbornness', 'obstinacy', and 'intransigence'[128]—to denote the bewildering mélange of retreat, adaptation, assimilation, and resistance that marked the headstrong behaviour of many aristocrats towards the National Socialist regime.

As will be clear by now, the sociocultural tensions within the misalliance that emerged between the Nazis and the nobility—the entente that underpinned the transfer of power to Hitler—were too great for it to have lasted. Ultimately, there was no getting around the fact that the idea of the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the concept of 'nobility' remained irreconcilable. As a result, the NSDAP's leaders were faced with the thorny issue of how to frame their relationship with Germany's aristocrats. On the one hand, drawing attention to noble party members gave them a significant propaganda boost among the upper echelons of society. At the same time, however, it also diminished the regime's credibility in the eyes of the nation's peasants and workers. Indeed, the presence of famous nobles within the NSDAP tended to be a mixed blessing for an organization that included the word *Arbeiterpartei* ('workers' party') in its name. As the historian Karina Urbach has demonstrated, the Nazis were more than happy to use certain members of the high nobility as important go-betweens, brokers, and secret diplomats after 1933.[129] During the *Kampfzeit*, however—the so-called 'years of struggle' during which the Nazis clawed their way to power—the bearers of

prestigious titles were deployed only with extreme caution when they came into contact with the general public. This caution was inspired by two factors. Firstly, the Nazis hoped to portray the NSDAP as the down-to-earth party of workers, peasants, shopkeepers, and other 'ordinary' Germans. And secondly, they wanted to maintain peace within the party itself. This latter goal was by no means easy to attain. In fact, many ordinary National Socialists were extremely hostile to the aristocrats among their ranks. The Nazi leaders attempted to mitigate this problem by intervening in many nobles' membership requests. For example, Hitler initially urged Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen, the Kaiser's son, to join the SA rather than the SS. In a similar vein, Prince Schaumburg-Lippe was asked to delay his application to the NSDAP in 1928.[130] Another instance involved Count Klaus von Baudissin, an aristocrat from Holstein who had been a Nazi supporter since 1930. In his *Personalfragebogen*—the questionnaire that all potential SA leaders were required to complete—Baudissin explained away his late involvement in the movement with an addendum that read: 'Not permitted to work as a speaker before 1933, because [I am a] "count" '.[131]

From 1930 onwards, the fact that an ever-growing proportion of aristocrats was joining the National Socialist movement triggered increasingly vociferous protests from Nazis who claimed that the old aristocracy were no longer necessary as they would soon be replaced by a new nobility.[132] Such objections were particularly prominent among members of the SA. Writing in the *Völkischer Beobachter* newspaper in 1932, for example, one aristocratic SA-Führer threw the time-honoured definition of 'nobility' and the aristocracy's 'calcified tradition' overboard and warned his complacent peers that the wheat would soon be separated from the chaff within the nobility's ranks. Crucially, the anonymous author's outburst was by no means aimed at all members of his class. In fact, the writer also declared that, despite their very different backgrounds, such figures as 'Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen,... Count Helldorf, the SA men Lehmann and Schulze, the landowner von Kalben, and Meier the stonemason' all shared 'one spirit, one belief, one blood and thus also one nobility, namely, the most beautiful nobility that one can have... the commitment to... *Volk* and Fatherland'. This special bond, he concluded, was not something that 'typical reactionaries' would be able to 'understand'.[133]

Such distortions of the traditional definition of the term 'nobility' became increasingly conspicuous after the Nazis consolidated their power. Perhaps most astonishingly, some observers even managed to pull off a startling

intellectual about-turn and found elements of 'nobility' among the ranks of the SA—a boorish bunch who dedicated their lives to marching, drinking beer, and committing the storm troopers' typical brutalities. Once upon a time, semi-official portrayals of ordinary SA men had described them as a rough breed of humans who got drunk, did 'stupid things', chalked up 'a colourful succession' of sexual conquests, and 'went at it hammer and tongs' when they brawled in bars. As the definition of 'nobility' became more and more fluid, however, such descriptions gave way to a very different kind of assessment. According to Karl Koch, for example, it was important to overlook the SA man's many failings in order to glimpse another side to his character. 'You cannot help but love [the SA man] when you know him', he wrote: 'His actions and deeds may be good, indifferent, or even bad, but his whole simple, rough, stout life is cloaked in a lustre—yes, even a nobility—that can only be appreciated by someone who is just as willing to put his life on the line . . . .'[134] Seen from this perspective, the ideal Nazi nobility would be a pure-bred caste of individuals who were bathed in the scent of gear oil, sweat, beer, and blood. In 1937, the SA's own periodical also stated that,

> as National Socialists we recognize only one nobility. That is the nobility of achievement. It cannot be inherited, nor can it be bestowed. It is earned . . . . The nobleman has some legitimacy when he is among and with the people. He loses this legitimacy when he is isolated from the community of doers.[135]

When the SA unleashed their reign of terror between January 1933 and June 1934, significant clashes broke out with increasing frequency between the SA's bands of thugs and members of Germany's old guard. A diary entry by Bella Fromm in March 1933 vividly portrays the disbelieving horror that the old 'high society' felt when a marauding troop of SA men trampled their combat boots all over the front garden of a villa where a cocktail party for foreign diplomats was taking place. Although Fromm, the hostess, was able to shield her sophisticated guests from attack by making calls to the Vice-Chancellor's office,[136] this kind of strategy of imposing 'restraint' would cease to be possible just a few months later.

The ferocity of such clashes was not due to the two groups' contrasting political opinions, but predominantly triggered by their sociocultural differences. The historian Sven Reichardt has painted impressively detailed portraits of the social microcosms that were established by the SA. These masculine worlds revolved around the *Sturmlokal* (literally, the 'storm pub')—institutions that acted as SA dormitories, club houses, and soup

kitchens rolled into one and gave (often unemployed) young SA members a place to gather together, sing songs, tell jokes, and use their own unique jargon.[137] The sociocultural gulf that separated this proletarian or lower-middle-class culture from the nobility's lifestyles that revolved around castles, manor houses, and the officers' mess was considerable. After 1933, the nobility were forced to play down this rift as best they could and protect themselves by keeping a low profile. It will come as no surprise to learn, however, that the Bavarian nobility—a group that was wealthier than most of their northern peers and generally maintained a greater distance from the National Socialist movement—were particularly ill-suited to this task. A clear example arose in 1936 when the Nazi newspaper *Der Angriff* triggered a wave of nervous unrest among the Bavarian nobility by announcing it would dispatch a team of 'flying editors' to look round an old noble family's home for a series of articles entitled *People who live in Castles*. This worried Walther von Bogen, who sent out a circular letter warning members of the DAG that the journalists would 'likely not let any actual shortcomings [i.e. anything at odds with the Nazi ideology] go unmentioned.'[138] The ensuing, anxious search for a pro-Nazi aristocrat who was prepared to surrender his castle and his party loyalties for inspection took some time. In their private correspondence, one leading Bavarian aristocrat facetiously asked the Bavarian Prince Öttingen to muster 'his troops' in order to identify who could best portray the kind of modest, committed Nazi aristocrat the journalists were looking for. 'So cast your experienced eye over [your people]', he wrote, 'and only make your choice confidently, carefully and well.' Tucked away in his mighty, elevated fortress, Öttingen then asked the DAG's leaders in Berlin for more time to find an appropriate candidate, suggesting that the journalists should first be sent to northern Germany to give the Bavarians a chance to get better prepared.[139] In the end, the DAG seems to have suggested that the 'flying editors' should visit the castle of the Franconian Baron Eckart von Aufseß, a man who had joined the NSDAP in 1931 and whose family already included ten party members by 1937.[140]

A bizarre example of the massive barriers that continued to exist between aristocrats and the National Socialists' insurrectionary ranks emerged in the Bavarian town of Regensburg in 1938. The local branch of the NSDAP attempted to commandeer the steel fencing surrounding the castle that was owned by the Prince von Thurn und Taxis. An improvised 'scrap metal task force' run by the district's Nazi leaders initially sent a letter to the Lord Chamberlain of the Princely Household suggesting that the prince should

completely remove the fences from around his mighty castle grounds. 'The railings and grilles', they stated, were 'entirely superfluous, unsightly remnants of a bygone age and taste and should ideally disappear'. Although this request was actually part of a pragmatic plan to supply the German armaments industry with steel,[141] the fact that the 'scrap metal task force' had chosen to rattle the gates of no less a figure than one of wealthiest princes in the land can also be seen as a symbolic effort to tear down the high nobility's key distinguishing features. Moreover, the demand to remove the steel barriers that separated the castle's inhabitants from the rest of the world also served as a warning that the princely family should finally become part of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Ultimately, the Nazis' attacks on the prince's gates did not progress very far. The prince countered with arguments about historical preservation and security, the SA troop stayed clear of the castle, and the castle's owner kept his distance from the National Socialist movement. In fact, aside from making an appearance at the neo-pagan *Sommerwendefeier* ('solstice celebration')[142] and allowing the local SS cavalry unit to use the castle's riding arena free of charge,[143] the prince seems not to have compromised with the Nazis at all.

The enormous gulf between the wealthy Catholic *grand seigneur* in his castle and the 'scrap metal task force' that remained outside his gates provides a good example of the social extremes that clearly existed in German society but rarely came face to face. One does not have to look to the outer reaches of this sociocultural spectrum, however, to see the basic traits of the same conflict being repeated time and time again. Indeed, even the relatively downtrodden ranks of the Prussian minor nobility lived lifestyles that were worlds apart from the culture of drinking and brawling that reigned within the SA—an organization that, until 1934, was the biggest driving force behind National Socialism aside from the Nazi party itself. This contrast was heightened by what Sven Reichardt has dubbed the SA's 'practice of comradeship': the cultivation of cultural codes that turned each *SA-Sturm* (an SA unit of around one hundred men) into a family and a home for its adherents and provided them with a hermetically sealed alternative to the middle-class way of life. Reichardt has also referred to these uncompromisingly masculine groups as 'total organizations'—a term originally coined by Hannah Arendt that captures the SA's all-encompassing influence over its members' lives.[144] Needless to say, the aristocracy's traditional lifestyles were located at a vast remove from this proletarian cult of comradeship, beer, and violence whose disciples' *noms de guerre* included such boorish monikers as

Klöten-Karl ('"Bollocks" Karl'), *Mollenkönig* ('Pint-King'), *Gummibein* ('Rubberleg'), and *Schießmüller* ('"Potshot" Müller').[145]

In spite of the enormous differences between the two groups, many aristocrats actually did decide to join the SA.[146] Crucially, however, they signed up not to be 'Bollocks' Karl's comrade, but to serve as 'Bollocks' Karl's Führer. Indeed, very few members of prominent noble families chose to forego the advantages of their front-line experience and their existing officers' stripes and join the fascist rank and file as ordinary 'SA men'. Much more commonly, aristocrats with military leadership experience took it for granted that they would go straight into the organizations' upper echelons whether in the SS or the SA. Even then, 'the position a *Sturmführer* [the lowest-ranking SA officer] had to occupy between a person of authority and a comrade'[147] was a particularly problematic role for many members of the nobility.

Ultimately, all aristocrats who joined Nazi organizations made a contribution to the demise of their own class. This was due to the simple fact that any move that took the basic principles of the *Volksgemeinschaft* seriously immediately struck at the heart of the traditional definition of the 'nobility'. Aristocratic National Socialists were not only aware of this, but also strove aggressively to hasten the old nobility's demise. According to such figures, the 'true nobility' was 'not tied to names', but grew 'out of the struggle for the *Volk* and the state'.[148] In September 1933, Achim von Arnim—an SA Colonel in the Berlin-Brandenburg region who had risen to become a professor of military science in the capital city—warned his noble peers that 'National Socialism has no intention of giving up, it is divinely determined to continue with its task . . . . Anyone who aggravates it is struck down. It has the will and it has the might.'[149] Just two months earlier, an article in the *Adelsblatt* declared that 'the [old] nobility . . . is a thing of the past in the same way that the [new] aristocracy is a thing of the future.'[150] An even more direct statement was issued by the ten noble Nazis that Prince zu Schaumburg-Lippe—Goebbels' adjutant—had gathered together to confront aristocratic opportunists in 1934. In a text that was published by the group, Count Bernhard zu Solms-Laubach thanked 'our Führer for giving the German people its new nobility when the old one failed'.[151] In his closing remarks, Schaumburg-Lippe also proclaimed that 'What we describe as "nobility" . . . is what you have to understand by the term from now on. Even if it means you can no longer count yourselves among its ranks.'[152]

Mavericks: Noble Republicans

A small minority of aristocrats resisted National Socialism as a result of their republican views. They included a handful of pacifists, socialists, and even a sprinkling of communists who diverged significantly from the predominant trend. Although they held a wide range of opinions, these aristocrats—who can aptly be described as 'mavericks'—kept themselves at a distance from the political and social norms of their noble peers.

Examining the unusual lives of this small minority reveals two main things. Firstly, it demonstrates that, although the noble habitus generally expressed itself in astoundingly similar ways, there were no absolute rules and some scope was left open for individual choice. Secondly, it highlights the heavy price these 'maverick' aristocrats had to pay for going against the grain of their origins. The isolation these people experienced within the aristocracy as a whole once again underlines the fact that no major noble groups provided the democratic project with constructive support. Indeed, the only nobles who championed democracy at all were aristocratic individuals acting alone.

At least as far as the Prussian nobility were concerned, it is impossible to identify any politically relevant aristocratic groups that accepted the principles of the constitution and made a positive, collective effort to contribute to the development of the German Republic. In contrast, however, searching for aristocrats who influenced politics from the upper echelons of the Republic itself reveals a raft of prominent names. Broadly speaking, there were four types of nobles who acted from within the democratic corridors of power.

The first identifiable type of aristocrat that played a significant governmental role during the Weimar Republic is represented by nobles who served as party leaders, government ministers, army generals, diplomats, or—in the case of Paul von Hindenburg—held the highest political office in the land without harbouring democratic views or doing anything to advance the republican cause. Indeed, some of the most prominent aristocrats who were active at the state's highest echelons—including Franz von Papen, Konstantin von Neurath, Kurt von Schleicher, and Hindenburg himself—are prime examples of noblemen who strove to bring the Republic down.[153]

A second archetype consisted of aristocratic members of Germany's power elites who held equally headstrong views about rebuilding the Empire but never actually did anything in direct opposition to the Republic. Their ranks boasted a number of high-level diplomats, including Baron Ago von Maltzan—the head of the Foreign Ministry's Eastern Office

(*Ostabteilung*) who later served as the ambassador in Washington until his death by misadventure in 1927—and Bernhard Wilhelm von Bülow, a nephew of the erstwhile German Chancellor who rose to become the Foreign Ministry's State Secretary in 1930. The group also featured a number of prominent political players, including Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, the ambassador to Moscow who died in 1928.[154]

A third archetype consisted of high-ranking civil servants and diplomats whose own engagement in politics considerably exceeded that of the 'pragmatic republicans' (*Vernunftsrepublikaner*) who did just enough to keep their careers afloat. A key example of such a conscientious figure is Count Albrecht von Bernstorff-Stintenburg (1890–1945), a *grand seigneur* from Holstein in the very north of Germany who owned entailed real estate and had been a student of law. A number of biographical peculiarities helped set the count apart from the rest of his prestigious family and—above all—from the East Elbian circles of landed aristocrats to which he belonged. Bernstorff-Stintenberg's list of unconventional life choices included studying as a Rhodes scholar, taking a year-long banking internship, becoming a full member of the left-wing, liberal German Democratic Party (DDP) in 1919, mounting resolute opposition to National Socialism, and organizing aid campaigns for Jewish emigrants and refugees after he lost his job at the embassy in London in 1933. Arrested in 1940, the count was murdered by an SS unit just a few days before the end of the Second World War.[155]

The fourth archetype was very rare indeed. It was represented by a smattering of resolutely, openly republican aristocrats whose actions were unwaveringly aligned with their political convictions. The number of documented examples of these 'mavericks' who were employed by the Republic can be counted on the fingers of a very few hands. Those that can be identified mainly lived lives at a radical remove from the noble cultural norm. This did not make for an easy existence. Indeed, aristocrats soon discovered that the road 'From Right to Left'—to quote the title of an autobiography by the journalist and prominent noble maverick Helmuth von Gerlach—was long and lined with thorns. The tale of Gerlach's own astonishing transformation from an aggressive young anti-Semite into a pacifist democrat is well known.[156] However, as a self-confessed 'Wasser-Gerlach'—i.e. a member of a recently ennobled family who upheld the marriage conventions of their middle-class origins—he does not belong in a study of the old nobility. The same is true of Count Harry von Keßler, a sophisticated and even more

famous figure who was a banker's son, an intellectual, a *flaneur*, a dandy, a writer, and a collector of art.[157]

Instead, it seems more fruitful to examine the relatively well-documented life of Baron Kurt von Reibnitz, one of the rare republicans from the old nobility whose commitment to the republican cause exceeded mere tactical compromise with the new status quo. A member of the ancient Silesian nobility, Reibnitz was an administrative lawyer who joined the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) after 1918 and served as the Minister of State for the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz between 1920–23 and again from 1928–31.[158] Born in the northern German city of Kiel, the baron was the son of a Vice Admiral who had served under the Kaiser. His middle-class mother was a granddaughter of the Prussian banker and liberal politician David Hansemann, meaning that Reibnitz probably felt comfortable moving in upper-middle-class circles from an early age. In addition to his family connections, the baron's curriculum vitae included two doctorates and practical experience of banking and the upper echelons of the civil service—a profession that was dominated by members of the historical nobility. He also spent long spells in the United States, including a stint as an embassy attaché in Washington in 1912/13. All of these extended Reibnitz's horizons far beyond the usual limits of the Prussian landed nobility. The discrepancy between the baron's lifestyle and that of his peers seems to have emerged at an early stage. Unusually, he did not become a member of a student corps or serve as a reservist officer at any point during the era of the German Empire, for example. This widening gulf increased in September 1918 when Reibnitz publicly declared his retirement from the civil service[159] and reached its logical conclusion when he joined the SPD. As far as can be told from the available sources, the baron's unusual choices and breaks with the aristocratic norm were not the result of sudden decisions but were congruous with a deliberate choice. '[I] have structured my life in a fashion quite at odds with the traditions of the aristocracy', he wrote to a peer in 1922.[160]

In 1929 and 1933, Reibnitz published two anonymous texts that painted portraits of German society and still stand as valuable documents written by a well-informed upper-class insider.[161] These sketches of politics, culture, and encounters between the old and the new German 'high society' portray their author as a reluctant republican and democrat who had certainly not abandoned the fundamental attitudes of elitism and scepticism towards mass movements and democracy that were commonly held by his peers.

The same can also be said of the tone and style of the correspondence Reibnitz left behind. Camouflaging his innate sympathies in this way was a prudent strategy as far as the baron was concerned. Indeed, both before and after 1918, deviating even slightly from the canon of entrenched noble views was all it took for aristocrats to be branded 'red counts' and 'spineless' individuals who had fallen prey to 'leftist' corruption as a result of the time they had spent in the 'asphalt climate' of the metropolis.[162] After 1945, the few individuals who actually merited this kind of treatment were able to wear epithets like 'red count' as badges of honour due to the democratic convictions they implied.[163] This was certainly not the case before the end of the Second World War. In fact, nobles who maintained an openly positive relationship with the Republic had to pay a high price for their opinions. In most instances, they could expect to be ostracized by their family members and their friends. The historian Michael Wala has described these mavericks as 'republicans without a Republic'[164] as they seldom received any republican support from within the ranks of the nobility.

Examples of such alienation abound in the historical records. For instance, an account written by Helmut von Gerlach describing a family tribunal that took place back in 1903 recounts how an old, ear trumpet-wielding uncle was already urging his nephew to renounce his unseemly, republican ideas or forgo his noble title altogether.[165] Family associations regularly held 'courts of honour' to exclude members who had drifted too far towards the Left. In another incident from 1923, Count von Zedlitz-Trützschler, the Kaiser's former Lord Chamberlain, was disciplined for having criticized his erstwhile Imperial employer in his memoirs. As a punishment, he was banished from the DAG and had a 'brutal family boycott' imposed upon him by his relatives.[166] At first glance, such sanctions might seem mild in comparison with the challenge to a pistol duel that Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg issued to a peer in 1919 for having publicly referred to the Kaiser as a 'coward'. Nevertheless, the boycott imposed upon Zedlitz-Trützschler was akin to a social death sentence. Hunting invitations he had already received were pointedly revoked, and his neighbours cut him off and started referring to him as a 'traitor'. Right up until 1945, his family members, neighbours, and former friends also resolutely and conspicuously avoided his house.[167]

The hapless count's experience was by no means unusual. Aristocratic republicans faced various forms of social ostracism and public condemnation that ranged from exclusion from their own family circles to banishment

from social events. Prince Max von Baden, for instance, was barred from the Guard Cuirassiers' regimental association for his apparent surfeit of liberalism and his alleged involvement in the Kaiser's abdication.[168] Another example of intra-aristocratic excommunication was Baron Paul von Schoenaich,[169] a landowner, a Dragoon Guard officer, and a retired Major General who joined the DDP in December 1918, commanded a counter-revolutionary unit in Berlin in early 1919, and later became an enthusiastic pacifist, the president of the German Peace Society, and even signed a manifesto against conscription along with Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein in 1925. In 1920, the baron felt deeply wounded when he was cast out of his regimental association and harried by defamatory articles in right-wing publications—some of which were edited by his peers—for having refused to take part in a 'loyal toast' on the occasion of the Kaiser's birthday. As a former officer, Schoenaich should have been eligible to convene a military court of honour in order to clear his name. When he attempted to do just that, however, his request was denied because the League of German Officers had meanwhile decided to remove him from their membership roster as well. Being thus stripped of the ability to salvage one's reputation was a deeply degrading experience for any noble officer. In his emotional, pompous memoirs entitled *My Damascus*,[170] Schoenaich demonstrated how the social boycott—which he described as 'the main weapon of the old officers'—was far from the innocuous-sounding punishment it might at first have seemed. In fact, as the book demonstrated, there were two strands to the 'fight' that was waged against him by his own family and his noble peers: '1. social and moral ostracism, and 2. financial harm.' One only has to glimpse the palpable sense of despair that infused both Schoenaich's and Reibnitz's accounts to see that such penalties hit their victims very hard.

Viewed in the light of this noble hostility towards republicanism, it seems astonishing that any aristocrats would have chosen to side with the Weimar Republic at all. Nevertheless, this is exactly what some of their number did. In 1926, for example, sixteen members of prestigious noble families—including a Prince von Hohenlohe and a Prince von Fürstenberg, one of Bismarck's grandsons—issued a public appeal urging their compatriots to support Gustav Stresemann's liberal foreign policy and to get behind their country's republican government. Rochus von Rheinbaben, a member of parliament for the German People's Party, supplemented this statement with his own text, the *Call to the German Nobility*, in which he urged 'the aristocracy in its entirety' to 'prove whether' they 'alone' and by dint of their 'own

inner strength' were 'still capable of taking the lead and heading down new intellectual paths, or whether two centuries of princely rule [had] robbed them of the leadership qualities that every true nobleman must seek and seeks within himself'. Instead of awaiting the arrival of a 'dictator', Rheinbaben continued, the nobility should join the 'new rulers', personally 'lend a hand' with the 'leadership of the state', and support 'the government in its difficult work'.[171] Many decades later, the historian Johann-Albrecht von Rantzau—himself from a famous noble family from the north of Germany—claimed that such declarations were evidence that a 'realistic [i.e. a republican] way of thinking' had established itself 'among a minority of the aristocracy' in the late 1920s. This minority must have been very small and could not have been overly vocal, however. Indeed, if such individuals ever worked together as a group, they left no written evidence of their actions.

Of course, the degree to which noble mavericks supported the Republic varied to a considerable extent. The south German high nobility in particular featured a range of aristocrats who harboured identifiable liberal views and refused to shift towards the extreme Right of the political spectrum, yet never actually aligned themselves with republicanism outright. One of the most prominent of this group was Prince Max von Baden,[172] the last Imperial Chancellor who founded the elite Salem Castle School with the Jewish reformist educator Kurt Hahn in 1920. There were also a number of exceptional southern individuals who were deeply committed to the republican cause. This atypical latter group included Prince Hubertus zu Löwenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg (1906–84),[173] a Catholic aristocrat from the Bavarian Princely House of Löwenstein who was one of the few noble figures who fought fiercely for the Republic. Born at Schönwörth Castle near the Austrian town of Kufstein, Prince Löwenstein was the son of an Englishwoman and a Bavarian cavalry captain. After completing his studies in law and political science in 1928, he spent a long time in Italy and submitted a doctoral thesis on Italian fascism in Hamburg. In 1930, when he was twenty-four years old, the prince joined the German Centre Party, signed up for the socialist *Reichsbanner* organization, and took an active, leading role in the republican youth association known as *Vortrupp Schwarz-Rot-Gold*.[174] As he was not his parents' first son, Löwenstein did not have any particular riches to call his own. In consequence, he supplemented his involvement in the Centre Party and his leadership of a republican society by earning money working as a journalist, a political commentator, and a distinguished columnist for Germany's leading democratic newspapers.[175]

Although no discernible 'Damascus moment' appears to have triggered Löwenstein's switch to republicanism, a handful of factors may help explain his unusual direction. For one thing, the prince, who was fascinated by the poet Stefan George, seems to have been partly inspired to become a republican by a speech from Theodor Haubach, a social democrat who had fought at the front line and would later join the Resistance.[176] Löwenstein also possessed a highly intellectual streak that may have been fostered by his father, a man who took early retirement from his career as a military officer and withdrew to his castle where he distinguished himself by translating Julius Caesar, among other feats. Another factor was provided by his English mother, whose own bloodline included a number of Jewish forebears. Apart from giving the National Socialist press a chance to dub him the 'Jew-Prince', this fact probably imbued Löwenstein with a general openness to cultural worlds beyond the aristocracy's borders.[177] Löwenstein also found someone who shared his unusual intellectual leanings in his wife, a woman from an uncommonly well-educated Dutch family who actively supported her husband's various anti-fascist activities. These activities included serving as a republican propagandist on various trips to Spain[178] and other European countries and his later work in the USA, where he emigrated after moving to Austria in April 1933. While in America, the prince founded and served as the secretary general of the American Guild for German Cultural Freedom, an organization established in 1935 that served as a vital relief fund for intellectuals who had been exiled from Germany.[179]

A handful of aristocrats who made a radical break with their noble origins can also be found on the extreme Left of the political spectrum. One of the most prominent members of this diminutive group was Arnold Vieth von Golßenau (1889–1979), a member of an old Saxon family who, under the pseudonym Ludwig Renn, enjoyed some fame as a communist writer. The first phase of Golßenau's life followed a typical aristocratic path. He graduated from secondary school, served as a professional military officer with the 100th Saxon Life Grenadier (*Leibgrenadier*) Regiment, and was decorated many times over for his efforts on the front line. There are no clear clues or motives that suggest why he ever moved away from this conventional course. Nevertheless, perhaps the best indication can be found in his family home, where views other than those held by the Prussian minor nobility were presumably espoused by his father—who was a princely tutor and a grammar school mathematics teacher—and by his mother, who was a daughter of a family of factory owners from Moscow. Whatever the roots of

his life choices were, however, Golßenau's split with the aristocratic world was an uncommonly radical affair.

The first major indication that his life would take an unusual turn arose during the Kapp Putsch in 1920, when Golßenau, who was serving as the commander of a police battalion at the time, refused to open fire at a group of workers and was discharged from the *Reichswehr* as a result. He then followed his decade-long career as a professional military officer by enjoying a wide-ranging education in such subjects as Russian, law, economics, history, and the history of art. Afterwards, he started working as a freelance journalist and author in Dresden, Vienna, and Berlin under the pseudonym Ludwig Renn, a *nom de plume* he would maintain for the rest of his life. In January 1928, he joined the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Red Front Fighters' League. A short time later, he also started working as co-editor of *Die Linkskurve* and *Der Aufbruch*, two communist periodicals. After being arrested and kept in custody by the Gestapo for a long stretch between 1933 and 1936, Renn decided to emigrate. Various stops along his journey out of the country later, he became the Chief of Staff of the 11th International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War and joined up as a member of the Catalan unionist party. He subsequently undertook a range of political missions to the USA, Cuba, Canada, and France and was arrested a number of times before being exiled to Mexico in 1939, where he started teaching at a university after a further period of study. Renn finally made the journey back to the Saxon capital of Dresden in 1947. Upon returning to his homeland, the erstwhile army officer became a professor of anthropology, a professor of cultural history, and the Honorary President of the PEN Centre literary organization in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). He was also named a 'Hero of Labour' (*Held der Arbeit*)—an important honorary title that was awarded for outstanding socialist achievements—and presented with a host of other significant GDR awards.[180] Overall, Renn's curriculum vitae—which was as audacious as it was unconventional—seems to have had no points of contact with the world inhabited by the German aristocracy after his career as an officer was cut short in the early 1920s. Indeed, he even appears to have made a deliberate decision to run contrary to all of the nobility's usual stock of fundamental views.

Any study of aristocrats who swam against the current of societal expectations cannot possibly ignore the raft of noblewomen who freed themselves from the fetters of their class. Three such mavericks included Maria von Maltzan, Marion Dönhoff, and the Duchess Tisa von der Schulenburg, all of

whom were from the inner circles of the Prussian landed and military nobilities. Although it is difficult to reconstruct the political stances they held before 1945 with any accuracy, it is safe to say that this trio of individuals all put a great deal of distance between themselves and the paths that were preordained for women of their standing.[181]

For an extreme example of aristocratic female rebellion that saw women from old noble families exhibiting astonishing displays of individuality, however, one need look no further than the family of the Protestant Baron Kurt von Hammerstein-Equord and the Catholic Baroness Maria von Lüttwitz, a general's daughter from an ancient Silesian clan about whom very little is known. The couple married in 1907 and had seven children together: three daughters and four sons. Astonishingly enough, the spectacular story of Kurt and his daughters was not rescued from obscurity by historians, but by a book written as recently as 2008 by Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, an influential German poet, writer, and intellectual. As far as historians are concerned, Enzensberger's text is an indigestible morass of authentic sources and fiction that is at once fascinating and difficult to read. Despite its flaws, however, the book has undoubtedly helped to rescue the impressive female members of this family from undeserved oblivion.

To understand the maverick nature of the couple's three daughters, it helps first to take a look at the attitude of their father, a man whom the title of Enzensberger's book credited with *Eigensinn*—the strong-willed cocktail of stubbornness, obstinacy, and intransigence discussed earlier.[182] Regarded as an unusually talented General Staff officer, the baron served as the Chief of the Army Command (*Chef der Heeresleitung*) from 1930 until 1933, making him one of the most important generals in the *Reichswehr*. Politically speaking, Hammerstein harboured an emphatically conservative, sceptical view of National Socialism that could have made him a powerful opponent to Hitler within the nation's armed forces. Indeed, he frequently made decisions in line with the republican constitution and opposed *putsch* attempts that were mounted by the political Right. Nevertheless, like many headstrong conservative aristocrats, his conflicting desire to reject, cooperate with, and 'tame' National Socialism all at once ultimately rendered him unable to act when the Nazis acceded to power in 1933.

Hammerstein's three daughters followed in—and exceeded—their father's own strong-willed footsteps. In February 1933, for example, two of the sisters—Baroness Marie Luise von Hammerstein and Baroness Helga von Hammerstein—entered their father's home office and stole military

and political secrets regarding Hitler's expansionist ambitions and details of an important speech the Nazi leader had delivered to the upper echelons of the German officer corps. Having secured this information, they then set about handing it over to Moscow and the intelligence service of the KPD. When all this was going on, the two young women were just twenty-five and twenty years of age, respectively.[183] By this time, Marie Therese already had substantial connections to extreme left-wing politics. As well as being a member of the KPD, she had also been romantically linked for a spell as a nineteen-year-old law student to the Jewish communist Gerhard Scholem, the older brother of the Zionist and celebrated theological historian Gershom Scholem.

For her part, the third sister, Marie Therese, joined the socialist youth movement and married Joachim Paasche, a law and oriental studies student who had Jewish ancestry and was by no means her social equal. In 1919, Joachim's father, a former naval officer, was murdered by a squad of right-wing, radical officers for being a communist and a pacifist. During 1934, the pair spent several months living in a Palestinian kibbutz. They resided in Japan during the Second World War and, in 1948, moved to California, where Marie Therese lived out the last of her days in a Jewish old peoples' home. After 1933, she seems to have worked as a courier between Berlin and Prague and provided aid to various Jewish intellectuals. A spectacular photo taken of her in 1933 shows the twenty-four-year-old woman perched playfully atop a weighty motorcycle.[184] Clad in overalls, she strikes an exceedingly confident pose with her hands on the handlebars, flashing the camera a self-assured smile. The picture is laden with that special combination of confidence, freedom, and headstrong *Eigensinn* that really seems to have been abundantly present among the members of her family—a military clan that was apparently able to trace its noble status back no fewer than ten centuries.

Studying the lives of these remarkable sisters offers an insight into a trio of extraordinarily autonomous, strong-willed individuals who all upheld long-standing traditions of aristocratic independence and stand as textbook examples of the archetypal 'female rebel' that emerged from within the nobility's ranks.[185] These women were not the only headstrong children of their family, however. Indeed, two of their brothers—Ludwig von Hammerstein-Equord and Kunrat von Hammerstein-Equord—were members of the conservative Resistance and became involved in the doomed coup attempt of 20 July 1944. For his part, their younger brother, Franz, eschewed his Catholic roots and became influenced by Martin Niemöller, a

protestant pastor who also joined the Resistance. Franz later became a theologian himself and was taken to a concentration camp with his mother and one of his younger sisters in 1944. Baroness Maria and all seven of her children survived the Second World War. Having lost power by late 1933, the baron himself became loosely associated with the military opposition to Hitler before dying of cancer in April 1943.

It is all too easy to mythologize the Hammersteins. In fact, the stock of (empirically unsubstantiated) tales about their clan could likely fuel an infinite number of legends. In writing his book that rediscovered the family, the erstwhile left-wing intellectual Hans-Magnus Enzensberger appears to have succumbed to this temptation. Indeed, his text contains a number of exaggerations that paint Baron Kurt von Hammerstein-Equord as a heroic figure of almost biblical proportions.[186] In contrast to what Enzensberger claims, however, the general was not a member of the conservative Resistance. Instead, he moved in pro-collaboration circles, rubbed shoulders with Germany's anti-republican power elite, and inhabited a political grey area that gave him enough leeway to accommodate information about Hitler's plans for world domination and his communist daughters under the very same roof. By ignoring these facets of his life, Enzensberger does a disservice to his subject on two counts. Firstly, he robs the baron of ideological complexity by suggesting that his political stance was solid as a rock rather than exceptional, fluid, and irresolute.[187] And secondly, he overlooks the independent evolution of his offspring, a rarity among the nobility as a whole.

As fascinating as these maverick noble democrats, socialists, and communists are, it is important not to forget that the lives they led were both extremely atypical and usually only possible after they had irrevocably cut all ties with their kith and kin. The isolation they experienced within the nobility as a whole again highlights precisely what the German aristocracy lacked before 1945: namely, a sense of collective, class-wide, constructive affinity with parliamentary democracy and the political culture with which it went hand in hand.

Short Knives: Noble Resistance

The history of the conservative Resistance is frequently intertwined with the history of the German nobility. Unlike the noble mavericks who cut themselves loose from their backgrounds after 1918, a considerable proportion

of the aristocratic resistance against the National Socialist regime was mounted by individuals who remained connected to and acted from within their traditional social networks. In fact, the majority of these individuals viewed the combination of their aristocratic relationships and their proximity to positions of power in the *Wehrmacht* and the Nazi state as practical prerequisites for the only acts of resistance that could present an existential challenge to the Third Reich. As was the case with other groups in German society, there was no unified, collective resistance that emerged from 'the nobility' as a whole. Nevertheless, it is clear that the aristocracy had various reasons for distancing themselves from, protesting against, and opposing the National Socialist regime that were unique to members of their class. Moreover, their sense of aristocratic superiority, the efficacy of their noble family networks, and their access to leading positions within the state gave them some of the confidence, motivation, and organizational prowess that was necessary to consider confronting the Nazis outright.

Aristocrats resisted the Third Reich in a variety of ways. Some engaged in subtle manoeuvres, a few openly opposed them from the start, and a handful of noble Nazis turned against Hitler and became martyrs for their cause. Despite this diversity, however, no other moment in the history of the German Resistance has attracted as much attention as the doomed *putsch* attempt of 20 July 1944. An impressive number of the individuals who were involved in this ill-fated venture were aristocrats, ranging from Count Claus von Stauffenberg—who served a double function as an assassin in East Prussia and a mastermind of the accompanying coup in Berlin—to the raft of other nobles who played supporting roles in the plot. In consequence, the failed assault can be considered just as much a part of aristocratic history as the history of any other class. As well as examining this act of insurrection, the following pages will also investigate the events that transpired in the summer of 1934 when the Nazis launched their first, systematic, murderous assault against their conservative opponents during the so-called Night of the Long Knives. On both occasions, the regime not only sought vengeance against aristocrats who had always staunchly resisted National Socialism, but also exacted retribution against nobles who had started out as Nazi collaborators and become resolute rebels.

On 17 June 1934, a speech was delivered at the University of Marburg by Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen—the man who had probably done more than any other single aristocrat to facilitate the rise of National Socialism. As well as being the most scathing public attack a leader in the Third Reich

had ever mounted (and, indeed, ever would mount) against the Nazi regime, Papen's address can be viewed as the second-to-last gasp of the link between the nobility and that particular strain of the conservative revolution that simultaneously promoted and criticized the National Socialist cause. Although the speech was read out by the Vice-Chancellor, it was actually written by Edgar Julius Jung—one of the most significant thinkers of the right-wing intelligentsia—and only given to Papen shortly before he set off for the event. In addition to fitting the political direction that had been pursued by the Ring Movement, Jung's text clearly articulated some of the concerns that had begun to worry the aristocrats and middle-class citizens who made up Germany's social elite. Perhaps the greatest of these fears was made explicit when Papen warned that no *Volk* could 'afford an eternal uprising from below'.[188] This comment chiefly aimed at the SA's increasing orgy of uncontrolled violence and their ominous calls for a 'second revolution' that would have dethroned the aristocracy and the middle class from the positions of power they held within the state.[189]

The very real fear of this 'uprising from below' caused many aristocrats from Germany's power elite to start limiting their collaboration with the National Socialist regime.[190] In fact, before Papen delivered his speech, his noble allies in the Vice-Chancellor's office—including the likes of Fritz Günther von Tschirschky, Friedrich-Carl von Savigny, Baron Wilhelm von Ketteler, Count Hans von Kageneck, and Herbert von Bose—had attempted to establish direct links with Hindenburg and sound out the leaders of the *Reichswehr*. The motives and intentions of these noble individuals have since been examined carefully.[191] Although it cannot be said that the Vice-Chancellor's office became an out-and-out bastion of resistance against Nazism, Papen's aristocratic colleagues did make sure that, for a short time at least, it was one of the last remaining places where the New Right's anti-democratic ideas about leading the masses, 'taming' the Nazis, and forming a new noble elite controlled a significant position within Hitler's regime.

On 30 June 1934, the National Socialist 'Behemoth' unleashed a wave of murders and a previously unseen level of brutality against the same 'uprising from below' that Papen had deplored in his speech and that had long disquieted the upper echelons of German society in general and the leaders of the *Reichswehr* in particular. Of course, the National Socialists' readiness to use violence was already a familiar sight. What especially shocked the upper class, however, was the dawning realization that the Nazis were not only willing to use their 'long knives' against Ernst Röhm and the other heads of

the predominantly lower-class SA, but were also happy to turn their blades against the loftier echelons of society. One especially attention-grabbing attack was aimed at General Kurt von Schleicher and his wife Elisabeth—the intelligent, charming daughter of a Prussian cavalry officer—who were both gunned down in broad daylight by a squad of assassins at their villa near Potsdam. Overall, the Night of the Long Knives triggered a range of mixed emotions among Germany's social elites. First and foremost, they felt a sense of gratification that the Nazis had wiped out the SA's ostensibly revolutionary ambitions and dealt a heavy blow to the possibility of an uprising that many feared would emerge from within the organization's ranks. At the same time, however, the assassination of *Reichswehr* generals and a range of key conservative figures also made the aristocracy realize just how severely they had underestimated the momentum and brutality of the new regime. Indeed, the murderous events of 30 June not only silenced the 'second revolution', but also brought the 'conservative revolution' to a standstill.[192]

The Night of the Long Knives provides a prime opportunity to examine the nobility's strikingly ambiguous relationship with the fledgling Nazi regime. One the one hand, the fact that the Vice-Chancellor's Office and several *Reichswehr* generals mounted an attempt to disrupt the SA's revolutionary ambitions suggests that the combination of noble and middle-class power elites still hoped to impose certain limits on the National Socialist state. As this was a 'Pyrrhic victory' at best, however,[193] the significance of such actions is outstripped by the considerable number of aristocrats who lost their lives during the fascists' vicious reprisals. These savage attacks of 30 June meant that Germany's elites could no longer ignore the Nazis' elemental ability to act with brutality against all sections of society. Astonishingly, however, this lesson they learned at great human cost did not cause the nobility to change course. Even the aristocratic members of the power elites within the army and the state chose not to protest against the wave of killings and thus added tacit approval of the National Socialists' methods to their existing acceptance of the goals of the regime.[194] This decision was made even more problematic because it meant that they had also silently endorsed the murders of Kurt von Schleicher and Ferdinand von Bredow, two *Reichswehr* generals who had been struck down during the proceedings. To their credit, three noble officers named Witzleben, Rundstedt, and Leeb did at least try to request a military inquest into the murders of their two colleagues, but got no further than the preliminary stages of the process.[195]

This aristocratic acceptance of a regime that had murdered its 'own people' and the annihilation of the elitist concepts represented by the *Herrenklub* marked a watershed for the German nobility as a whole. The history of the aristocracy in the Third Reich after this turning point has never been told. Indeed, if it can be written at all, it seems questionable whether this narrative could ever hope to be more than the history of individual aristocrats who were living under Adolf Hitler's rule. In all likelihood, historians would end up composing two different accounts. On the one hand, there would be the story of innumerable petty frictions with the regime and myriad pockets of noble countercultures that lived on in castles and manor houses wherever financial means remained available.[196] Above all, however, they would tell the tale of how formerly independent aristocrats were integrated into the ruling apparatus of the National Socialist state. Both of these histories still remain largely unknown.

Despite this, the idea that the nobility had entirely lost their unique political relevance by the summer of 1934 can be gainsaid by examining the events of 20 July 1944. On the whole, historians have been slow to conduct a systematic examination of the relationship between the aristocracy and the doomed attempt on Adolf Hitler's life. Indeed, although it has often been referred by historians, it is only in the last few years that tentative steps have been made to research the matter more closely.[197] Academics are seemingly the only ones who have been reluctant to make inroads into this particular subject, however. In fact, countless commemorative speeches, works of journalism, and aristocratic memoirs have repeatedly asserted over the years that 'the nobility' as a whole rose up for a final time on 20 July. In 1954, for example, the West German President Theodor Heuss gave an influential speech on the tenth anniversary of the failed assassination in which he identified the 'Christian aristocracy of the German nation' as one of the pillars of the plot. In 1969, the playwright Carl Zuckmayer went even further by explicitly linking the entire aristocracy far more closely with the Resistance movement in a speech he gave at the official memorial ceremony that was held in honour of the individuals involved. During his address, Zuckmayer made reference to nine aristocratic families and stated that 'almost all the names of the German noble dynasties' could be 'found among the ranks of those who fought and gave their lives for the Resistance'.[198]

Zuckmayer's statement was by no means misleading. Indeed, the number of aristocrats who supported and joined the conspiracy was just as impressive as the proportion of nobles who fell victim to the subsequent retaliation

by the Nazi regime. One account written in the 1950s claimed that as many as fifty of the 150 casualties—individuals whom the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl referred to as some of 'the most noble and greatest' individuals 'that have ever been produced in the history of humankind'[199]—came from aristocratic stock.[200] The nobility's significant role in the plot seems not to have escaped the Nazis' notice, either. In fact, it is well known that the aristocracy bore the brunt of the physical and rhetorical hostility the regime's pathologically enraged leaders aimed at the conspirators and their family members in the aftermath of the attack. For example, the National Socialist politician Robert Ley referred to them as 'blue-blooded pigs' and a 'vermin' that would have to be 'eradicate[d]' and 'obliterate[d] root and branch'.[201]

On the face of it, this kind of hate-filled tirade appears to provide evidence of a deeply rooted mismatch between the nobility and National Socialism. For a long time, the majority of historical research reached the same conclusion and would have agreed with the journalist Joachim Fest's description of the 'long road to 20 July'—an influential formula which suggested that the would-be assassins had been unflinching opponents of the National Socialist regime from a very early stage. From this point of view, it was largely faulty time bombs, rigged bottles of schnapps that refused to detonate, the paranoid Führer's nigh-on impenetrable defences, and a number of chance events that prevented them from mounting their decisive attack at a much earlier date.[202]

In contrast to this interpretation, however, it is not possible to detect a resolute, unbroken thread of noble resistance to the National Socialist regime that ran from the Weimar Republic right up to the martyrdom of 1944. In fact, such opposition was as rare as it was impressive. Aside from a handful of striking exceptions, a majority of the noble conspirators of 20 July were erstwhile advocates of the Nazi-conservative coalition that had taken shape in 1933. Moreover, many of their number played more or less active roles in opposing the Weimar Republic before the Nazis rose to power.[203] To quote the cynical accusation that Ulrich von Hassell levelled at Count Fritz Dietlof von der Schulenburg in 1943, it is possible to say that the bulk of the noble plotters were among the 'Sauls' who joined the resistance movement (i.e. belated but zealous converts in the tradition of the biblical figure St Paul).[204]

In all likelihood, many of the conspirators of 20 July would never have denied such a charge. In fact, Edgar Julius Jung is attributed with claiming that he and others who had helped Hitler to power had a duty to 'do away

with' the 'blighter' themselves.[205] It takes no great flight of fancy to imagine a similar sentiment escaping Schulenburg or Tresckow's lips. Viewed in this light, the oft-quoted description of the Resistance as a 'revolt of good conscience' could conceivably be renamed the 'revolt of bad conscience' instead. Indeed, as far as a large number of the plotters were concerned, it is fair to assume that they derived at least some of the impressive resolve that was required to put their lives on the line from a sense of responsibility for miscalculations they had made in the past.

Of course, this is not a side to 20 July that features in the popular imagination. Generally speaking, the polished portraits of the plotters that are presented in 'lordly stories' (*Grafenerzählungen*) and a myriad of biographies are less concerned with how the conspirators would have perceived themselves than with the political interests of their self-proclaimed heirs. This is certainly no accident. In fact, the 'legend of the resistance' (*Widerstandslegende*)—the claim that the conservative conspirators had opposed National Socialism from an early stage[206]—played a deeply important role in the attempt to legitimize the renaissance of the conservative social order that took shape in the West German Republic after the Second World War. Moreover, the narrative of the heroic resistance that was mounted by the 200 or so men and women who were linked to the 20 July plot arguably represented one of the most important tales on which the entire political identity of the West German state was based. As might be expected, the nobility made every effort to capitalize on this advantage. In fact, forging a link between the nobility and 20 July 1944 lent them an immense amount of prestige in post-war Germany that has only grown in significance since the nation was reunified in 1990.[207] As such, the conspiracy stands as yet another successful example of the aristocracy's centuries-old, tried-and-tested tactic of using the exceptional conduct of a handful of individuals as proof of the excellence of the entirety of their class.

Whatever their descendants have written about them, however, the fact remains that a significant proportion of aristocrats numbered among the conspirators' ranks. This consideration still remains to be explained. To date, literally every single attempt to unravel the matter has relied on the nebulous notion that the twentieth-century nobility possessed particularly high levels of 'honour', 'decency', 'austerity', and a strong 'sense of duty' that inspired them to take a stand.[208] Although passing judgement on this popular opinion exceeds the scope of this book, it seems rather unpersuasive when viewed against the backdrop of the tacit pact the nobility made with

the National Socialists and the war they helped wage both within Germany's borders and abroad. Throughout this period, a large number of aristocrats—including some of the individuals who would later join the Resistance—saw fit to abandon their sense of 'honour' and 'decency' on thousands of occasions.

A more plausible explanation of the nobility's role in the conservative Resistance might be provided by examining the aristocracy's ruling habitus. Indeed, countless documented and alleged statements made by noble resistance members seem to suggest that the aristocracy's continued belief in their own ingrained ability to lead and rule allowed them to maintain a certain 'lordly' distance between themselves and the National Socialists' mass movement, in spite of all the unspoken agreements they had made with the regime. Combined with their military ideal of fearlessness in the face of death and the 'anarchic' impulse they had inherited from the noble French *frondeurs*, this indestructible rift was probably instrumental in creating the intellectual space necessary for such noble plotters as Stauffenberg, Schulenburg, and Tresckow to flesh out their famous opposition to the National Socialist state. This same space probably also played a role in the exceedingly impressive lives of Nazism's earliest, most unflinching aristocratic opponents, including Count Helmuth von Moltke, Count Peter Yorck zu Wartenburg, Adam von Trott zu Solz, and Count Ulrich Schwerin von Schwanenfeld. Of course, it is possible to prove that moral motives also inspired practically all of the noble conspirators who stood up to the regime. Nevertheless, there is nothing intrinsically aristocratic about morality, which could equally be detected among all of Germany's other social ranks. The same cannot be said of the nobility's ruling habitus, however, which was undoubtedly the sole preserve of the aristocracy.

This habitus was not the only uniquely aristocratic driving force behind the nobility's involvement in the conservative Resistance. Indeed, a number of other, more easily tangible factors can also be added to the list. For instance, it only took the Nazis a few months to muzzle liberalism, murder their conservative opponents, and crush the mightiest trade unions and left-wing parties in Europe. During their twelve long years in power, however, the National Socialists were totally unable to quash the communications that were maintained by the aristocracy's independent family networks. Unlike the doomed organizations that were run by democrats, socialists, and communists, these exceptionally resilient noble networks had no fixed address, no immediately vulnerable structure, possessed a specific

set of valuable skills, and were entirely built on private relationships between members who shared a bedrock of common cultural codes and mutual trust. As a result, they were far more difficult to unmask and stamp out.

Almost all of the extant studies into the history of the conservative Resistance justifiably underline the immense significance of these networks that aristocrats maintained at considerable personal expense. It is difficult to overstate just how important these relationships were for the establishment of conspiratorial bonds. Indeed, as many historians have pointed out,[209] these networks allowed a whole raft of impressive, prescient aristocrats to pursue a common goal. Each of these figures was probably also influenced by the aristocratic attitude that non-nobles often take for arrogance, but which can be described more charitably as a sense of 'self-assured detachment'. Overall, these noble idiosyncrasies provide a far more convincing explanation of why the aristocracy played such a considerable role in the events of 20 July than all vague notions of morality and a 'sense of honour'—two attributes that, in any case, were shared by other societal groups.

Of course, these factors were just the *positive* aspects of noble culture that helped individual aristocrats' get involved with the Resistance movement.[210] It is important not to forget, however, that aristocrats who wanted to join the cause had to overcome a number of serious obstacles as well. For one thing, officers' messes and manor houses were not exactly traditional locations for masterminding a *coup d'état*. Viewing the aristocratic contribution to the conspiracy in this light reveals two things. Firstly, it highlights the fact that nobles who joined the Resistance deserve the utmost respect. And secondly, it rather makes the long-standing insight that they were not supporters of democracy hardly surprising.

Studying the history of the German nobility confirms a pair of key findings that have long been espoused by historians of the conservative Resistance.[211] First of all, most of the noble conspirators had actively opposed the Weimar Republic and agreed with the compromise that was reached on 30 January 1933 when Hitler rose to power. And secondly, the aristocrats who joined the Resistance represented a tiny noble minority who went against the grain of the overwhelming majority of their professional colleagues and their class. Moreover, the noble plotters who held lofty positions within the hierarchies of the military and the state also provide a glimpse of what could have been possible if aristocrats of a similar rank had not decided to sit still and leave their tacit pact with the National Socialist regime intact.

For decades, some of the self-proclaimed gatekeepers of the memory of the conservative Resistance feared that any critical discussions about its noble members would lessen the admiration in which they were held. Despite these qualms, however, quite the contrary has proved to be the case. This is largely because, unlike the communists and socialists who mounted a more consistent opposition to Nazism from an earlier date, none of the aristocrats who opposed the Nazi regime was motivated by a fundamental sense of existential threat. In truth, the nobility as a whole was not targeted by the National Socialists. If anything, the noble Resistance members were cocooned by their social status and mostly acted from mid- or high-level positions of leadership that they held within the Nazi state. On the one hand, this latter consideration helps explain why aristocrats played such a pivotal role in the Resistance. Indeed, by the mid-1940s, effective opposition was only possible from within the Third Reich's corridors of power and, above all, from the upper echelons of the *Wehrmacht* itself. To the noble conspirators' credit, however, it also underlines the extreme sense of moral responsibility they must have had to leave such powerful positions behind them and put their lives at risk without feeling the pressure of any external duress.

Of course, there is also another side to these observations. That many conservative Resistance members followed career paths that originally required them to forge practical and ideological alliances with the regime that they would ultimately conspire against highlights the ambivalent role many of the plotters played within the Third Reich. Indeed, the fact that they planned their attack from such lofty positions of power also means that they had already been carrying out the duties associated with their National Socialist posts for many years before they decided to act. Whether one should stress the ambivalence or the 'greatness' of these aristocrats' contradictory attitudes will no doubt remain a bone of contention in the debates surrounding 20 July 1944.

It is, however, a fact that 'the aristocracy' as a whole never mounted a revolt against the National Socialist regime. Moreover, if such an uprising had ever taken place, it would have been aimed at the Weimar Republic rather than Hitler's Third Reich. It is also safe to assume that the aristocracy played a considerable role in developing the murderous machinery that allowed the Nazis to carry out their plans for genocide and predatory war. Meticulously chronicling the percentage of noblemen who served in individual branches of the military lies beyond the scope of this book, however, and further research will be required to find out exactly how many aristocrats

were active in Germany's right-wing paramilitary organizations and, above all, in the officer corps of the *Reichswehr*, the *Wehrmacht*, and the SS.

Although the bridges between the nobility and National Socialism were lined with significant obstacles, they could, in fact, be traversed. Indeed, large numbers of aristocrats entered into a misalliance with the Nazi regime and made a significant contribution to Hitler's rise to power in 1933. This decision had more far-reaching consequences than the nobility's late attempt to derail the regime via their failed revolt in 1944. The aristocracy had already been veering towards the extreme political Right for many decades before the Third Reich. Ultimately, they lacked the will and the might to chart a different course. In fact, by the time a tiny aristocratic minority shouldered a crucial role in the attempted coup of 20 July, a far larger section of their class had already assumed key positions in the Nazi state and war machine.

Towards the end of his life, General Henning von Tresckow—one of the most impressive members of the plot of 20 July—is said to have uttered the now-famous phrase *coûte que coûte* ('at all costs') to spur on his fellow conspirators to continue with their uprising no matter what. Crucially, however, Tresckow's rallying cry to a small minority of heroic aristocrats was not the first time this phrase had been used.[212] It had previously been uttered by a much larger section of the nobility to urge their peers to forge an alliance with the National Socialist regime.

5

Nazis and Nobles: Affinities

The previous chapter outlined the key barriers that hindered the formation of an alliance between the Nazis and the nobility. Chapter 5 will now analyse the most important reasons for their eventual rapprochement and demonstrate why these patches of common ground ultimately had greater political weight than the numerous points of friction that existed between the two groups.

Common Enemies

The central reason for the rapprochement between the Nazis and the nobility lay in the various common enemies they shared. On the face of it, this seems utterly banal. In 1927, however, the influential constitutional lawyer Carl Schmitt published a notorious text in which he claimed that differentiating oneself from the 'other' was a vital prerequisite for defining the 'self' and that the distinction between one's friends and foes should form the bedrock of all one's politics.[1] Indeed, despite all their differences, when the aristocracy began basing their identity on what they were *not*, it allowed them to believe that forging an alliance with the National Socialist movement was the logical next step. This was particularly true after the NSDAP's election success in September 1930. In their vague, aggressive way, the Nazis criticized 'asphalt nomadism', extolled warriorhood and the German soil, expressed contempt for middle-class lifestyles and education, and despised a tangled mass of enemies—including the Republic, democracy, capitalism, parliamentarianism, liberalism, Judaism, socialism, Bolshevism, and the party-political state—that were strongly reminiscent of the foes the aristocracy had recognized long before.

The extent to which the perception of common enemies helped to overcome the obstacles between the two groups can be seen in a source that provides exceptional insight into the Prussian nobility's relationship with National Socialism. In February 1931, Prince Friedrich Wend zu Eulenburg-Hertefeld—a major Mark Brandenburg landowner who was about fifty years old at the time—launched an advertising campaign to persuade his peers to join forces with the National Socialist movement.[2] The eldest son of one of the Kaiser's most famous associates, Eulenburg had switched allegiance from the DNVP to the NSDAP in early 1931 and met Hitler in Munich on 24 January that same year. Following their conversation, the prince had a version of his notes approved by the Nazi leader and sent out as a circular letter to various major noble landowners and the exiled Wilhelm II in Doorn. This text, which outlined Hitler's answers to some of the nobility's key objections to National Socialism, appeared alongside an appeal from the prince to his fellow aristocrats to sign up as active members of the NSDAP, rather than waiting any longer for '[Alfred] Hugenberg's little flock' in the DNVP 'to captivate [the] masses'. Warning nobles not to miss the moment, he declared that 'men with leadership qualities must resolve to join the NSDAP and work within it'. The prince was actuated by his dichotomous worldview which led him to believe that 'the final showdown between the right and the left, between National Socialism and Bolshevism, the definitive confrontation ha[d] begun.'[3]

Although Eulenburg's opinions were striking, he was far from representative of the aristocracy as a whole. Not many wealthy princes from even the Prussian nobility joined the National Socialist movement as early as 1931. Nevertheless, his appeal—and, crucially, its discussion of common enemies—struck a chord with a majority of aristocrats who never actually joined the NSDAP themselves. An example of this phenomenon is Count Dietlof von Arnim-Boitzenburg, an extremely eminent nobleman who was one of the most influential landowners in the whole of the Brandenburg region. Arnim was highly sceptical about National Socialism at first. He had once refused to receive Hitler at his castle and demonstrated a typically aloof, self-confident 'lordly' attitude towards the Nazi leader by habitually misspelling his surname with a double 't'. In early December 1930, he also helped a number of major Brandenburg landowners to arrange a meeting with Hitler and confront him with a handpicked selection of strong-willed aristocrats who would teach him some 'respect' and leave him 'banging his head against a brick wall' of rejection and resistance as a result of the 'extravagance of many of his ideas'.[4]

By the time Eulenburg launched his appeal, however, Arnim was already striking a much more conciliatory tone. The turning point in the count's opinions seems to have occurred in January 1931 when he saw Hitler give a speech to around fifteen aristocratic landowners in the Berlin headquarters of Bechstein, the piano manufacturer, shortly before Eulenburg's advertising campaign went to print.[5] During the event, Hitler appears to have sidestepped the landowners' objections with effortless ease and charmed at least one of the members of his audience. In a letter he wrote in response to Eulenburg's appeal shortly after this meeting in February 1931, the count—who was about sixty-five years old at the time—articulated grave reservations about the National Socialist movement that were largely based on its lack of a 'Christian element' and the rise of individual demagogues within the NSDAP. Tellingly, however, he had absolutely no complaints about Hitler himself. Indeed, he described his speech in Berlin as 'quite outstanding' and stated that, 'if National Socialism were to move in the direction that Hitler outlines in his policies, one could agree with it without any further ado.' Although Arnim made it plain that he thought his own political position would best be represented by Alfred Hugenberg's wing of the DNVP rather than the NSDAP, he nevertheless clearly expressed the ideas he shared with the Nazi leader. In reference to Hitler's comment to Eulenburg that he would '*ruthlessly*' wage war against the 'plague' of Marxism '*at all costs*' until he had brought about its '*extermination*', for example, Arnim hoped that the influence of the social democratic and centre parties would soon be broken by a 'nationalist majority'. Despite admitting that they had 'differing views in some details', Arnim also declared that the Nazis' and the nobility's shared perception of their enemies and friends should allow the two groups 'to fight shoulder to shoulder' with one another 'on the whole'.[6]

By 1932, the NSDAP's success in the July elections made it definitively clear—if it had not been clear before—that it was the National Socialists, and not Alfred Hugenberg, who had the greatest potential to crush the political Left. This was a consideration that the nobility simply could not ignore. In fact, although the vast majority of their number never entirely relinquished the objections and resentments they felt towards the Nazis, their opposition softened enough for them to see just how useful the tactical alliance with the movement that Arnim had sketched out in early 1931 could be. Indeed, over time, they even came to view it as an indispensable tool for keeping their own chances of seizing power alive.

This shift in sympathies was exemplified in typical aristocratic style by Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg, a close friend of Arnim's who—unlike

Arnim—also entered into an official relationship with the NSDAP. As early as 1929, Schulenburg had expressed hope that the National Socialists would 'blow a fresh, biting wind through all the party-political nonsense', that they would 'not shy away from draconian measures', and that they would take an 'iron broom' and 'sweep out cronyism' from society.[7] Just two years after making this statement, the retired military general joined the NSDAP. In November 1932, he declared with approval that 'without the National Socialists we would already have a red [i.e. leftist] majority today'. Moreover, around a month after the Reichstag burnt down in February 1933, his correspondence with Arnim revealed that his misgivings about the fascists' persecution of the Jews and about their habit of recruiting too many Führers from the uneducated working class were increasingly being drowned out by his cautious enthusiasm for how the Nazis handled their common political foe. 'Hitler's success in the Reichstag was remarkable', he wrote, 'and it was a pleasure to see how he smashed the Social Democrats to pieces' with his 'impromptu' speeches. 'At any rate', he continued, whoever managed to convince 'old Hindenburg' to ignore his doubts and appoint Hitler as Chancellor 'has done a great service to history.'[8]

On 4 February 1933, just three days after he was named the German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler addressed the leaders of the *Reichswehr* in the private residence of General Baron Kurt von Hammerstein in Berlin. During a two-and-a-half-hour after-dinner speech to the assembled military nobility, the Nazi leader made the case for his plans to seize territories in the east. Although various records of the talk survive, the reaction of the generals who heard it remains a point of debate. One thing that is clear, however, is just how careful Hitler was to repeat the tactic he had previously employed with Germany's *grands seigneurs* and find exactly the right words to win over his mighty audience. Indeed, none of the painstakingly selected ideas he spoke about—including rearmament, bringing the SA to heel, crushing Marxism, acquiring *Lebensraum* ('living space') in the east, and 'Germanizing the soil' in the areas they conquered—would have exceeded the understanding or ambitions of any of the Prussian military noblemen who were present at the event.[9]

The aforementioned Count Arnim and Count Schulenburg both represent two prominent versions of a political stance that was prevalent among the older generations of the Prussian nobility and evident among those who were still financially secure. Despite its ambivalence, this attitude ultimately brought them into an alliance with the National Socialist cause. Interestingly,

the same kind of fundamental ideas could also be seen among all the other sections of the nobility that were hit by significant levels of social decline in the aftermath of the First World War. For instance, the notion of a common enemy played a central role in the ideological evolution of Count Andreas von Bernstorff-Wendendorf, a nobleman who was located several social strata below Arnim, Schulenburg, and the other *grands seigneurs*. Evidence of Bernstorff's political development is provided by his voluminous diaries. For one thing, the count was in the habit of sticking pictures of his favourite leaders in his book. Reminiscent of religious icons, these images changed over time: his beloved Kaiser was replaced by the 'Saviour' Hindenburg who—after his own fall from grace—made way for the 'Führer' in turn. An indication that this shift was partly based on a sense of trepidation can be detected in Bernstorff's written journal entries, which catalogue the blend of excitement and relief he felt that the National Socialists were, for example, taking such an uncompromising approach to their political foes. Indeed, the fact that the dynamic Nazi government had decisively cleared out the communist 'cutthroats', had vowed to protect Germany's agriculture by imposing protectionist tariffs, and had united the nationalist right-wing outstripped the count's wildest expectations. 'It is wonderful!', he wrote.[10]

As was evident from Arnim's message to Eulenburg, even aristocrats in secure social positions who turned their noses up at the National Socialists' methods were increasingly won over by respect for the movement's achievements. In November 1932, for example, the Grand Duke Friedrich Franz von Mecklenburg-Schwerin expressed his own version of this respect in a letter to Chancellor von Schleicher. 'One can think what one likes about Hitler and his deeds', he wrote, and 'one must of course be extremely distressed by the movement's aggressive tenor over the last few months, [but] one thing is certain: Hitler has the irrefutable virtue of having promoted a nationalist mind-set among broad swathes of the population that would otherwise have fallen into the Marxist or communist camp.' The Grand Duke also declared that he had nothing against Hitler acceding to the chancellorship when all was said and done as he could only assume the role by entering into a mitigating coalition with other political forces.[11]

A similar brand of respect for the Nazis was articulated in Bavaria in the early 1930s by the Franconian Baron Enoch von Guttenburg. Over the years, the baron—who served as one of the leaders of the Bavarian Home and King's League—had frequently expressed his conviction that the Nazis and the nobility were united in their struggle against a common foe.

In 1930/31, for instance, he declared that 'the enemies of National Socialism are our enemies, too!', that 'we share their yearning for freedom', and that 'we would be the last to condemn their enthusiasm!' At the end of 1931, he again announced that, even though the nobility did not share the Nazis' 'methods in many important respects', their 'opponents are our enemies too'. In July 1933, the baron also reiterated the notion of a common enemy in an official statement he made about the objectives of his organization. 'The Bavarian Home and King's League has spent twelve years fighting against the party-political state and unscrupulous politicians, against pacifism and un-German attitudes', he stated: 'We see that these opponents have been vanquished today.'[12] A comparable sentiment was uttered by the Westphalian Baron Alexander von Elverfeldt-Canstein in August 1932. 'That is why I welcome [the National Socialist] movement, because the enemy of my enemy is my friend', he declared.[13]

Ultimately, it did not take long for the Nazis and the nobility to identify one of the most significant enemies they both shared. In a statement that altered a line by the poet Theodor Däubler (a writer he admired), Carl Schmitt once declared that 'the enemy is our own problem embodied in another person.'[14] As far as large numbers of the nobility were concerned, their antithesis, their 'own problem', and the embodiment of all they should fear and fight against was epitomized by another minority in German society: the Jews.

Anti-Semitism

Once described as 'socialism for idiots',[15] modern anti-Semitism emerged in the nineteenth-century as a futile, knee-jerk response to the comprehensive transformations that had been triggered by modern industrial capitalism—a gravely misunderstood social dynamic that seemed to desecrate all that was holy and destroy everything in its path. The German aristocracy were by no means immune to this reaction. Indeed, the political heart of their own anti-Semitism can be seen as an offshoot of the same, aggressive attitude that first arose within the old middle class of independent craftsmen, guilds, trades, small farmers, shopkeepers, and other individuals who felt threatened by the dynamics of modern capitalism.[16]

As far as the nobility were concerned, the impact of anti-Semitism was not limited to this political function, however. Crucially, it also served as an

overall 'cultural code'[17] that facilitated the rapprochement between the Nazis and the nobility by providing them with a common enemy, a range of shared guiding principles, and an idiom that both groups could understand. In her famous analysis of the self-inflicted demise of Europe's nation states, Hannah Arendt outlined how anti-Semitism played a vital role in bringing together 'mobs' of rejects from all levels of society.[18] Exactly the same can be said about the relationship that was forged between the German aristocracy and Hitler's followers.

Adapting the most modern forms of anti-Semitism to existing antipathies was not a difficult feat for large numbers of the nobility. Although aristocrats were absent from the 'bastions' of Jewish culture, for example, they were represented in every single one of Germany's major anti-Semitic milieus. Indeed, a majority of nobles lived out their lives between manor houses, student corps, the civil service, the officer corps, and other pockets of anti-Semitism that kept them far removed from their Jewish compatriots.[19] Family festivals, all of the nobility's family associations, and the publications produced by agricultural organizations were also quick to adopt the anti-Semitic idiom that, for example, described Berlin as a 'New Jerusalem' where 'duplicitous Jews' (*Schieber-Itzig*) and 'stock exchange money-grubbers' (*Börsen-Raffke*) lived the high life in 'club armchairs' while running their fraudulent schemes. The creation and implementation of such powerful rhetorical codes reached a climax during the Weimar Republic[20] and attained an unsurpassed level of symbolic and linguistic perfection in Goebbels' propaganda machine. Furthermore, a handful of white-hot financial and corruption scandals that exposed Jewish businessmen's grubby dealings with corrupt Social Democrats seemed to provide confirmation of all the prejudices the nobility had ever dreamt up about democracy, the Republic, merchants, and the metropolis.[21] In rural areas, the anti-Semitic code gave the landed aristocracy another chance to redirect their loathing for the radicalized peasantry into a joint hatred for the 'Jews and Jew-lovers' who became their scapegoats for low agricultural prices, high credit rates, and any number of other complaints.[22]

Jean-Paul Sartre once declared that anti-Semitism was more of a passion than an idea.[23] This statement certainly holds true when it comes to the German aristocracy. Indeed, the nobility's tirades against Judaism were similar to Nazi propaganda in that they relied far more heavily on emotional imagery than on logical argument. In some respects, this irrationality was vital to the anti-Semitic worldview, which could not otherwise have blamed

the Jews for the vast range of simultaneous, contradictory troubles they supposedly inflicted on society. As this emotional anti-Semitism deepened over time, the Jews were transformed from a hated 'minority' into the 'anti-race',[24] and aristocrats came to view the figure of 'the Jew' as the symbol of everything the minor nobility despised, including democracy, liberalism, the metropolis, 'uprootedness', 'asphalt culture', intellectualism, modern art, revolutions, social democracy, Bolshevism, free trade, financial capitalism, the stock markets, opulent wealth, excessive education, and—last but not least—a certain strain of sophisticated, distinctly non-military, middle-class way of life. Moreover, the 'projective character of anti-Semitism'[25]—i.e. the idea that the entire mercantile and banking sectors were Jewish through and through—developed into a key feature of the noble ideology that became particularly pronounced after the First World War.

Although anti-Semitism was rife among the minor nobility—and although tub-thumping cries 'against Jews and Jew-lovers' had become a matter of daily life within the ranks of the DAG—such views were also widespread among the loftiest echelons of their class. In March 1919, for instance, Crown Prince Wilhelm confidently proclaimed that the 'metropolitan rabble and sections of the Jewry' were to blame for the post-war revolution and Germany's overall demise.[26] In a similar vein, Count von Arnim-Boitzenburg delivered speeches at private family parties and to the Central Association of German Conservatives that were littered with examples of *völkisch* and anti-Semitic ideology. In one address, for instance, the count asserted that aristocratic leadership was the antithesis of the 'Jewish spirit'—a societal force that knew only how to subvert, to exploit, and to cheat.[27] Comparable declarations were also made by the DAG's *Adelsmarschall*, Friedrich von Berg.[28] Although he did not personally share the gutter anti-Semitism (*Radauantisemitismus*) that prevailed among the organization he commanded, Berg spent many years fostering the DAG's aggressively anti-Jewish direction and lent the authority of his name to innumerable declarations that helped associate 'nobility' more deeply with racist thought.

As previously noted, aligning the aristocracy with racist views was a mixed blessing. Indeed, once they started accepting the tenets of biological determinism, the aristocracy essentially placed themselves on a slippery slope which ultimately led to such self-destructive statements as Count Erhard von Wedel's claim that 'race and nobility are related terms, or at least they should be.'[29] Flirting with these racist ideas also took them perilously

close to the concept of the *Sippenwarte*—the so-called 'kinship guardians' who would be tasked with keeping a watchful eye over aristocratic procreation. The similarity this concept bore to some of the notions espoused by the SS was striking. In fact, the moment the DAG's managing director Walter von Bogen proposed the idea in 1934 can be seen as the final step in the nobility's institutionalized adoption of the SS's anti-Semitic code. This impression was cemented when Bogen admitted that, although the plan would likely still 'seem quite monstrous' to the 'older generation' of aristocrats, it was imperative to implement it by following the example that had been set by the SS.[30] Essentially, Bogen's plan envisaged an aristocratic version of the marriage conventions that had subjected SS officers' future brides to genetic background checks since 1931 and bore many of the hallmarks of the NSDAP's *Sippenamt* ('Office for Family Affairs') that was founded in the very same year. Unmistakable similarities also existed between the nobility's EDDA project and the *Sippenbuch* ('Kinship Book') that was orchestrated by the SS.[31]

It is difficult to overstate how important anti-Semitic codes were for facilitating the nobility's rapprochement with the National Socialist movement. Nevertheless, even this aspect of their misalliance was not unproblematic. Indeed, ever since the late German Empire—and particularly in the aftermath of the First World War—the nobility's use of anti-Semitism had been accompanied by anti-Semitic criticism that was directed at their class. For instance, the *völkisch* rumour mill started claiming that the Prussian Crown Prince had promoted the 'invasion of eastern Jews' into the country and that he had returned to his homeland with the help of 'Jewish money'.[32] The prince's adjutant was branded a 'half Jew' by *völkisch* agitators, prompting him to condemn the levels of 'savagery to which such circles could ascend'.[33] For their part, aristocratic election speakers frequently had to deal with anti-Semitic slurs. While working for the DNVP, for example, Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg was confronted with the widespread accusation that the House of Hohenzollern had long been under the influence of the Jews.[34] Other noble speakers—and especially those working in rural areas—were confronted time and again with the popular idea that the aristocracy had become 'highly Judaized' themselves.[35] There were also widespread accusations that nobles were living the high life with Jews and 'Jew-lovers' in their castles at the general populace's expense. One can assume that these latter allegations only increased after 1933.[36]

Ultimately, some aristocrats were not just victims of *völkisch* allegations, but also suffered from anti-Semitism directed at them by their own noble peers. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the DAG started expelling over 200 members from its ranks after adding the 'Aryan clause' to its statutes in 1933. Although this resulted in cases of 'monstrous tragedy' being meted out to various aristocrats, no one was shown any mercy. This was even true of Baron Kurd von Gleichen-Uslar, a retired colonel from an old Saxon family who wrote to Hitler asking for help in 1934. 'Allow me to remain in the German national community', he pleaded: 'take this undeserved humiliation away from me, give me the right—based on my convictions, my tradition, and my front-line military service—to call myself "Aryan" before the state and the church.'[37] The baron's cries of despair were probably more typical than the conspicuously relaxed attitude displayed by the Bavarian Baron von Berchem who was faced with the threat of expulsion from the DAG because of a Jewish ancestor in his family tree. After nonchalantly crediting this disadvantageous forebear with having brought a non-negligible amount of 'intelligence' to his clan, Berchem simply declared that 'apart from my natural, deep regret that I will no longer be able to attend the German Noble Society's unfailingly elegant teas, I could not care less about the whole affair.' However, the baron's extensive efforts to refute the allegations against him rather give the lie to this insouciant claim.[38]

The popular notion that the nobility cultivated 'moderate' forms of anti-Semitism and gave the most brutal strains of the ideology a wide berth is not remotely backed up by the historical sources. In fact, the most vulgar strains of racial anti-Semitism had already received active support from the aristocracy in the German Empire. Proof that the nobility's alleged distaste for 'gutter anti-Semitism' eventually evaporated—if it had ever existed at all—was provided in August 1931 when the SA-Führer Count Wolf Heinrich von Helldorf could be seen giving orders from an open-topped car as his men prepared to rough up any 'Jewish'-looking passers-by on the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin.[39] Sources also point to the existence of a widespread seam of 'paranoid anti-Semitism' that had run through the nobility's ranks from the early days of the DAG, continued in the EDDA project, and reached its climax when they tried to forge an alliance with the SS.[40] Admittedly, there is also some evidence that aristocrats did espouse a wider spectrum of views in private. For example, the NSDAP member Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg expressed political reservations about Hitler's Jewish policy and was reluctant to part with his wife's long-standing

physician—a man he confidentially described as a 'first-rate doctor whose Jewishness we cannot let bother us'—after the Nazis rose to power in 1933.[41] A similar sentiment can also be detected in the case of Prince Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten, an SS member who had a disagreement with his organization's leaders in 1938 when he attempted to retain the services of a highly competent Jewish lawyer who had helped run his estate for twenty-five years.[42] Although this kind of anecdote might suggest that the nobility looked more kindly on the Jews than one might expect, this impression quickly dissolves on closer inspection. In fact, at no point did these individuals' preference for Jewish professionals ever cause them to disregard the fundamental tenets of the anti-Semitic worldview.

Führertum

> As soon as I hear the term 'bourgeois gentlemen', I feel sick. It always conjures up the image of a fat man with a watch chain dangling down his belly . . . a playing card between the sausage-like fingers of his left hand, [and] a pot of beer in his right . . . .
>
> —Baron Manfred von Killinger (1927)[43]

In the space of just a few short years, the National Socialists managed to establish an anti-democratic mass movement in German society. In so doing, they achieved a feat that had long eluded the aristocracy, whose organizational methods were far outstripped by the scope, dynamism, and radicalism of the fascists. From around 1928/29, it also gradually dawned upon the nobility that the Nazis would soon overtake their dominance in right-wing politics and—most worryingly—threaten their superiority in the countryside, a domain that had been the mainstay of their power for hundreds of years.[44] After the Nazi party achieved its tremendous success in the national elections of September 1930, their growing superiority was no longer in any doubt. The efficient genius of Richard Walther Darré's Agrarian Apparatus had allowed the National Socialist movement to challenge and destroy the aristocratic claim to leadership in rural areas between 1930 and 1932.[45] Needless to say, when it came to Germany's cities, the nobility did not even stand a chance.

Ultimately, the Nazi propaganda machine managed to create a much more credible, contemporary, popular image of *Führertum* than the nobility ever could. Moreover, by successfully redefining what it meant to be a

Führer, they dealt a devastating blow to the heart of the noble habitus. Interestingly, while this fight over leadership was still going on, both the word *Führertum* and the concept it represented also served as one of the key links that bound aristocratic and National Socialist ideals together. Indeed, it is almost impossible to overstate just how important the Führer-follower ideology was for the entire political Right in the aftermath of the First World War.[46]

During the early stages of his political career, Hitler made it eminently clear that he viewed himself as a mere 'herald' (*Trommler*) of the future Führer and one of the many rhetorical engineers who would finalize the mechanism of the Führer-follower ideal in time for the true leader's arrival. 'You are developing the intellectual tools to rebuild Germany. I am nothing more than a herald and a collector. Let us work together', he supposedly declared to Arthur Moeller van den Bruck in Berlin in 1922.[47] In May the following year, he also seized upon *völkisch* dreams of a messianic Führer figure by announcing that the *Unterführer* (the 'sub-Führers') could already start serving the future leader, even though his identity was not yet known. 'You might ask yourselves: is the suitable person already here? It is not our job to look for the Führer. He is either granted by heaven or not. Our job is to forge the sword the Führer will use when he is here. Our job is to provide the dictator with a *Volk* that is ready for him when he comes', he proclaimed.[48]

Long before Hitler successfully started playing this leading role himself,[49] the idea of a Führer and his followers had already taken root in the German aristocracy. An example of this phenomenon is provided by a speech about the nature of the true Führer that Baron Engelbert von Kerckerinck—a Catholic landowner and farmers' leader from Westphalia—delivered to the Federation of German Industry in Dortmund in December 1927. As far as the baron was concerned, the future leader could not be appointed or created, but was a 'natural phenomenon in human form' that could be discovered at any level of society, be he a prince, a minor nobleman, a middle-class citizen, or—like Mussolini—a member of the 'working class'. The baron's address to an audience of industrialists also contained a number of decidedly messianic overtones which demonstrate just how compatible the nobility's views were with the 'Hitler myth' that would emerge just a short time later. 'Even in these adverse times', he declared, 'may Providence grant us the exalted man who will bring together the nation's fragmented forces . . . [and] show us the way out of the night and into the light.'[50]

Although they certainly did not see eye to eye on every detail, the general thrust of the Führer-follower ideal—a concept that stood in stark opposition to the democratic and egalitarian social models—represented one of the most significant bridges that facilitated relationships between the differing groups of the emergent New Right. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, the concept contained various diffuse—but eminently powerful—blends of irrational, messianic, pseudo-religious elements that were comfortingly similar to the New Right's typical rhetorical and symbolic idiom.[51] And secondly, both the ideal and the reality of National Socialist *Führertum* came to signify a system of charismatic, personal rule that was worlds apart from democracy's anonymous elections and the 'cold' mechanisms of modern bureaucracy. Indeed, the Nazis' ideal Führer was a decisive warrior who had been annealed by *Stahlgewitter* (literally the 'storm of steel' that was rained down by artillery fire) and represented the antithesis of the feeble, desk-bound bureaucrat.[52]

This ideal of charismatic rule—a phenomenon that was rooted in irrational, religious, emotional forces—presented the aristocracy with new opportunities to seize power by highlighting the attributes they had traditionally prized for hundreds of years. By pointing to the insights of Marc Bloch's famous study of the French kings and their belief in their ability to heal diseases with the so-called 'royal touch', even the earliest analysts of National Socialism had observed just how many noble traits were contained within the Nazi ideal of *Führertum* itself.[53] Furthermore, it also soon became apparent that the aristocracy had a head start when it came to presenting themselves as charismatic, determined, battle-hardened rulers in a disoriented society that was anxiously casting around for new leadership. Indeed, the nobility actually possessed centuries of experience in wielding charismatic power that Hitler and other sections of society could not possibly match.

This idea that the nobility could fulfil society's yearning for *Führerschaft* (leadership) by confidently drawing on their many centuries of leadership experience could be detected wherever aristocrats discussed the opportunities created by the National Socialists. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had complained about the difficulty of finding suitable Führers. He also claimed that his movement was based on the 'aristocratic principle' and was thus hostile to any democratic forms of leadership recruitment.[54] To some extent, this gave the nobility good reason to be hopeful. Indeed, from their rather supercilious point of view, the National Socialists were a petty-bourgeois, proletarian force

that had succeeded in teaching the 'masses' to think in terms of Führers and followers, but suffered a chronic lack of individuals who were actually able to lead. The confident nobility ridiculed the Nazis for this failing at first. From around 1930, however, they cautiously began voicing the idea that they could perhaps fill this gap in the market themselves. A grotesque variant of the aristocratic attempt to redirect Germany's thirst for leaders towards themselves appeared in a speech that Wilhelm II delivered in the Netherlands in 1930. During his address, the exiled Kaiser bemoaned the fact that the term 'Führer' had become so terribly devalued in the modern age. 'To be a Führer! Everyone wants that nowadays', he declared: 'Führers are cropping up all over the place. Lots of people act as if they are Führers .... And yet, folk are still crying out for Führers everywhere!' In the same speech, Wilhelm II also invoked a bizarre blend of Christian and New Right motifs in order to reaffirm his own right to rule. In an attempt to confirm that *Führerschaft* was a God-given privilege, the erstwhile Kaiser declared that the Almighty had '*revealed*' the 'call to be a Führer' to his forebears five centuries ago, just as He had first done to the Babylonian King Hammurabi five millennia in the past. With a political naivety that was only matched by his geographical distance from the centre of German power, Wilhelm II then declared that Jesus was the Führer of heaven, while he was the Führer on earth. To cap it all, the self-proclaimed Kaiser-Führer also recited the passage from the Gospel of John that had provided the title for his speech. 'I am the vine, ye are the branches:' he quoted in an act of shameless self-reference: 'He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for *without me ye can do nothing.*'[55]

Of course, this kind of wild, sweeping claim was not widely echoed among the rest of the nobility's ranks. Indeed, aristocrats who had a firmer grasp on political reality increasingly started ceding ground to the modern Führer ideal. In 1926, for example, the DAG's chairman Friedrich von Berg conceded 'that noble birth does not automatically qualify one to be a Führer' and spoke of the 'Führer upbringing' that was necessary to achieve such a status.[56] After 1933, some of the noble family associations that wanted to at least pay lip service to the new status quo also started referring to their 'Chairman of the Family Council' as a 'Family Führer' (*Familienführer*) instead.[57]

The relationship of supply and demand—a relationship in which the theoretical demand for Führers was met by the actual supply of aristocratic leadership experience—can also be detected in the nobility's practical

dealings with the National Socialist movement. Despite the two groups' differences, the aristocracy really did possess a reservoir of individuals with precisely the kind of leadership credentials that the Nazis most admired. Indeed, the nobility boasted large numbers of civil servants with specialist legal expertise, landowners whose roots were plunged deep into the local soil for generations, and officers who combined military know-how with the reputational sheen of having fought on the front lines during the First World War. This practical affinity was also underscored by the fact that both the Nazis and the nobility shared great enthusiasm for the Führer-follower ideal and that National Socialists frequently expressed a willingness to align themselves with the old traditions of aristocratic rule. Examples of this latter phenomenon abound. Heinrich Himmler chose to style himself as the reincarnation of a medieval king, for instance,[58] and Hitler had a portrait painted that portrayed him as a lance-wielding white knight on horseback. Of course, whenever Nazis presented themselves as aristocratic warriors, it could mean one of two things. Either they were attempting to curry favour with the nobility, or they were mounting a hostile takeover bid to claim the aristocracy's traditions as their own. Overall, it seems as though the nobility were able to give the National Socialists the benefit of the doubt. Even the left wing of the NSDAP made various statements that must have been music to noble ears. In 1927, for example, Gregor Strasser spoke of the relationship between a 'Duke' and his 'liegeman' and claimed that the 'essence of the structure of the NSDAP' lay in this 'ancient German . . . relationship' between a Führer and his follower.[59] Two years later, Franz Pfeffer von Salomon—a former military captain from a Westphalian noble family who rose to become the highest-ranking member of the SA—also announced that 'a new human epoch' of 'noble crusadership' had emerged from 'the blossom of Germany's youth' in the SA and that it had the ability to vanquish the 'toxic beast of degenerate subhumanity' which crawled 'through the asphalt deserts of the metropolis' in search of its prey.[60]

Despite such promising signs that their skills were in demand, aristocrats could not merely offer up their 'leadership experience' and join the National Socialists' ranks. After all, important social, ideological, and political rifts existed between various sections of the political Right, including part of the German youth movement (*Jugendbewegung*), the 'secret Germany' that gathered around the 'Master' (*Meister*) Stefan George, the Young German Order (*Jungdeutscher Orden*) that was led by the 'High Master' (*Hochmeister*) Arthur Mahraun,[61] and the brutal forms of uncompromisingly masculine camaraderie

that reigned among the *Freikorps* and in the clubhouses of the SA. Although they were different in a number of ways, however, all of these groups shared two kinds of common ground that made them more approachable for aristocratic outsiders. Firstly, they all held a desire to discover lifestyles that revolved around the Führer-follower model and that were deliberately created in opposition to the middle-class habitus. And secondly, they were overwhelmingly populated by young men. This latter factor was particularly attractive as far as the nobility were concerned. Indeed, although aristocrats of all ages harboured anti-middle-class views, the practical implementation of these ideas was largely taken on by aristocrats who had fought on the front lines and by their younger siblings.

Young, male aristocrats must have felt a particularly deep sense of affinity with the ideals, symbols, style, and tone of the *Bündische Jugend*—a collection of youth organizations that bore a number of similarities with Robert Baden-Powell's Scouts and cultivated a range of anti-urban, anti-middle-class, 'chivalric' ideals.[62] Indeed, the titles, language, and slogans used by the organization's 'Führers' made their 'youth uprising'[63] seem like a boy's revolt in which the sons of middle-class citizens rose up against the aloof, dignified tedium of middle-class lives in an act of rebellion that was partly inspired by a set of idealized noble myths. After 1918, the *Bündische Jugend* was especially popular with youthful, middle-class soldiers who, upon returning home from the battlefield, experienced a sense of profound disgust at the familiar lifestyles of the 'modern bourgeois citizen' and the 'excess' of bourgeois wealth, comfort, and education they saw all around them. The stylistic pinnacle of this revulsion appeared in a biting requiem for the middle-class world that was written by Ernst Jünger,[64] a decorated war hero, an author, and a self-proclaimed 'anarchist'.[65] 'Death steps into bourgeois living rooms and touches the trash of tassels and fabric with his fingers…', Jünger wrote: 'He peers into the dusty parlours with the gaze of a waiter who indifferently adds up his bill during a senseless orgy.'[66]

Unfortunately for the aristocracy, the disenfranchised middle-class youth who yearned to escape this spectre of bourgeois respectability were not necessarily driven into the real nobility's arms, but rather gravitated towards various versions of elitist, masculine associations that stressed the importance of becoming 'noble' oneself.[67] Indeed, a number of male-dominated organizations—including the SS, the *Bündische Jugend*, and the circle of disciples surrounding the poet Stefan George—started amassing a conspicuous

stockpile of noble fantasies in much the same way as the *völkisch* movement had done before the outbreak of the First World War.

In spite of this development, a number of points of intersection did emerge between the ideological worlds of young noblemen and the middle-class youth. An example of this common ground can be found in the guise of the 'Grey Corps' (*Graues Korps*), which stands as one of the most stridently elitist youth institutions that existed during the post-war period. In his account of the organization, the historian Nicolaus Sombart described the corps as a 'circle of secret nobility', an 'elite corps beyond good and evil' that was forged via 'a rigorous selection process' and gathered together a number of followers around 'an exceptional individual' whom they referred to as 'their Führer'.[68] Although such organizations provided prime opportunities for young aristocrats and their middle-class peers to join forces with one another, it remained entirely possible that the rapprochement between the two could have gone awry. The aristocracy never tired of restaking their leadership claim, and the middle-class members of the *Bündische Jugend* wanted to reshape the collapsing middle-class world by imposing their own model of *Führerschaft* upon it. As both nobility and disenchanted middle-class youth spoke the same language and shared a comparable stock of symbols, ideals, and imagined foes, however, the overlaps between the two camps became larger over time. Indeed, the *Bündische Jugend* espoused a combination of elitism, militarism, and nature-obsessed anti-urbanism that were familiar to the aristocracy. The same was also true of the chivalric motifs they used and the songs they sung, which spoke of breaking away from 'everyday humanity' and 'riding longing to death' (i.e. purging themselves of youthful desires by embarking on epic horseback adventures).[69]

It is useful at this point to wrest Max Weber's famous statement about the 'disenchantment of the world' from its original analytical moorings[70] and use it to refer to the symbols, emotions, and yearnings that arose in twentieth-century Germany. As can be seen from a letter the young Countess Marion Dönhoff penned to the chairman of the DAG in 1939,[71] the aristocracy were no strangers to using the term 'disenchantment' themselves. Ultimately, this disenchantment precipitated the advent of a number of counter-cultural movements in German society. This was particularly true wherever it was prompted by a feeling of despair at the rise of rationalism, science, bureaucracy, and technology and by a sense of disillusionment that was triggered by the increasingly drab aesthetics of the middle class—a group

that had actively suppressed the use of colour and form during the nineteenth century, turned fashion into an exclusively female pursuit, and transformed the figure of the 'gentleman' into the grey individual who is still a familiar sight.[72] Crucially, when disenchanted Germans found they could not rely on the radical Left to furnish them with images of a re-enlivened world, they tended to gravitate towards a fascination for the striking symbolism of the nobility. To disenchanted onlookers, the glamour of Wilhelm II's court in the capital city, the aristocracy's castles and palaces, the Horse Guards' parades, and the famously flamboyant march the Kaiser undertook with his sons in 1913[73] all seemed to provide 'militaristic', old-fashioned, 'feudal' displays of magnificent splendour that the dry stock of Republican imagery had no hope of rivalling.[74]

During the era of the German Empire, anti-middle-class attitudes assumed innumerable guises that were rehearsed by a variety of different groups, ranging from the Youth Movement and the *völkisch* elements of society right through to the pseudo-aristocrats who studied the works of Nietzsche. After the First World War, these views were bundled together with the mythology surrounding the so-called 'Spirit of 1914'[75] and radicalized via exposure to Germans' experience of battle.[76] Although its actual political function was somewhat ambiguous, the 'fascist style'[77] of anti-middle-class thought was undoubtedly the most significant form of this particular ideological trend that emerged in the post-war period. As the historian Sven Reichardt has argued, this raw outpouring of rhetorical and actual hatred for upper-middle-class lifestyles was also the defining moment in the creation of the fascist self-image. Nowhere was this more conspicuous than among the ranks of the SA, a male-dominated, vitalist, paramilitary group that was driven by a 'fanatical' will, organized according to the Führer-follower hierarchy, governed by masculine, military rigour, and remained the mightiest wing of the National Socialist movement until 1934. The SA were unremitting in their hatred of the middle class. They openly despised the 'the limitless despicableness, the cowardly failure of the bourgeois world',[78] for instance, held the middle class responsible for the advent of the 'System' (as the Republic was often pejoratively known), unfailingly envisaged middle-class citizens as 'unmanly, dejected, indecisive conformists',[79] and even developed their 'warrior-like' sense of 'camaraderie' in direct opposition to the bourgeois existence they so despised.[80] This overall attitude of loathing was encapsulated by Ernst Röhm in 1932. 'We reject them all', he declared, 'the "clever", the "level-headed", the "mature",

the "experienced", all those who claim to know so much and yet cannot do one particular thing: become the unflinching masters of destiny.'[81]

This anti-middle-class sentiment would ultimately prove a blessing for the National Socialists overall. Indeed, they were able to stand out among the onslaught of right-wing groups that arose in Germany thanks to their focus on anti-middle-class views and the striking levels of brutality they were willing to employ. In fact, the leaders of the *Stahlhelm* and the DNVP suddenly started to look like feeble, inconsequential 'Philistines' in contrast with the style of their Nazi counterparts. By 1931, Magnus von Levetzow, the chief advisor to the exiled Kaiser, had voiced the opinion that Alfred Hugenberg—the leader of the DNVP—was 'no Führer', but 'a Prussian privy councillor' who wore a fancy, bourgeois 'necktie and a frock coat at 8 o'clock in the morning.' 'Germany can expect nothing from this skilless fat cat, from this fellow who is as dry as pig's leather, from this . . . pedant', he declared.[82]

Manfred von Killinger, a Saxon nobleman who served as a Führer in both the *Freikorps* and the SA, described the same radical departure from the middle-class style in words and deeds that were wildly more brutal than Levetzow's. In 1932, Killinger contrasted the military, sparse, physical lives of his SA comrades with those of the 'duplicitous Jews' (*Schieber-Itzig*)—'indolent little upstarts' with stuffed bellies and diamond-encrusted fingers who wore modern jackets and shiny shoes and could often be seen 'shaking a leg' on the dance floor with some 'make-upped whore'. In his eyes, the positive antithesis of this degenerate image was represented by an SA unit who sucked in 'lungfuls of forest air' while exerting themselves on a night march. Killinger's particular brand of invective reads like a demotic version of the anti-materialist, anti-middle-class criticism that was typical among the minor nobility at that time. 'Money is your god', he railed against his middle-class compatriots: 'It gives you what you need for your lifestyles—jazz bands, balls, Jewish theatre, champagne binges—and drapes your wives in jewellery and furs. We are worlds apart from you.'[83]

One of the points of intersection between the Nazis' and the nobility's anti-middle-class views was provided by similarities in the language they used. Indeed, both groups employed an idiom that was notably tinged with emotion, filled with military images, and heavily laced with metaphor. In 1932, the Westphalian Baron von Kerckerinck provided a typical example of this rhetoric when he articulated his views on the political 'ideal of the Führer'. A number of 'thoroughly well-known manoeuvres' from the

'science "of war"', he declared—including 'reconnoitring, scrutinizing the opposing front, concealment, evasion, frontal attacks, charging the flanks, encircling, retreat, [and] flight'—occurred 'time and again in the daily battles within human society.' As a result, Kerckerinck continued, it was 'logical' to approach the matter of the 'Führer problem' using the 'military model' as well.[84] In the same year, Magnus von Levetzow published a similarly militaristic public appeal in the pages of the *Völkischer Beobachter* which urged readers to come out in support of the NSDAP. After unleashing the battle cry of 'Ran and den Feind' ('Engage the enemy'), the retired admiral's text declared 'follow me with confidence and vote Adolf Hitler!'[85] Both the Nazis' and the nobility's syntax and choice of words also frequently engaged in open confrontation with the level-headedness, elegance, and 'decadence' of the educated middle-class idiom. Indeed, National Socialist pamphlets often echoed the language used by the minor nobility, employing short sentences, powerful anecdotes, malicious jokes, clarity, bluntness, physicality, animalism, colour, emotion, and aggression in tones that resonated with the crack of a riding crop, the thunder of galloping hoofs, and the thud of boots slapping against the pavement. Although the images and sounds invoked by aristocrats tended to be more melancholic and poetic—conjuring up the morning dew on fields of rye and the wind in the treetops, for example—they generally also contained strains of directness, power, conflict, and a permanent state of attack. In addition, the more military-minded sections of the aristocracy shared the National Socialists' tendency to view politics as a modified continuation of the First World War, and there is a great deal of evidence that the two parties both couched their 'struggle' against the Republic in the metaphorical idiom of battle. Ultimately, all of these direct, raw, animalistic images, words, and stylistic devices helped to bind the Nazis and the nobility closer together.

In addition to this set of military symbolism, the nobility also used a striking number of metaphors from the worlds of hunting and horse riding. For example, Baron Kerckerinck once wrote a letter to the famous author Oswald Spengler which described the strategy he used in his work as a 'farmers' leader' as follows: 'The horses I travel with are healthy and good', he wrote, 'but they need to be steered prudently [as they are] very different from one another in race and temperament.'[86] A similar equine metaphor can also be identified in Baron Magnus von Braun's description of the 1918 Revolution, which explained the rather moderate course of the insurrection by comparing it with the behaviour of 'Führers' whose 'horses' had become

'shy and wild', but had 'not completely torn away from their reins'.[87] To quote a final example from the nobility's inexhaustible supply of anecdotes, Reich President Hindenburg is also said to have used a hunting metaphor in conversation with Kurt von Schleicher shortly before he was replaced by Hitler as Chancellor. 'I thank you, Herr General, for everything you have done for the Fatherland', Hindenburg said: 'Now let's see how the hare [i.e. Hitler] runs with God's help.'[88] Uttered two days before the handover of power to the Nazi leader, this rather supercilious exchange of words between two aristocratic generals stands as a rhetorical monument to their total lack of ability to grasp the significance of what was arguably the most disastrous decision in modern German history.

Although seemingly antiquated at first glance, the nobility's vivid, metaphor-laden language of hunting and warriorhood was certainly not obsolete. Indeed, it proved extremely compatible with the heroic-vitalist style of the New Right and resonated with the stunted rhetoric of what the Jewish novelist Victor Klemperer called the *Lingua Tertii Imperii* (LTI): the 'Language of the Third Reich'.[89] In August 1934, Klemperer—a philologist with a seismologist's sensitivity for linguistic shifts—noted that this National Socialist idiom 'began in a lyrical, ecstatic mode, then it became the language of war, then it slid into a mechanistic, materialistic style'.[90] During the first two stages of its development, the LTI must have triggered countless feelings of familiarity and a sense of kinship among the aristocracy in general and the among younger generation of the minor nobility in particular. In fact, the LTI communicated an enticingly powerful, warrior-like dynamism and spoke of 'fighters', of 'attacks', and of a 'movement' that would take 'action' and head out on the 'assault' with an 'ice-cold' will and 'lightning-fast' speed. As well as chiming with military-minded aristocrats, these concepts were stolen—like many of the National Socialists' ideas—from other societal domains. Indeed, as Klemperer noted, the way in which the LTI emphasized 'willpower and the violent desire to forge onwards' was a notion it had 'inherited from or shared with the Expressionists'.[91] Wherever these ideas came from, however, they were highly effective at building bridges between the Nazis and the nobility. In fact, when Joseph Goebbels praised the 'elemental rootedness' that was evident in 'down-to-earth Westphalia' and contrasted it with the 'asphalt monster' and the lack of any 'patriarchal loyalty' he saw in the metropolis,[92] his words would not only have been grasped by his adjutants from the high nobility, but also understood in every aristocratic manor house throughout the land.

Careers and Profiteers

When the National Socialists decided to place the concepts of 'blood' and 'soil' on an ideological pedestal, they necessarily also raised the status of agriculture and landownership to a significant extent. This had two main effects. Firstly, it prompted many aristocrats to hope that their private property could be entailed and given legal security and that the assets they had lost could be replaced. And secondly, it meant that Hitler's imperialist hunt for *Lebensraum* in the east became one of the most important points of ideological and political affinity between the Nazis and the nobility. The National Socialists also won favour among the aristocracy by boosting their prospects of securing a job. The *Wehrmacht*'s swollen war machine gave a number of noble sons back the career prospects that had been stripped from them after 1918, for instance, and a number of new positions became available in government after the Nazis completed their 'cleansing' of the civil service. In a letter he wrote to his mother three days before the reins of the state were handed over to the National Socialists, Prince Otto von Bismarck—a Guards Officer, a lawyer, and a landowner—rejoiced in the career opportunities he predicted a Hitler–Papen cabinet would open up for him and his brother Gottfried. The prince was not mistaken in his assessment. Indeed, he was swiftly promoted to the position of embassy counsellor in London in 1933 and, in 1937, became the director of the political department in the Foreign Ministry. For his part, Count Gottfried von Bismarck—Otto's younger brother who had joined the NSDAP in 1932 and was also a Guards Officer and a lawyer in his own right—became the county commissioner for the Baltic island of Rügen as early as March 1933. Less than two years later, he then proceeded to assume the role of district president in the city of Stettin (a.k.a. Szczecin) and was made a Brigadier General in the SS—a post from which he was dishonourably discharged after the events of 20 July 1944.[93]

The Nazis gathered further noble support for their conquest and settlement plans by adopting the Teutonic Knights' motto *Gen Ostland wollen wir reiten* ('We want to ride towards the East') and employing it in their propaganda campaigns. This resonated very favourably with large numbers of German nobles. As early as 1926, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin extolled the potential gains that these National Socialist policies might yield for the East Elbian nobility in the pages of a prominent magazine. The rejuvenating

effect that the 'unlimited settlement opportunities' provided by 'colonial land' in the east would have on the aristocracy as a whole 'needs no explanation', he declared.[94] By the outbreak of the Second World War at the latest, Kleist-Schmenzin's vague aspiration had evolved into extremely pragmatic attempts by the nobility to gain a share of the booty for themselves. Indeed, after 1939, rich and poor aristocrats and members of the high and low nobility alike began asking the leaders of the SS about the possibility of acquiring parcels of conquered land. Fortunately for the aristocracy, while the settlement of new colonial territories was being planned, it became apparent that Germany's proverbial *Volk ohne Raum*—literally, the 'people without space'—now had a great deal of space, but not enough people to fill it. Proposals to populate the land with industrial workers were met with such a poor response that 'Aryan' foreigners had to be brought in to settle the territories instead.[95] The same lack of enthusiasm did not afflict the nobility. In fact, they quickly realized that they were being presented with a unique opportunity to secure estates for their families for generations to come. Letters to Heinrich Himmler and his high-ranking SS colleagues prove that various sections of the aristocracy were extremely interested in getting their hands on major holdings in the 'Eastern lands'. Even messages written by the wealthy high nobility contained extremely concrete enquiries about taking a potential share of the spoils. An example is a letter that the Hereditary Grand Duke Nikolaus von Oldenburg sent to Himmler in 1941. 'Dear Herr Himmler!', he wrote,

> I have submitted three hereditary farm approval applications [*Erbhofzulassungsanträge*] for my inherited family property in Holstein; two applications have already been approved, but the decision about the third application is still outstanding. As I have 6 sons in total, I would very much like to apply for yet more major landholdings for the younger sons. I would be very grateful if you could briefly let me know whether, in principle, I will be given the opportunity to buy larger estates in the east after the end of the war. . . . Warmest wishes and Heil Hitler . . . .[96]

Interestingly, this noble desire to move into new territory like the 'robber barons' of old had little to do with the much hailed concept of *Schollenverbundenheit*—the aristocracy's connection to their native German soil—and a great deal to do with the mythology surrounding the colonization of lands in the east.[97] In 1940, one Baltic author echoed this latter ideal when he praised the 'Führer's' proposal to recall the Baltic nobility from

their 'ever-faithful, seven-hundred-and-fifty-year-old vigil over advance positions' in order to 'transplant' their roots to newly 'reclaimed German lands in the east by the river Vistula' and thus grant them a 'new, mighty and magnificent task'.[98] Not all of the nobility's motives were quite so idealistic, however. Indeed, the predatory war in the east was particularly popular with aristocrats who had lost their estates when Germany ceded territory to the victorious powers after the war. Just a few weeks after Hitler's invasion of Poland, for instance, the wife of Heinrich von Bismarck wrote a letter to the Ethnic Germans' Liaison Office which mentioned the estates that had been taken from her Baltic-German mother and asked 'whether there would also be an opportunity for us . . . to acquire a hereditary farm or similar, preferably among our fellow citizens' in the regions that had been conquered.[99] According to the message, the family had long dreamt of settling some territory—'preferably in the east'—but the land within the Reich had proved to be prohibitively expensive. Such was aristocrats' desire to own new estates that many of their demands for freshly conquered territory rather overstepped the mark. In September 1940, for example, Ludolf von Alvensleben—a ruined, dispossessed landowner who had become a Führer in the SS—was sharply rebuffed when he asked Himmler about acquiring a share of the plunder for himself.[100] It was impossible to provide 'settlement land' to help out with 'every National Socialist's business failings', came the prominent Nazi's blunt reply. 'Overall', Himmler continued, 'your intention to retake possession of this property without a penny in exchange did not please me . . . . Like all members of the German Reich, you can apply for an estate after the war.'[101] Despite such instances of rejection, however, the nobility kept on gravitating towards the National Socialists because of the real career opportunities they provided and the tantalizing prospect of being given land in the illusory 'Empire of Unlimited Possibilities' in the east. In fact, regardless of how realistic their expectations were, a considerable proportion of the nobility became 'Hitler's beneficiaries' in terms of the actual advantages they acquired and the imagined future benefits they hoped to receive.[102]

In 1933, countless members of the minor aristocracy whose careers had taken a steep dive after the First World War began to develop justified hopes that their early involvement in the National Socialist movement would pay dividends now that Hitler had acquired power. In March that same year, for example, a member of the Bülow family who had lost his post as a Lieutenant

Colonel in 1920 wrote a typical begging letter to the local office of the NSDAP. 'The poor man', he wrote—referring to himself in the third person—lives 'in very grim conditions' despite the fact that his relatives 'were once so wealthy'. 'He is a party member', he continued, 'and a staunch supporter of the movement. Perhaps, Herr President, it would be possible for you to provide work and an income for a poor party member.'[103]

In actual fact, the Third Reich presented many aristocrats with opportunities for advancement in their traditional professional fields, regardless of their individual level of commitment to the National Socialist movement. When compulsory military service was reintroduced in March 1935, for instance, noblemen's prospects of securing a military career—an option that had been hit extremely hard by the Treaty of Versailles—suddenly took a turn for the better. As a result, a number of noble officers issued appeals reminding Germany's aristocratic youth that there was now no longer any reason to follow 'bourgeois' professions 'instead of—damn it all!—following that inner voice . . . that must now be sounding a blaring clarion call to anyone with an old name to take up arms', and find their time-honoured place 'in the first wave of the attack' whenever the Fatherland needed them.[104] Within the space of just two years, the number of active aristocratic officers more than doubled. This meant that around 1,300 additional noblemen were able to pursue military careers. During the Weimar Republic, the nobility had been unable to maintain a steady grip on more than 900 officers' posts in the *Reichswehr*. By September 1937, however, the army featured no fewer than 2,280 aristocratic officers (about 15 per cent of the 14,800 or so officers who served in the force overall). By May 1943, this number had risen to 3,000 noblemen (approximately 7 per cent of the total of 42,700 officers).[105] These increases were in addition to the opportunities that Hitler's expansionist ambitions had opened up in the SA and the SS and which many noblemen had already taken advantage of before 1933.[106] By January 1938, for instance, aristocrats represented a high proportion of several ranks in the SS, including 8.4 per cent of the Lieutenant Colonels, 14.3 per cent of the Brigadier Generals, 9.8 per cent of the Lieutenant Generals, and 18.7 per cent of the Generals.[107] Viewed in terms of pure percentages, the nobility's prospects within the SS actually decreased over time as its apparatus continued to expand and aristocrats became outnumbered among its lower ranks. In absolute figures, however, the SS still represented a rich seam of career opportunities that the aristocracy seized with both hands.[108]

As a result of all these fresh professional prospects, aristocratic sources from around 1933 are frequently infused with a buoyant feeling of hope, opportunity, and new beginnings.

As has been demonstrated throughout this book, the strongest force that pulled the nobility towards radicalization stemmed from the financially troubled social 'fringes' of their class. It should therefore come as no surprise that destitute members of the minor nobility were generally the most likely to seek an ideological foothold and chances of advancement within the National Socialist movement even before Hitler's rise to power in 1933. Using examples from the aristocracy's upper and lower echelons, the next few pages will examine the archetypal noble 'loser' who experienced social decline, became politically radicalized, and ultimately achieved social rehabilitation by aligning themselves with the National Socialist cause.

One instance is Baron Kurt von Löffelholz-Colberg, a retired Major from Franconia who was typical of the fate experienced by many impoverished, radicalized nobles from the south. In 1931, Löffelholz-Colberg lost his modest fortune in a failed property venture. Having been an active member of the National Socialist movement from as early as 1922, he then made various fruitless attempts to apply for paid positions within Nazi organizations. At nearly sixty years of age, he also began studying medicine in the hope of finding work as a rural doctor to feed his family of four. As early as December 1933, however, the baron's fortunes took a turn for the better when he was appointed to the position of senior government councillor (*Oberregierungsrat*) in the Nazis' Ministry of Labour. This meteoric rise of an ageing, penniless family man can only be explained by his early membership of the NSDAP.[109]

A second example of a ruined nobleman who found recovery through the National Socialist movement is Ludolf von Alvensleben. Upon returning home from the First World War, the nineteen-year-old lieutenant served in a *Freikorps* unit before taking over his father's West Prussian estate in 1919. If everything had gone to plan, Alvensleben would have spent the rest of his life on a career path befitting his status. Four searing losses quickly put paid to such ambitions. Firstly, his land was confiscated by the Polish state. Secondly, inflation wiped out all of the compensation he received. Thirdly, he suffered a serious traffic accident from which he took years to recover. And finally, the automobile business he had established in Gdansk after leaving the army went bankrupt. In June 1932, however, the erstwhile officer finally managed to rise back up the social scale by joining the SS. This made it possible for him to pursue a career as the adjutant to Hans von

Tschammer-Osten, an SA Major General in Saxony who would later become the *Reichssportführer* responsible for overseeing sporting activities in the Reich.[110]

Similar tales of decline and subsequent rehabilitation were also experienced by entire noble houses. For instance, Princess Marie Adelheid Reuß zur Lippe, a daughter of Prince Rudolf zur Lippe who had received no vocational education of her own, became a *Parteigenossin* (female party member) in May 1930. By this point, the thirty-five-year-old princess had already divorced two princes from the House of Reuß, moved to Berlin, tried her hand at becoming an author, and worked as a supervisor at a mint. From 1926, she and her third husband—a middle-class financial official (*Staatsfinanzrat*)—had been members of the so-called 'Nordic Ring' (*Nordischer Ring*), a group surrounding Richard Walther Darré and Hans F. K. Günther for whose publications the princess also worked as a writer.[111] Another example from the same dynasty whose members joined the NSDAP with exceptional frequency and at a remarkably early stage is the Hereditary Prince Ernst zur Lippe, who became the first member of a high noble family to sign up for the NSDAP when he enrolled in the party at the age of twenty-five in 1928. After the First World War, Ernst tried his hand at a number of jobs—including working for a major Berlin hotel and serving as an intern at the AEG electricity company—which suggests that his financial means were meagre and at some remove from the usual standards maintained by his high noble peers.[112] Later on, however, he became the personal assistant to Darré himself.

In *Royals and the Reich*—one of the most impressive studies of the twentieth-century German nobility—the historian Jonathan Petropoulos has demonstrated how even the uppermost echelons of the aristocracy forged relationships with National Socialism as a result of their real and imagined experiences of decline. One example is Prince Christoph von Hessen, a man who joined the NSDAP at the age of thirty in late 1931 and whose choice of marriage partner—Princess Sophie of Greece—seems to have been the only aspect of his life that matched the high nobility's usual expectations. In the 1920s, he embarked on a tangled odyssey of a career after his lofty family came under financial pressure and he lost any prospect of taking over one of his father's estates. Having left both his secondary school (*Realgymnasium*) and his agricultural college without any qualifications, the prince was forced to take a number of jobs, including an apprenticeship in the body shop at the Kruck automobile works, a car mechanic's traineeship at the Maybach factory, and a post at an insurance company, where he

earned a crust as an 'independent travelling agent'. He joined the NSDAP at around the same time as he was fired from his position at Maybach. Before he became politically active, the prince had—by his own admission—'primarily busied' himself with a number of rather unprincely 'sporting pursuits', including stints as a showjumper and a motorbike racer. After Hitler's rise to power, however, his early decision to join the NSDAP started paying off in a big way. Indeed, by 1936, the prince—a thirty-five-year old man who had never been to university—was appointed to the role of Ministerial Councillor (*Ministerialrat*) and became an SS-Colonel, a Ministerial Director (*Ministerialdirektor*), and the head of the Research Office in the Reich Air Ministry just a few years later. He provided visible evidence of this meteoric rise when he swapped his apartment in Berlin's rather down-at-heel Schöneberg district for an imposing villa in leafy Dahlem.[113]

Such examples of precipitous post-war decline that took a drastic turn for the better after 1933 were widespread among all levels of the nobility. As a result, forging a career within the NSDAP frequently allowed aristocrats to break through the dividing lines that had traditionally separated the 'high' nobility from their poorer, 'low' aristocratic peers.

Interestingly, there was also a second kind of noble National Socialist who was not motivated to join the NSDAP for financial reasons. The most prominent and symbolically significant example of this type of aristocrat is Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen, the Kaiser's son who enjoyed a career in the SA and the NSDAP. Ever since the 1930s, this Hohenzollern prince had found a fresh purpose in life by donning a Nazi uniform, making appearances at major fascist events, styling himself as a street fighter, and—along with his nineteen-year-old son—representing the high nobility's most spectacular (although perhaps not the most important) contribution to the National Socialist cause.[114] Like other nobles who joined the NSDAP from a position of economic stability, the prince suffered all the hallmarks of rapid decline without actually experiencing any dire financial consequences himself. After his marriage with a princess from Holstein was dissolved in 1920, for instance, he continued living in a villa that was in his family's possession. August's story also demonstrates that even members of the high nobility—many of whom already started out from a far more eminent position in society than the majority of their peers—could also enjoy a meteoric rise in such organizations as the SS, the diplomatic corps, and the upper echelons of the civil service if they joined the National Socialist movement at a sufficiently early stage.

Although the party clearly derived a number of advantages from the high nobility's support, princes and princesses could also prove a liability whenever Nazi propaganda campaigns tried to convince workers and peasants that they were a down-to-earth political movement. As usual, however, the National Socialists relied on their astonishing chameleon-like abilities and merely adapted their appearance to what each particular situation required. Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen styled himself as a jovial comrade when he addressed German workers, for example, and aristocratic contributions to the movement were highlighted only when the Nazis hoped to win over members of the conservative elite.

More recent studies have produced detailed evidence of the two most important services that the high nobility rendered to the National Socialist movement.[115] The first of these was to use their personal relationships and their connections in salons and clubs to forge links with members of almost all of Germany's power elites and help make Hitler and the Nazis *salonfähig*—i.e. presentable in polite company.[116] Indeed, although Hitler's street cred as a front-line combatant and a man of the people were excellent when he wanted to present himself to steel workers in Essen or farmers in Mecklenburg, for example, they were useless when it came to wooing the upper echelons of society. In consequence, he relied heavily on aristocrats and members of the high nobility to make inroads in these areas. As Karina Urbach has demonstrated, the nobility also provided the same service on an international level after 1933 when they carried out private diplomatic missions among the loftiest aristocratic families in Europe.

The second vital type of noble assistance was granted by a raft of aristocrats with glittering names—including individuals from the Princely Houses of Preußen, Hessen, Hannover, Waldeck-Pyrmont, Hohenzollern-Emden, Mecklenburg, Schaumburg-Lippe, Lippe, Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha, and Thurn und Taxis—who lent their status to the National Socialists before 1933 and thus helped make the entire movement seem more solid and acceptable to conservative circles.[117] In April 1930, Hugenberg's advisor Paul Bang made a statement which demonstrates just how successful this tactic could be. 'One cannot dismiss a movement as nationally unreliable', he declared, if 'Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen marches at its head.'[118]

Of course, the Prussian Prince August was certainly not the only eminent aristocrat who put his weight behind the NSDAP. Perhaps the most spectacular example of documented rapprochement was instigated by Crown Prince Wilhelm, Prince August Wilhelm's eldest brother.[119] Although he

never joined the NSDAP himself, the Crown Prince—who had returned from exile in 1923 and moved between Berlin, Cecilienhof Palace in Potsdam, and Oels Castle in Silesia—approached Hitler in March 1932 with a view to offering him a power share in which the Nazi leader would serve as the Chancellor while Wilhelm assumed the role of Reich President. When the exiled Kaiser vetoed this original plan, the Crown Prince posed for photos standing next to NSDAP campaigners and made a widely heeded appeal urging voters to support Hitler instead of Hindenburg in the presidential elections.[120] In February 1933, Wilhelm also took part in a highly symbolic internment ceremony that honoured two men who had been shot dead during the night of 30 January 1933: a non-commissioned police officer and the SA-Führer Hans Maikowski, a Nazi 'martyr' who died in a shootout within the ranks of the SA and whose funeral was allegedly attended by hundreds of thousands of people. The first great display of propaganda after Hitler had risen to power, this event was a signal that a remarkable watershed moment had taken place. Indeed, the fact that the pretender to the German throne—a Crown Prince who commanded an army group during the First World War—had posed next to Göring in front of Berlin cathedral[121] and paid homage to a convicted murderer and leader of a particularly brutal SA unit was difficult to ignore.[122]

Around six weeks later on 21 March 1933, the Crown Prince also provided his services for the so-called Day of Potsdam, an even more significant spectacle that hoped to win over conservative deputies, voters, and the leaders of the *Reichswehr* itself.[123] As such, it represented the most important piece of propaganda staged by the fledgling regime. The event was an attempt to portray the Nazis as the true heirs of Prussian and conservative traditions by unleashing a carefully orchestrated barrage of symbolism that would have been understood by any educated German citizen and millions of conservatives throughout the land. On the day itself, for instance, Potsdam was bedecked in the traditional Prussian colours rather than draped in the Nazi flag. During proceedings, which culminated at the city's heavily symbolic Garrison Church, Reich President Hindenburg took centre stage, carried a ceremonial baton down to the vault of the great Prussian kings, and laid wreaths at the tombs of Frederick the Great and his father—the so-called 'Soldier King' Frederick William I. Clad in a top hat and morning dress instead of his usual military uniform, Hitler made a long speech extolling Prussian traditions in general and Hindenburg in particular, to whom he bowed uncommonly deeply as a famous photograph can attest. A further

piece of symbolism was provided by an empty chair that was placed in a prominent position in the church. As well as representing the throne that the king and emperor would one day take up again, this emblematic seat also ingeniously invoked the Kyffhäuser legend, a tale which claims that Frederick Barbarossa—an Emperor who drowned during the Third Crusade in 1190—is sleeping in a hidden chamber in central Germany, from whence he will rise and reclaim his rightful place on the throne when his country faces its greatest hour of need. Crucially, the presence of the Crown Prince, three of his brothers, and various other members of the Hohenzollern family helped to make the event a successful piece of propaganda for the regime and to convince conservative members of parliament to endorse a Nazi dictatorship by suggesting that the Third Reich would continue the very best of Prussian traditions. Indeed, Hitler and the Crown Prince—the latter clad in his impressive Hussar uniform—gave a staged display of public harmony when they were photographed chatting and smiling in front of the famous church where the ceremony had taken place.[124]

The Day of Potsdam was by no means the Crown Prince's last public support of the National Socialists. In fact, in September 1933, he made a prominent appearance in a swastika armband at a military gathering where he marched next to the supreme SA commander Ernst Röhm and in front of Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer SS.[125] In April that same year, the Crown Prince also wrote to some of his American friends to drum up international support for the regime. His letters praised Hitler's 'genius', denied that Jews were being harmed or that violence was breaking out within Germany's borders, and requested that the Nazi leader be left enough time to carry out his project of *Aufräumarbeiten*—to 'tidy up' Germany by destroying its left-wing organizations and implementing its first systematic policies against the Jews.[126] The uniformed Crown Prince and his sons were also photographed wearing swastika armbands in the foreign press after 1933, and Wilhelm posed in front of a mirror with the Nazi symbol on his arm for a Danish newspaper in 1934.[127] Even as the years progressed, the Crown Prince continued to signal his approval of the National Socialist cause. Between May and September 1940, for instance, he sent several rather euphoric telegrams to Hitler in which he expressed his 'admiration' for the Führer himself.[128]

Historians have paid astonishingly little attention to the symbolic contributions that the high nobility made to the aristocracy's rapprochement with National Socialism during the days of the Weimar Republic. However,

further examples of this relationship can also be found among the members of a range of other high noble families who professed the Protestant faith.

One such individual was Philipp von Hessen, a prince and landgrave who was born in 1896 to the Landgrave Friedrich Karl von Hessen and one of Kaiser Wilhelm II's sisters. After being educated at a German school in England and a secondary school (*Realgymnasium*) in Potsdam, Philipp served in the First World War, took his school leavers' exams, and studied at the Technical University in Darmstadt. Despite joining the NSDAP on 1 October 1930 and signing up for the SA, the prince had already moved to Italy in the service of the NSDAP in the 1920s. During his time in the country, he played a clandestine role as an international go-between for the party while ostensibly working as an architect who, in fact, did most of his important work away from the drawing board. Although he was appointed to the governorship of Hesse-Nassau in 1933 and later rose to the rank of Major General in the SA, these diplomatic activities were probably the most useful contribution the prince made to the National Socialist state. Indeed, after becoming the Italian king's son-in-law in 1925 by marrying Princess Mafalda of Savoy, he was able to achieve such feats as helping to gain Mussolini's approval for the annexation of Austria in 1938.[129] A few months after a coup was mounted against the Italian leader in 1943, however, the prince and his wife were arrested and deported to Germany, where the princess died during a bombing raid on the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1944.[130]

Despite all this evidence against him, the prince was not the proverbial 'black sheep' of his family. Indeed, a grand total of six princes from the House of Hessen joined the NSDAP before 1933, and no fewer than thirteen members of his family could be identified among the party's ranks by 1941. Two of Prince Philipp's brothers also served as a Senior Storm Leader in the SA and a Colonel in the SS, respectively.[131] Finally, Prince Wilhelm von Hessen—another of Philipp's relatives who was married to Princess Marianne von Preußen, served as an officer in the Bamberg Cavalry Regiment, and graduated with a degree in forestry and agriculture after the First World War—also joined the Nazi party in May 1932 at the age of twenty-seven and enjoyed a career as a Führer in the SS.[132]

The life of Hereditary Prince Josias zu Waldeck-Pyrmont, a Hessian kinsman of the Princes zu Schaumberg-Lippe, tells a similar story. After studying at secondary school and taking the officer cadet's exam (*Fähnrichexamen*), Josias became a front-line combatant during the First World War and was a twenty-two-year-old Lieutenant Colonel by the time the conflict came to

an end. After a subsequent spell as a *Freikorps* officer in Berlin and Upper Silesia, the hereditary prince took a course in agriculture and spent a few semesters studying a number of subjects without graduating. Between 1923 and 1927, he began gravitating towards right-wing politics when he joined the Young German Order and various other organizations before eventually finding his way into the National Socialist movement. In November 1929, this Protestant hereditary prince ultimately signed up for both the NSDAP and the SS at around the same moment that his wife—née the Duchess von Oldenburg—became a member of the Nazi party herself. During his time in the SS, Josias enjoyed a meteoric career as the adjutant and close personal friend of both Heinrich Himmler and the SS-General Sepp Dietrich and had risen to the rank of SS-Colonel before 1933. The prince was not driven by financial necessity. His family resided in the impressive Arolsen Castle in northern Hesse and—as has already been mentioned—inherited over 5,000 hectares of mortgage-free land that was granted *Erbhof* status in 1938 when its rateable value was 1.7 million Reichsmarks.[133] As such, Waldeck's family of four was in no way reliant on the rather lavish sum of 2,200 marks he received every month while serving as an SS-General during the Second World War.

Waldeck-Pyrmont was far from the only example of a wealthy National Socialist among the Protestant high nobility's ranks. In April 1932, for instance, Prince Fugger declared his willingness to finance an entire SS regiment at Schloss Wellenburg near the city of Augsburg.[134] Moreover, the Hereditary Grand Duke Friedrich Franz von Mecklenburg-Schwerin signed up to both the NSDAP and the SS in May 1931 at the age of twenty-one. This decision made him one of the Nazis' most prestigious *Alte Kämpfer*—the so-called 'old fighters' who became involved with the movement at a particularly early stage. The son of the Princess von Hannover and the grandson of the Grand Duchess of Russia, Friedrich had graduated from secondary school (*Realgymnasium*) with the requisite qualifications and spent a few semesters studying law in Munich. A short while later, he made a career for himself as an SS-Führer, a diplomatic clerk in Denmark, and the personal aide to the prominent National Socialist Werner Best.[135] Social decline and a lack of prospects can hardly be said to have triggered his decision to side with the National Socialists. In fact, the same can also be said of all the Protestant aristocrats so far mentioned in this chapter. Indeed, although every single one of them felt that 1918 had marked the beginning of a process of massive decline for their class, none of them can reasonably

be described as belonging to the 'impoverished' human flotsam and jetsam that emerged from the high nobility after the First World War.

In nearly all of the cases outlined above, these individuals' membership of the Nazi party was preceded by involvement in other organizations on the Right of the political spectrum. Interestingly, even offspring of the high nobility were often at pains to stress that their links and loyalties to these other institutions—which, in different circumstances, would have been their most natural ideological home—had been dissolved the moment they entered the NSDAP. In the autumn of 1931, for example, the *Stahlhelm* member Prince Bernhard von Sachsen-Meiningen and his wife wrote to the leaders of the NSDAP from Schloß Pitzelstätten—their residence in the Austrian region of Carinthia—to ask for permission to play a part in the 'most German of nationalist movements'. A couple of months after being told that it was impossible to be a member of the *Stahlhelm* and the Nazi party at the same time, the high noble couple decided to choose the NSDAP. The prince, who had evidently succeeded in maintaining a standard of living fit for a man of his status, explained his desire to join the party in writing that same year. 'We have been won over by your leader's book—"Mein Kampf"—and by the exemplary discipline that emanates from your Führer, Herr Adolf Hitler', he declared: 'We have long belonged to you in our hearts, but now we also want to belong to you outright.'[136]

The majority of aristocrats who actively supported National Socialism before 1933 were part of the group of social losers who were hit by decline in the post-war period. As has been demonstrated above, however, the movement's ranks also included a minority of men and women from prestigious high and minor[137] noble families who continued moving in their traditional social circles, carried on marrying from the same eligible stock, and in no way found themselves in desperate financial straits. Indeed, impoverished and bankrupt aristocrats were certainly not the only nobles who became members of the NSDAP. Furthermore, from around 1930 onwards, even those aristocrats who did not join the party and yet supported National Socialism in the most unexpected of ways were largely individuals who came from the social nucleus of their class.

The above examples of aristocratic National Socialists all represent individuals who *joined* the Nazi party before 1933. Nevertheless, this is only *one* of the ways in which the nobility broached a rapprochement with the fascists overall. In fact, joining the party—a move that, generally speaking, went against the grain of the aristocratic habitus—should be viewed alongside

a range of other kinds of support that evade quantitative assessment. For example, many *grands seigneurs* who, to quote one scornful observer,[138] only felt sufficiently 'moved' to join the party after 1933 had previously furthered the Nazi cause via a range of other avenues—including making financial contributions, providing castles as arms depots and paramilitary training centres, and forging links between Nazi leaders and sections of the old ruling elites—that provided far more effective support for National Socialism than simply adding their names to the membership lists of the NSDAP. Despite often being extremely important to the Nazis, however, there remains very little documentary evidence of this kind of aid.[139]

Perhaps the most prominent individuals who provided this kind of extra-party support and have already featured in this book were Prince Bentheim—the chairman of the DAG who joined the NSDAP in 1937—and Duke Carl-Eduard von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, the president of the *Nationalklub* who became a party member on 1 May 1933. These two men were not the only aristocrats who helped the National Socialists in this way, however. Indeed, in 1938, Dr Hans von Arnim—a journalist who did not join the NSDAP himself—made a statement before the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* (the 'Chamber of Writers of the Reich') in which he truthfully declared that 'all the pieces' he had published since 1918 had 'fought against the system that existed at the time and served to help pave the way for the nationalist state'.[140] The same can also be said of the articles and speeches that were produced by the aristocracy's myriad *Freikorps* leaders, *Stahlhelm* members, DAG adherents, DNVP speakers, and members of the widespread networks of the 'nationalist' Right who, for various reasons, did not actually become Nazi party members themselves. Any attempt to ascertain the size of the noble minority that joined the NSDAP must also remember that they were backed up by a broad noble majority who fought against 'the system' from outside the party's ranks.

It is impossible to quantify the number of aristocrats who were 'thoroughly positive' in their attitude 'towards the Third Reich and [the National Socialist] movement' and could be described by the Nazis as 'entirely politically reliable' even though they had not joined the party.[141] Nevertheless, it can reasonably be assumed that a large majority of the nobility could be placed within this political group. Historical research into the matter is frequently hampered by the generally scant NSDAP personnel files that *cannot* provide any information and the well-stocked private archives of high noble dynasties that do not *want* to yield results. In consequence, one often has to

rely on various snapshots of history to get a picture of what went on. Take the moment in March 1933, for instance, when Hitler kissed the hands of the daughters of Prince Ratibor-Corvey, an uncommonly wealthy Nazi party donor. Take the innumerable photographs in which the Crown Prince was pictured next to the mightiest potentates of the National Socialist movement. Or take the moment when the Duke von Braunschweig—the son-in-law to Wilhelm II—appeared in his SA uniform at a reception for the English military attaché along with his son, the Prince von Hannover, himself clad in the regalia of the SS. Of course, such instances hardly allow any conclusions to be drawn about the amount of genuine conviction that underpinned these symbolic acts.[142] What is very clear, however, is that they all caused quite a stir and were frequently interpreted and understood as examples to their fellow aristocrats.

Melting Pots and Meltdowns

The relationships that were forged between the Nazis and the nobility in rural areas were matched in Germany's major cities thanks to the work of the aristocratic salons—gatherings where a 'vibrant mix of morning dress and SS uniforms' could frequently be seen.[143] As time went on, a form of National Socialist high society emerged as the former elites' willingness to enter into new alliances coincided with attempts by various Nazi leaders—including Hitler, Göring, and Goebbels in particular—to ingratiate themselves with the sophisticated guardians of the old order.[144] Although aristocrats would later deride Hitler for his efforts, many of them had originally been impressed when he awkwardly kissed hands and excitedly darted around in a bid to recommend himself to members of the high nobility. Indeed, his flattery had been a familiar sight at noble salons long before 1933.

Right from the beginning of his political career, Hitler had already started forging personal links with the aristocratic and middle-class members of Germany's elite in his benefactors' houses. A number of these relationships—including his fruitful connection to Emil Kirdorf (one of the leading Ruhr industrialists) that was partly orchestrated by Prince Karl zu Löwenstein, the chairman of the radical, right-wing *Nationalklub*[145]—were established at a salon organized by Elsa Bruckmann. The daughter of a high noble family from Romania, Bruckmann was originally known as Princess Cantacuzène

until she married Hugo Bruckmann, a publisher from Munich.[146] By the time the members of Bruckmanns' salon had developed 'concerns about the psychological repercussions of Hitler's success',[147] the Nazi leader had long since extricated himself from the influence they had dreamt of wielding over him. Another Berlin residence that remained important to Hitler until he rose to power was the Bechsteins' house in Berlin. Indeed, Helene Bechstein provided the Nazi leader with financial support during his years as the 'herald' (*Trommler*) of Nazism and hosted his meeting with fifteen major landowners from prominent Prussian families in January 1931.[148]

Hitler was not the only leading National Socialist who developed relationships with the nobility. Hermann Göring, for instance, boasted ties with a range of aristocrats, including the Prussian Crown Prince himself. This list of noble contacts was initially established thanks to his reputation as the former commander of the famous 'Richthofen' fighter squadron and was significantly expanded when he married his first wife Carin von Kantzow, a noblewoman from Sweden.[149] Göring also enjoyed a number of other direct connections to the nobility because Carin's sister was married to a German aristocrat by the name of Count Wichard von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf. Over the years, Göring remained the most significant bridge between the aristocracy and the high-ranking members of his party. In August 1931, for example, the Görings hosted Hitler in their home when he delivered a two-hour speech to three noblemen—Count Rüdiger von der Goltz, Leopold von Kleist, and Magnus von Levetzow—and the powerful banker Hjalmar Schacht, all of whom were so fascinated by his words that they 'stayed put for a while in silence, gripped and impressed'.[150] Moreover, Göring and the Strasser brothers could often be seen at the salon in Berlin's Dahlmannstraße that was organized by Oskar von Arnim-Burow and his wife, the middle-class daughter of a wealthy family from Frankfurt.[151]

By the year 1930 at the latest, one salon in particular—namely, the gathering held in the residence of the von Dirksen family in Berlin's diplomatic district—had become perhaps the most significant point of social contact between the Nazis and the old nobility overall. The event, which was held in the family's ostentatious palace, was hosted by Viktoria Auguste von Dirksen, the daughter of a newly ennobled family from Gdansk. Viktoria was the mother-in-law of Herbert von Dirksen—an anti-Semitic diplomat who held positions in Moscow, Tokyo, and London between 1928 and 1939—and the second wife of Willibald von Dirksen, an envoy who died in 1928. The von Dirksen salon had long been a significant fixture for

Germany's social elite. It had served as an important hub of Berlin and Potsdam court society before 1918, for instance, and remained a political, bitterly anti-republican meeting place for a significant number of members of the 'old society' after the First World War. In the late 1920s, the widowed Viktoria, who had backed Hitler from as early as 1923, also opened the salon's doors to the leading lights of the NSDAP, who used the opportunity to court prominent members of the high and minor aristocracy alike. The Nazi newcomers delighted their hostess—'The old lady is head over heels with me and wants to use me to convert the whole world at once', noted Joseph Goebbels in his diary in February 1930[152]—and also made successful impressions on the other aristocrats who were in attendance. The minutes of a gathering that took place in November 1931 give an insight into the unifying power of the event, which became known as the 'social epicentre of the National Socialist movement' among high society insiders in Berlin. Those present included Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, the German Crown Prince, Princess Marie Adelheid zur Lippe (a member of the NSDAP since 1 May 1930), Prince Viktor zu Wied and his wife (party members since 1 January 1932), the *Adelsblatt* columnist Baron Walther Eberhard von Medem, the party member Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen, the banker Baron August von der Heydt, and the retired colonel Leopold von Kleist (the representative of Wilhelm II).[153] Many other encounters between the old nobility and the most prominent Nazi leaders also took place in the von Dirksen residence. For example, Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, and the Berlin SA Chief Count Wolf Heinrich von Helldorf used the event as an opportunity to connect with members of the House of Hohenzollern. Prince 'Auwi', the Kaiser's son, also showed up at the von Dirksens' in a brown SA uniform, and both he and his own son Alexander—who was also a member of the NSDAP—were 'introduced to Hitler's teachings' at their house.[154] Viktoria von Dirksen—whose brother Karl August von Laffert was a member of the SS—continued to serve as an intermediary 'between the National Socialists and the old court society' for a number of years.[155] Her influence could not last indefinitely, however. In fact, the salon run by the 'old witch' (as she was then known) had already evidently lost its former significance by the end of 1933. Nevertheless, during the key months of Hitler's rise to power between August 1932 and January 1933, her gatherings briefly regained some of their prominence when—like other, similar salons—they provided a useful setting for the machinations of the unofficial advisors surrounding Reich President Hindenburg. Indeed, the von Dirksens' house

remained an important arena for a number of key encounters, including the meeting between Hitler and Oskar von Hindenburg—the son of the Reich President who did not serve a formal constitutional role but seems to have helped convince his father to appoint Hitler as Chancellor—on 22 January 1933.[156]

As well as bringing together two social worlds that were otherwise largely separate from one another, National Socialist salons also provided an opportunity for what Bella Fromm dubbed 'salon espionage'—the process by which (predominantly female) Nazi supporters attempted to gauge the mood and leadership experience of Germany's power elites and feed their findings back to the party. As might be expected, loyal aristocrats were frequently selected for this task.[157]

Over time, a more 'mobile' point of intersection between the Nazis and the nobility emerged thanks to the activities of Princess Hermine von Reuß, the second wife of Wilhelm II, who moved in some of the most important circles of the political Right during her visits to Germany. Although the precise moment at which she first met Hitler is unclear, she appears to have made contact with the NSDAP's leaders on the fringes of the Nuremberg Rally in 1929 and certainly encountered the future Führer at a salon organized by Baroness Tiele-Winckler in November 1931.[158] During this event, Hitler delivered a lengthy monologue to an audience that included the princess, the Görings, and Wilhelm II's aristocratic chief advisor in which he declared his intention to order the 'public strangulation' of 'all the November criminals' (i.e. the Jews, socialists, and democrats he held responsible for overthrowing the monarchy and losing the First World War). The speech seems to have enchanted the hostess and her guests in equal measure. The Kaiser's wife, for instance, made positive noises about the 'likeable' Hitler, about 'his good, even countenance', and about his 'good eyes' that were free from 'deceit'. Delighted with the outcome of the meeting, Magnus von Levetzow also penned a letter to Prince von Donnersmarck in which he summed up his own impressions of the Nazi leader. 'He was in damned good form', he wrote.[159]

As time went by, the points at which the self-contained milieu of Germany's high society opened itself up both politically and stylistically to the Right of the ideological spectrum became more numerous and varied. In December 1932, for example, Bella Fromm described how a rather more 'colourful than elegant' section of the population had gathered together for a charity ball during which Magdalena Goebbels and the high nobility

became acquainted with one another.[160] Fromm was a particularly well-qualified observer and analyst of Germany's rapidly changing upper-class milieu. A society columnist from an upper-middle-class background, she was familiar with the social lives of Berlin's elites, had personal ties with such conservative figures as Schleicher and Papen, and—as a member of the Jewish community—was able to provide particularly acute observations about the shifting social currents in the country. Her diaries contain a wealth of vivid miniatures and snapshots that encapsulate the great upheavals of the age. She noted, for instance, how more and more members of the old nobility—including the likes of Count Helldorf and Prince 'Auwi' who often appeared in their SA uniforms—used the discussion groups of foreign diplomats and the networks of Potsdam's old elite as showcases for ostentatious displays of their National Socialist sympathies. Fromm also wrote various sketches of what she termed 'little unpleasantnesses'. In December 1932, these vignettes included a remark that 'it was dispiriting to see how many new friends of National Socialism have risen up from the ranks of the old aristocracy.'[161] She also noticed how the meaning of the term 'high society' had been redefined in the Third Reich and recorded that, although the nobility only had a small part to play in this newly calibrated social landscape, they remained a visible minority within it. Overall, Fromm's portrayals are reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's accounts of the receptions that were held in Parisian salons during the era of the Dreyfus affair. Indeed, Arendt's description of a trio of phenomena that emerged in the fin-de-siècle French capital and 'became commonplace after the First World War'—namely 'the elites' hero-worship of gangsters, their admiration for every barbarism, [and] the ultimate alliance of all classless people based on foundations of resentment or despair'[162]—were akin to the trends that Fromm was observing in Germany at a similar time.

As the years progressed, the nobility started dismantling their class and partially integrating themselves into the hybrid social group that Hannah Arendt dubbed the 'mob'. This process reached its climax when the aristocratic associations adopted a policy of 'self-coordination' (*Selbstgleichschaltung*)—i.e. voluntarily toeing the Nazi party line—without even putting up a fight. In 1933, as waves of German citizens began joining the NSDAP, a flood of aristocrats throughout the country started publicly declaring their loyalty to the nation's new leaders.[163] Once again, the symbolic pinnacle of this aristocratic ingratiation was reached by the DAG when Prince Bentheim made various early, unprompted, kowtowing advances to Hitler in June 1933 and

informed him of the aspirations held by the leaders of his noble organization. As well as hoping that the aristocracy could regain their status as a social 'class',[164] the German Noble Society wanted to be granted the same standing as a public corporation, aspired to be integrated into the Third Reich, and dreamt of serving as the new fascist state's official 'elite'. The prince also asked whether various state organs could put pressure on aristocrats who did not belong to the DAG and make membership of his organization a legal prerequisite for noble status. In return, he gave Hitler his solemn word that the 'purified German nobility' would be placed at the National Socialists' exclusive disposal. At least from Bentheim's point of view, the talks seem to have gone well. Indeed, the prince later declared that he was within an inch of securing the great 'goal that has been lost to us for a hundred years', namely 'that the nobility will become a political class once again'.[165]

The German Noble Society was extremely quick to adapt to National Socialist rule. As has already been described, the more aggressive version of the DAG's 'Aryan clause' came into force with a statute amendment on 12 September 1933 and resulted in the 'withdrawal' of well over a hundred individuals from its membership lists. At the same moment, the organization's executive board was swollen by the addition of five prominent National Socialists who held the top rank and other lofty positions within the SA.[166] As a result of these changes, the DAG came to represent the symbolic spearhead of a wider movement within the nobility which enthusiastically complied with the process of 'working towards the Führer'[167] that was occurring throughout the land. The DAG's leaders would have been just as unsurprised by the speed and radicalism of this process of 'self-coordination' as they were by the sycophantic letters Prince Bentheim sent to Hitler after such events as the Night of the Long Knives—when he expressed his 'total admiration' for the Führer—and the failed assassination attempt of 20 July 1944, whose conspirators he described as 'despicable crooks'.[168] Indeed, the naivety the heads of the organization displayed when—to quote the words of the Bavarian Baron Erwein von Aretin—they rushed to 'lick Hitler's boots'[169] was the logical product of a direction they had been travelling along for a number of years. In fact, the only surprising aspect of their conduct was that they made no discernible attempt to correct the course they were on before 1945.

A far more astonishing phenomenon was the speed with which the once obstinate opposition to the Nazis broke down within the Bavarian branch

of the DAG. A number of events contributed to this precipitous decline, including the arrest of Baron Erwein von Aretin and Baron Franz von Gebsattel by the Gestapo, the resignation of two 'reactionaries' named Leonrod and Drechsel from the organization's executive board as early as May 1933, and the destruction of the *Gäa*, which had previously served as one of the southern nobility's most significant rallying points.[170] This regional outpost of the German Noble Society displayed a blend of limp retreat and gestures of conformity in a process of 'self-coordination' that seems to have swiftly relegated it to the depths of insignificance.[171]

A similar statement could also be made about the nobility's Catholic organizations. Indeed, by late 1933, the leaders of these associations had already demonstrated that they lacked the might—and possibly also the will—openly to oppose the pro-Nazi course that was being plotted by Prince Bentheim and the DAG. When Bentheim made the startling announcement that 'blood purity' would be the definitive criterion for noble status,[172] for instance, his declaration received the blessing of the Catholic aristocratic associations just three months later. Furthermore, Prince Alois zu Löwenstein—the chairman of both the Bavarian Association of Catholic Aristocrats and the Central Committee of Catholic Aristocratic Associations—issued a prominent statement to his peers which included 'the advice to comply with [Bentheim's] demand'. Judging from everything that can be pieced together about the southern Catholic nobility's leading groups, this statement must have been met with a high degree of disapproval. Nevertheless, they never expressed their dissatisfaction in public.[173] To make matters worse, even the German Association of Princely Houses—the high noble institution with the most financial heft—had been stripped of its significance via a process of 'self-coordination' by the summer of 1933. Indeed, although the organization continued to serve as a focal point for promoting the efficiency of major landholdings after 1933, it lost the means to mount any political opposition to the Nazis when the Catholic mediatized princes who refused to bow to Bentheim's dictatorship over the aristocratic associations withdrew from their positions within its ranks.[174]

This was the cue for the Catholic nobility's Nazi minority to deliver a wave of speeches and appeals in an attempt to steer the political direction of their peers. Typical examples of this outpouring were provided by the declarations made by Count Eugen von Quadt and Count Kuno von Dürckheim, who both publicly renounced their former resentments against the National Socialist movement and urged their listeners to get

wholeheartedly behind the state from now on.[175] At around the same time, an organization named the Working Group of Catholic Germans (AKD) was set up in 1933 with the intention of encouraging the Catholic aristocracy to adapt to the new status quo. Like many of the institutions that had been established before 1933, this organization's leading echelons featured a number of aristocratic representatives, including Franz von Papen and—above all—members of the Westphalian and Silesian nobilities.[176] In a lecture he gave on 'the duties of the Catholic German aristocracy in the Third Reich' in 1934, the AKD's young director, Dr Count Roderich von Thun und Hohenstein,[177] enjoined an audience of around sixty noble listeners to promote 'unquestioning collaboration with National Socialism' among the 'Catholic section of the population'. Underlining his own 'blind faith in the Führer' and warning any unconvinced parties that they were being presented with a 'never-to-be-repeated chance at redemption for the Catholic-German nobility', Thun also declared that Hitler's 'defensive battle in the east' had a similar significance for the Catholic aristocracy as the victories against the Huns and the defence of Vienna against the Ottomans had for German-speaking peoples in centuries past. A record of the event notes that seven Westphalian aristocrats backed the young count's statements by proclaiming that the Catholic nobility should henceforth stand behind the Führer as one.[178]

All of these developments meant that, by the time Hitler had been in power for just a few months, there was an utter dearth of aristocratic associations or similar organizations that could coordinate any meaningful noble opposition to the National Socialist regime. Indeed, any attempts at resistance would henceforth have to rely exclusively on the networks that remained intact among noble family members and within aristocratic circles of friends.

Nobles into Nazis

The ways in which the nobility adapted to the reality of National Socialist rule fill the observer with varying degrees of surprise. On the one hand, the revelation that the DAG and certain noble salons readily conformed with the rules of the Third Reich hardly has the power to shock. It is also unremarkable to learn that certain, right-wing, radical traditions within the minor nobility paved a direct road to National Socialism. In contrast, however,

examples of rapprochement from the worlds of the high nobility and the *grands seigneurs* are more surprising. Indeed, with their centuries-old tradition of rule and their belief in their own superiority, these lofty aristocratic figures should have been particularly resistant to following 'Hitler, the Führer of the masses'.[179] When viewed alongside their general, instinctual distrust for the 'party system' and the great social rift which separated them from the groups that formed the backbone of the National Socialist movement, this potential for aversion might lead one to expect that any sympathies the high nobility held for the 'people's party with a middle-class belly'[180] (i.e. a party that was home to a disproportionate number of middle-class citizens) would only rarely have actually inspired them to join the NSDAP. This makes it all the more surprising, therefore, when one realizes that the high nobility were demonstrably more supportive of National Socialism than the examples of individual aristocrats have suggested in this book so far.

In 1981, a study of around twenty members of the high nobility noted that 'the National Socialists suffered absolutely no shortage of princes' among their ranks.[181] Although this investigation included an astonishing array of lofty names, titles, and careers that had otherwise sunk into oblivion, its findings lost some of their impact due to the fact that most of the aristocrats in question had achieved their positions of power within the Nazi state apparatus long after 1933 and, as such, could be viewed as mere opportunists who simply adapted to the prevailing status quo. Further research has demonstrated, however, that the high nobility's rapprochement with National Socialism was far more extensive than this initial study suggested. Indeed, another survey conducted in the holdings of the former Berlin Document Center revealed that 'members of Princely Houses' had joined the Nazi party in startling numbers at an astonishingly early stage.[182] By 1941, for instance, more than 270 scions of Princely Houses had become members of the NSDAP, and around eighty of their number had enrolled in the party before 30 January 1933. The survey also demonstrated that, as was the case with the lower aristocracy, some high noble families featured massive concentrations of individuals who joined the NSDAP. For example, ten members of the House of Lippe, nine of the House of Sachsen-Coburg/Sachsen-Meiningen, six of the House of Hessen, and five from the House of Schaumburg-Lippe had added their names to the party's roster prior to 1933. Another interesting discovery was that a remarkable number of female members of the high nobility had also joined the National Socialists' ranks.

In fact, forty-seven—or around 32 per cent—of the 147 members of Princely Houses who had enlisted in the NSDAP by the end of 1934 were noblewomen. This figure far outstripped the average number of female members in the party overall, which fluctuated between 5 per cent and 7.5 per cent until 1933.[183] The study also reported that the average age of the high nobles who joined the party by 1933 was considerably lower than the average age of new members among the nation as a whole. For instance, only ten individuals from the group had reached the age of fifty or beyond when they joined the party, whereas thirty-two of their number were thirty years old or younger when they officially signed up for the NSDAP.

The remarkable influx of party members from certain noble lineages continued after 1933. Indeed, some of the Princely Houses featured strikingly high numbers of individuals from various branches of their family trees who are known to have joined the party by 1941. By this point, for example, fourteen members of the House of Hessen, ten of the House of Schaumburg-Lippe, eighteen of the House of Lippe, nine of the House of Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha, and no fewer than twenty of the House of Hohenlohe had enrolled in the NSDAP.

Unfortunately, no comparable data is available for the lower echelons of the German aristocracy. This makes it difficult to compare with the aristocracy as a whole. Nevertheless, one can build up a general picture of the nobility's involvement with Nazism from various contemporary sources which seem to indicate that few aristocrats were actively involved in the National Socialist movement. Tellingly, the Nazis' complaints that the nobility were far too 'reactionary' were repeated by members of the aristocracy themselves. In 1934, for instance, Count Bernhard zu Solms-Laubach composed an article entitled 'The Nobility is Dead—Long Live the Nobility' in which he accused his fellow aristocrats of passivity and failure when it came to joining Hitler's cause. 'The German aristocracy [have] fatally disgraced [themselves]', he wrote, '[they have] miserably missed [their] last chance to prove [their] reason for existence.... The question the *Volk* addresses to you today is difficult and distinct: Where were you noble lords when Germany's end was nigh?... Where did you fight, and what did you sacrifice?'[184] Similar claims were also made by the SA Major General Achim von Arnim in Brandenburg and the Bavarian Count Eugen von Quadt. Indeed, in 1934, this latter figure declared it necessary to openly confess 'that there were not all too many aristocrats who found their way into the NSDAP in the early years or who worked their way up to leading positions'

within the organization.[185] These statements seem to corroborate the detailed allegations about the nobility that were made by a range of contemporary conservative journalists after 1945. Following the Second World War, these figures saw fit to report that it was 'only true [aristocratic] outsiders' and a 'number of [noble] oddballs by nature' who had made overtures to the NSDAP before 1933 and built long-term relationships with the movement.[186] Of course, the phrase 'a number of' is just as vague as the expression 'oddballs by nature' itself.

Overall, these statements seem to dovetail seamlessly with the popular history of the conservative Resistance that culminated in the assassination attempt of 20 July 1944. Nowadays, memorializing and honouring the would-be assassins has become a crucial part of Germany's political identity. The Federal Ministry of Defence has its headquarters on *Stauffenbergstraße* ('Stauffenberg Street') in Berlin. Moreover, Count Stauffenberg, Henning von Tresckow, Count Carl-Hans von Hardenberg, Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, Count Ulrich Wilhelm Schwerin von Schwanenfeld, and Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg all live on in newspaper supplements, novels, and films and are well-known to German secondary school pupils and military officers alike. In many ways, however, the aura exuded by these aristocratic individuals does them a disservice. Indeed, it seems to have clouded the insight that they were, in some respects, 'outstanding' individuals whose actions were neither typical of their families, nor of the 'family of the nobility' as a whole. As is always the case with the history of the nobility, the biographies of individual aristocrats can only be seen in an accurate light when their family members, who are overshadowed by exceptional relatives, are brought to the fore once again. Take Count Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg, for example, a figure who has been referred to on numerous occasions in this book. Schulenburg is renowned for being a key player and one of the most dynamic driving forces behind the military Resistance.[187] What is less well known, however, it that viewing his life in its wider historical context reveals some rather surprising results. When the count joined the Nazi party at the age of 31 on 1 February 1932, for instance, he was continuing a family tradition that had been established by his three older brothers. Count Wolf Werner von der Schulenburg—Fritz-Dietlof's second-oldest brother who engaged in 'commercial' activities after the First World War, rose to the rank of senior government councillor (*Oberregierungsrat*), and was ultimately killed while commanding a parachute regiment in 1944—became a member of the NSDAP on 1 November 1930,

eleven months before his eldest brother[188] and four months before the third brother[189] in the family line. Fritz-Dietlof's trio of older siblings were then accompanied by their father, Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg, who signed up for the party in December 1931. A retired General Staff Chief of Crown Prince Wilhelm's army group who has often featured in these pages, Count Friedrich had seemingly also toyed with joining the NSDAP as early as September 1928 when he announced his resignation from the Knights of the Order of Saint John to Prince Oskar von Preußen due to the apparent incompatibility of his membership in the Order with his work for the National Socialist movement.[190] After the count's youngest son Fritz-Dietlof followed in his footsteps, the four men were all finally joined in August 1932 by their mother, née Countess von Arnim, who was around sixty years of age when she became a party member herself.[191] At least some of her sons' wives also signed up for the NSDAP at a later date.[192] Examining their immediate circle of relatives further confirms the impression that the Schulenburgs were one of those 'clans' that almost unanimously became National Socialists and exerted a massive amount of mutual pressure on one another to do the same.[193] Indeed, among their immediate relations, the sole person who was 'left out' of this trend was their only daughter, Countess Tisa von der Schulenburg, a figure who has appeared on numerous occasions throughout this book and whose impressively renegade life choices eventually led her to seek out an artist's existence in Berlin and enter into an unsuccessful marriage with a Jewish merchant.[194] The fact that the countess's father regarded this latter union as a shameful stain on his family's reputation reveals just how much courage and independence it took for aristocrats to break away from the expectations of their noble milieus.[195]

Further insights can be gleaned by looking beyond the dynasty's immediate relatives and examining all of the individuals who bore their family name. By this reckoning, no fewer than seventeen Schulenburgs had joined the NSDAP by 30 January 1933. By the end of the Second World War, this figure had swollen to a total of forty-one, including twenty-six men and fifteen women. Overall, the list of documented professions that were practised by these National Socialist family members was dominated by lawyers, civil servants, farmers, and owners of entailed estates. Their number also included Count Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg, the ambassador to the Soviet Union who was later executed for his involvement in the plot of 20 July 1944. Counterintuitive though it might seem, this pattern of concentrated Nazi party membership within a single dynasty was

commonplace in East Elbia. Indeed, a number of other families—including those whose surnames were shared by one or even two members of the plot of 20 July—exhibited similar levels of involvement in the National Socialist movement. The Bernstorff family, for instance, featured twenty individuals who had joined the NSDAP by the end of the Second World War. Moreover, five of these figures even signed up for the party before 30 January 1933. Similar numbers can also be seen among the Hardenbergs (twenty-seven and five individuals, respectively), the Schwerins (52/22), the Stülpnagels (14/4), the Tresckows/Treskows (30/10), and the Kleists (43/5). In a phrase that was typical of the older literature on the subject, the historian Walter Görlitz once wrote that 'the best names of the East Elbian aristocracy were united once again' by the plot of 20 July.[196] This statement is certainly correct. Nevertheless, it should also be remembered that the Prussian nobility's same 'best names' were also 'united' in unparalleled numbers within the NSDAP both before and after the failed assassination attempt.

East Elbian noble families tended to be particularly large. As might be expected, therefore, they also tended to supply particularly large numbers of members to the NSDAP. The record for the highest total of relatives listed in the party's card indexes goes to the Wedel family, seventy-eight of whom were enrolled in the organization prior to the close of the Second World War. Of these, thirty-five joined before the end of January 1933. To give just a handful of other especially prominent names, significant numbers of party members can also be detected within the Alvensleben family (34/8) and among the Arnims (53/25), the Bassewitzs (23/9), the Bismarcks (34/4), the Bothmers (22/12), the Borries (43/14), the Bredows (43/8), the Bülows (40/13), the Dohnas (23/7), the Einems (25/10), the Eulenburgs (10/3), the Goltzs (37/10), the Hoyningen-Huenes (22/2), the Maltzahns (36/8), the Massows (26/8), the Oertzens (44/16), the Ostens (70/20), the Puttkamers (38/10), the Roons (11/6), the Schacks (24/9), the Schlieffens (14/7), the Schweinitzs (15/10), the Vietinghoffs (44/9), the Wangenheims (33/15), the Winterfelds (48/18), the Wrangels (15/6), the Zedlitzs (23/12), and the Zitzewitzs (34/6). Many more names could be added to this list. Indeed, a sample of 312 old aristocratic families that was compiled by examining around 350 families' local NSDAP membership cards yielded a total of 3,592 men and women who joined the Nazi party overall. When missing cards are accounted for, the total number of party members from these selected families may have been up to 10–15 per cent higher than the figure cited above.

Limiting this sample to a detailed examination of just fifty-three families who supplied the Nazi party with particularly high volumes of members reveals a number of factors that allow one to describe aristocratic National Socialists overall. By the close of the Second World War, a total of 1,595 members of these fifty-three dynasties alone had become members of the NSDAP. Moreover, 528 (33.1 per cent) of these individuals had joined the party before Hitler rose to power. Dubbed 'old fighters' (*alte Kämpfer*) in the jargon of the movement, these latter figures are of particular interest here. Originally, the term 'old fighter' was used to refer to individuals who had joined the party by 1928 or whose membership numbers were lower than 100,000. Later on, however, the term was broadened to refer to anyone who had enrolled before 30 January 1933. Being in possession of a low membership number was viewed as a significant badge of honour and could considerably accelerate one's career within the Third Reich.[197] Although further specialized research will be necessary to verify the following conclusions, a handful of recent studies that provide a meticulous breakdown of individual noble clans already seem to suggest that these findings hold true.[198] Indeed, based on the restricted sample of fifty-three families and the available stock of newer investigations, it is possible to make seven statements about aristocrats who became official adherents of the National Socialist cause:

One. Comparing the number of party members from individual noble families with the total size of the families in question reveals that aristocratic adherents of the NSDAP remained a minority within noble clans overall. This is hardly a surprising result. To avoid any misunderstandings, however, it is worth repeating: there were more aristocrats who did *not* join the National Socialist party within individual families than relatives who *did* sign up for the NSDAP. Even so, at least some of the nobility's prominent clans featured astonishingly high numbers of party members among their ranks. Indeed, although further research will be required to ascertain the exact figures involved in each case, it is already possible to state that the forty-one and twenty-three members of the Schulenburg and Dohna dynasties who joined the NSDAP represented around 30–40 per cent of the family members who were old enough to enlist in the party at that time.[199]

Two. Almost all of the aristocracy's best-known East Elbian clans showed at least some level of active support for the NSDAP. In fact, in 1930/31, the social core of these families started putting its tremendous weight behind the party. This influence increased steadily as the years progressed. Of

course, there were significant differences in individual families' attitudes towards the movement. For example, some clans displayed a strikingly high level of commitment to National Socialism from a remarkably early stage, whereas some added to the ranks of the NSDAP only after 1933,[200] and a handful of prominent East Elbian families featured only a few party members or even none at all.[201] Generally speaking, however, the nobility were probably overrepresented to a significant extent within the NSDAP by the year Hitler finally came to power. By May 1933, the party boasted about 2.5 million members, or approximately 5 per cent of the adult population of the Reich. Assuming that there were around 50,000 adult aristocrats in the country at that time, the nobility would have matched the same percentage if just 2,500 of their number had joined the NSDAP. Notably, however, the above-named sample of just 312 aristocratic families—some of which were, admittedly, extremely large—reveals that around 1,500 noble individuals had signed up for the party by May of that fateful year. If one extrapolates this result to the 6,000 or so noble clans that existed in the eastern provinces of Prussia alone, then it is safe to assume that the number of aristocrats who were involved in the NSDAP by 1933 considerably outstripped the approximate percentage of members that existed among the population as a whole.[202]

Three. The noble north-south divide that has played such a key role throughout this book is also strikingly, unequivocally reflected in the Nazi party's membership lists. For example, the old Catholic aristocratic families that predominated in Bavaria and south-western Germany—a group which included such clans as the Aretins, the Franckensteins, the Leonrods, and the Neippergs—either featured few or no members who ever joined the NSDAP. Even their less influential counterparts among the old Bavarian (*altbayerisch*) noble dynasties rarely broke with this trend. In fact, most of the deviations from this regional norm emerged from such Franconian noble clans as the Truchseß family, the Seckendorffs, and the Thüngens. For their part, the Westphalian families—including such names as the Drostes, the Bentheims, the Fürstenbergs, and the Mallinckrodts—tended to join the NSDAP less often than the Protestant clans from East Elbia, but clearly far more frequently than their peers from the Catholic south.

Four. There were very few 'old fighters' (*alte Kämpfer*) or 'old party members' (*alte Parteigenossen*) among the nobility overall. Indeed, in the above sample, only 101 aristocrats (i.e. 6.3 per cent of the total under investigation) became members of the Nazi party before its election success in September

1930. At least as far as this particular study is concerned, there seems to be no discernible pattern in the types of aristocrats who signed up for the NSDAP at such an early stage. In fact, they came from a wide range of demographics, including young students, tenant farmers, single nurses, and retired military officers who were over seventy years of age. Even from this small sample, however, it is already possible to see that there were very few major landowners who belonged to the Nazi party's noble advance guard. Although aristocrats followed the general trend in German society and joined the NSDAP in greater and greater numbers after 1930, the data also suggests that they tended to enrol in the party at an earlier stage than the population as a whole. The political scientist Jürgen Falter has demonstrated that, of all the people who enlisted in the NSDAP between 1925 and May 1933 when a four-year moratorium was placed on new memberships, only around 38 per cent enlisted in the Nazi party before Hitler rose to power (i.e. on January 30 1933). Furthermore, no fewer than 61 per cent of the same group joined the organization in the remaining months after Hitler assumed the Chancellorship. It seems that exactly the opposite was the case among the nobility, however. In fact, examining the aristocrats who signed up for the NSDAP by May 1933 reveals that the 'old party members'—i.e. those who enrolled before 30 January 1933—outnumbered the *Märzgefallene* (the so-called 'March windfalls' who jumped on the Nazi bandwagon in March 1933) by 61 per cent to 38 per cent. As a result, it seems that the aristocracy were not immune to the wave of opportunistic new members who wanted to ride on the Nazis' coattails in 1933 but were swept up in its wake less often than the population as a whole.[203]

Five. The party's index cards reveal very little useable information about the careers and social positions that were held by aristocratic members of the NSDAP. Nevertheless, they still appear to confirm the idea that eldest sons who owned their families' estates were less likely to join the party overall and that second and subsequent scions who enjoyed less social stability and held down jobs in urban areas were far more likely to enlist in the NSDAP than their families' principal heirs. Indeed, both before and after 1933, the card indexes display such information as 'retired officer', 'student', 'merchant', 'wife', 'widow', and 'member without any given occupational status' far more frequently than such titles as 'farmer' or 'owner of a knight's estate'.[204] Moreover, most of the proprietors of major family landholdings who became Nazi party members did so after 1933. In fact, the historian Mario Niemann

has demonstrated that, although around 24 per cent of Mecklenburg's major landowners had signed up for the NSDAP by the end of the 1930s, only around a third of their number joined before 1933.[205] Even though Niemann's figures were originally produced for a particular state, one would also expect to get similar results from the East Elbian nobility in general.

Six. In contrast to the rather vague state of the professional and social details they supply, the National Socialists' card indexes provide very clear information about the ages of their members and the number of women among their ranks. This data is surprising for two reasons. Firstly, aristocrats who signed up for the NSDAP before 1933 were 36.8 years old on average when they joined the organization. This was considerably higher than the average age of twenty-nine years among the population as a whole.[206] These findings in no way disprove the existence of the noble youth's special affinity with the National Socialist movement. Indeed, although young aristocrats were far less likely to join the party than their older peers (a striking number of whom were retired military officers of a more advanced age by the time they enrolled), both groups provided complementary forms of support for the movement overall.

Seven. The second surprising revelation from the Nazis' card indexes is the fact that 559 of the 1,595 aristocrats from the sample who joined the NSDAP were women. At an overall proportion of 35 per cent, this imposing number is around six times higher than the average female contingent among the party as a whole, which stood at around 5–7.5 per cent. Moreover, 211—or 39.9 per cent—of the 528 aristocrats who signed up for the NSDAP prior to 30 January 1933 were women.[207] With the current state of research it is possible to suggest—but not demonstrate—that such a disparity was the result of noblewomen's uncommon intellectual independence and, above all, the unusual levels of politicization that aristocratic families encouraged in their daughters.[208] The notion that these women may have been 'led' into the party by their husbands[209] does not apply in at least half of the cases in question. Indeed, in addition to the women who were listed as 'wives' in the party records, the NSDAP's noble female members included numbers of young female students, professional singles, seventy-year-old widows, and daughters who were still living in their family homes. All in all, these findings seem to chime with the newer body of research into the important role that highly political, independent women played within the ranks of the anti-republican Right. In fact, it appears that noblewomen also

occupied an impressive proportion of the leading positions in this particular ideological domain.[210]

As is generally the case with members of the NSDAP, no uniform demographic patterns can be identified among the aristocrats who joined the Nazi party. It is possible, however, to point out various typical examples of individuals from a range of different social backgrounds who enrolled in the NSDAP. Statistically speaking, for instance, the average aristocrat who joined the party was a male, young, protestant member of the East Elbian minor nobility with a military bent and no land to call his own. Although of general interest, however, such information serves little practical purpose. The lack of overall homogeneity among noble members of the NSDAP means that this kind of standard profile is largely unhelpful for statistical studies and useless when it comes to writing a social history of the nobility.

The fact that noble party members came from such a heterogeneous array of backgrounds shows just how important their shared cultural and ideological codes were for bridging the gap between the nobility and National Socialism. A handful of these codes were revealed in the candid autobiography of Prince Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten—a figure who, by his own admission, voted for the NSDAP in November 1932. For example, a shared love of military motifs and country living helped him get along with the highly decorated fighter pilot Hermann Göring, whom he invited out on a hunt. For his part, Heinrich Himmler, whom the prince took out for a drive from Marienburg Castle in his Horch cabriolet, won the nobleman over with his humble demeanour, his erudition, and, above all, the fact that he—like Dohna—had studied agriculture and belonged to a duelling fraternity.[211] Dohna also glimpsed a sense of affinity that crossed an even wider social gulf when he went driving through East Prussia with Prince Christian zur Lippe and his wife, whom he described as 'enthusiastic Hitler supporters as so many of our acquaintances are at present'. During their excursions, the latter two princes greeted the people they saw working in the fields with a Nazi salute as they drove past and were excited by the enthusiastic looks they received in return. At such moments, the dawn of the new National Socialist era seemed within easy reach and the nobility appeared to have found a new role for themselves in society.[212]

Aristocrats also used symbols of their power and rank to issue highly visible signals of their intent to side with the NSDAP. In East Prussia, for example, receptions were organized for Göring, Hitler, and various prominent local

National Socialists by Count Hermann zu Dohna at Schloß Finckenstein[213] and by his 'cousin' Count von Finckenstein-Schönberg at the famous fortress of the Teutonic order (*Ordensburg*) that bore his family name. Count Ottfried von Finckenstein also described how one of his relatives hosted leading Nazis at his castle and went driving with Hitler in East Prussia in 1931. 'From there, my cousin drove him in one of his big automobiles . . . to several towns where he gave his election speeches', he wrote. 'Of course, these visits caused quite a stir, and people in the local area asked themselves: how does a young, wealthy and famously intelligent count end up serving as the chauffeur for the "Bohemian corporal"…?'[214]

Over time, it became apparent that there was a great deal to be gained from such displays of loyalty. Indeed, long-term supporters of National Socialism from celebrated Prussian dynasties rapidly started accruing significance and visibility among their family circles, and noble Nazis who had once been seen as outsiders now became viewed as leading role models by those who shared their family name. Within the prestigious Finckenstein family, this opportunity was seized by the Silesian Count Heinrich-Georg Finck von Finckenstein. A lieutenant colonel from a dragoon regiment, the count joined the party as early as September 1925 after a winding journey through various *Freikorps* units and battle leagues and signed up to be a simple SA foot soldier in July 1929.[215] He thus aligned himself with the National Socialists far earlier than his relative, the castle owner Count Finckenstein-Schönberg. Ever since 1931, greater numbers of aristocrats in Upper Silesia had also begun assuming the widest range of leadership positions within the National Socialist movement. The retired lieutenant colonel von Garnier, for example, became the chairman of a nineteen-strong local chapter of the NSDAP; a man by the name of von Flotow served as the leader of his region's SA-Subgroup (*SA-Untergruppe*); and Count Wolfgang Yorck von Wartenburg—an SA officer and the owner of a knight's estate in Silesia—took up a post as a section leader at the regional headquarters of the NSDAP in Breslau in September 1931.[216]

A further locus of rapprochement that helped unite National Socialists from a wide variety of social backgrounds was provided by the concept of the *SS-Burgen*—fortresses that were intended to serve as conspicuous symbols of the SS's power and training facilities for its elite. In 1933, a Westphalian aristocrat named Adolf von Oyenhausen assisted Heinrich Himmler in planning these institutions when he suggested that he might consider using the Wewelsburg, a castle near the city of Paderborn. The first *Burghauptmann*

('castle captain') of this mighty Renaissance edifice was destined to be Manfred von Knobelsdorff, a professional military officer who had lost his commission in 1918, subsequently worked as a perfume salesman, and married one of Richard Walther Darré's sisters after the First World War. If Himmler's plans had ever come to fruition, the *Burg* would have featured halls with such sonorous names as 'Grail', 'King Arthur', and 'King Heinrich' and would have housed the 'death's head rings' (*Totenkopfringe*) of fallen SS Führers, whose coats of arms would also have hung from the castle walls. Although the SS's symbolism was dominated by their own brand of extremely complex esotericism, the imagery they borrowed from the aristocracy was appreciated by members of the old nobility.[217] The Wewelsburg represented a place where craftsmen, shopkeepers, and butchers could join the ranks of the SS and imagine themselves as Sir Lancelot while also allowing nobles to feel exalted by the misguided notion that the old aristocracy were providing the guiding lights for the future Nazi elite. This double misconception—writ large in the grotesque symbolism of the Wewelsburg—was of great significance for the misalliance that has been described in this book.

The sense of affinity between the Nazis and the nobility that was generated by various symbols, gestures, and elements of language also had an impact among aristocrats who were by no means 'true believers' in the National Socialist cause. Indeed, even some of the nobles who would later be connected with the plot of 20 July experienced a similar kind of rapprochement with Nazism both before and after 1933. A number of commentators have questioned this latter assertion. For example, Count Detlef von Schwerin's biography of the 'young generation in the German Resistance' opened with an attempt to rebuff allegations that a number of noble Resistance members were, relatively speaking, rather close to National Socialism at first.[218] However, Schwerin's book then went on to include assorted fragments of biographical detail about some of the Resistance members—including their sympathies for the Beer Hall Putsch, their involvement in right-wing student associations, the *Freikorps*, and the *Stahlhelm*, and the fact that the Schulenburg brothers both joined the NSDAP—which contradicted his original claim. A similar tale of rapprochement can be detected in the family of Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, one of the leading lights of the Resistance. Although infinitely less well known than his more famous sibling today,[219] Peter's older brother Count Paul von Wartenburg—a man who owned his family's entailed estate

and joined the Nazi party in 1932—turned his 3,000-plus hectare Silesian property into an important hub for prominent local Nazis before he began gravitating towards the Resistance himself.[220] Moreover, although there is no evidence that he was ever a diehard party fanatic, Count Paul seems to have harboured a typical aristocratic blend of unambiguous anti-republicanism and ambivalent National Socialist sympathies which he retained until at least 1934. This pattern of behaviour was also typical of the majority of the Resistance conspirators, including Count Claus von Stauffenberg, who trained SA men in night-time field exercises as a young officer from 1930 to 1932 and—according to the most plausible accounts—addressed a crowd of people who were excited by Hitler's rise to power on 30 January 1933. In fact, Thomas Karlauf's recent biography of Stauffenberg has unleashed a fresh round of heated debate about his motives, opinions, and political development prior to 1944. As such, it is clear that, even when it comes to some of the plot's most celebrated conspirators, far more is known about their actions in 1944 than their political positions in and around the year 1933.[221]

A similar level of political ambivalence can also be detected within the Bismarck family, whose members were either loyal or antipathetic to the National Socialist cause. Individuals of the latter persuasion included the Countess Hannah von Bismarck. The sophisticated eldest daughter of the family whose life is unusually well documented, the countess conspicuously distanced herself from Nazism at an early stage and later served as a close ally of the Resistance. The voluminous private correspondence between her daughter, Countess Philippa von Bismarck, and Werner von Haeften—who proposed to Philippa a year before he ostensibly threw himself in front of Stauffenberg's firing squad[222]—also betrays a sense of political clarity and perspicacity that was unusual among the Prussian nobility's ranks. It was, however, the more visible male Bismarcks who formed their family's reputation in the eyes of the outside world. Indeed, Countess Philippa's younger brothers—Prince Otto von Bismarck and Count Gottfried von Bismarck—both joined the NSDAP in 1933 and forged stellar careers in the Third Reich's civil service and diplomatic corps. For his part, Prince Otto also entered into direct contact with Hitler and Göring by early 1932 at the latest. Proof of this connection emerged when Countess Philippa noticed a diamond-encrusted swastika on her brother's wife's coat, and photographs exist of Hitler's later visit to Schloss Friedrichsruh, the Bismarcks' family seat.[223]

Housed in their mighty castles, the East Prussian *grands seigneurs* seem to have kept more of a distance between themselves and Nazism. Nevertheless, the National Socialist movement did make certain inroads among this group as well. For example, Count Heinrich von Lehndorff—a future staunch Resistance member who owned a 5,500-hectare estate surrounding Steinort Palace—applied to join the Nazi party after 1933. Following the Second World War, Heinrich's sister, the Countess Karin von Lehndorff, wrote a snippet of text to her granddaughter in which she described the atmosphere that had allowed such an ambivalent attitude to take root. Back then, she declared, the conservative party was regarded as the 'other side' and 'we young people all voted for Hitler—the National Socialist. Everyone thought, there's something new, so just join in at first and everything will get better again.'[224] Interestingly, when faced with the consideration that young offspring of East Prussia's most prestigious noble families had left their mighty castles to stick up campaign posters for the NSDAP, even the best biographies written in 2019 still attributed their actions to the 'folly of youth',[225] despite the fact that Count Heinrich—the individual to whom that particular quotation refers—was around twenty-three years old at the time. As they say in British PhD seminars, 'more research is needed'.

A similar revisionist tendency also surrounds Countess Marion Dönhoff, a woman who did more than any other individual to bind the words 'nobility' and 'Resistance' together in the collective imagination.[226] Even today, far more is known about her friendship with members of the Resistance and her impressive career as perhaps the most influential journalist and networker in the German Republic than about her brothers' membership of the NSDAP, for example. Indeed, Dönhoff never spoke about such unsavoury facets of her family history.[227] Despite her silence on such matters, however, there are various aspects of the countesse's life that do not match the impression of herself she hoped to give. How, for instance, is one supposed to interpret her nonchalant report that the Nazis' Panzer campaign against France in 1940 was something of a 'hunterly' adventure or the documented joy she felt when her brothers took up roles in the 'colonial sector'—by which she meant the settlement programmes in Poland? In fact, the fragmented snatches of text that reveal her political worldview have far more in common with other authors' expressions of astonishment at Germany's easy military victories in the summer of 1940 than with utterances of opposition and resistance to the regime.[228]

When it comes to many of the aristocrats who were members or close allies of the Resistance, it will always be difficult to reconstruct the often tortuous intellectual and personal trajectories they followed in any level of detail. Nevertheless, Marion Dönhoff—or 'The Countess' as everyone called her—spent five decades not only obsessively maintaining the memory of her friends in the Resistance, but also compulsively promoting her own interpretation of their lives.[229] Moreover, until her death in 2002, she remained astonishingly caustic towards anyone who challenged her point of view. In 1984, for example, Dönhoff excitedly quoted a phrase that had been coined by the political scientist Dolf Sternberger when he railed against historians' sceptical questions by declaring that the world already had 'enough of those academic insects who blindly and unfeelingly crawl around on the cadaver of history'.[230] Similarly, in 1995, she instructed Hans-Ulrich Wehler—one of Germany's most influential historians after 1945—that 75 per cent of Hitler's would-be assassins were aristocrats, that none of the Nazi higher-ups came from noble backgrounds, and that his view of the nobility as facilitators of the National Socialist regime was thus 'very surprising' indeed.[231] In the countess's estimation, aristocratic eyewitnesses and those loyal to them should be the only ones permitted to pass down the tale of the nobility's role in the Resistance in a manner akin to the Homeric legends of old. Although Ralf Dahrendorf has ventured an educated guess that there were more nuances and grey areas than Dönhoff allowed,[232] the same cannot be said of the many recent works that have been written about her life. Moreover, biographies of aristocrats in the Resistance are still filled with descriptions of beautiful countesses, dashing horsemen, rustling oak trees, and unbelievably intelligent friends who visited from all over the world, stood in front of fabulous décor in their casual tweed attire, and trotted out quotations for posterity that are ripe for the printing press. As far as Dönhoff herself is concerned, more is known about the magnificent East Prussian lakes she admired, every horse ride she took, every leopard she shot, her favourite steeds, her witty cousins, her sports cars, her feminism *avant la lettre*, and every genuine or apocryphal conversation she ever engaged in than is known about less appealing figures like her uncle Count Bogislav von Dönhoff, a diplomat and estate owner (or, rather, estate occupier) who lived at Schloss Quittanien and joined the NSDAP in 1932.[233]

As was discussed at the beginning of this book, not all of the tales remembered and told by noble authors after the Second World War actually chime with documented history prior to 1945. At the same time, however, it

seems highly unlikely that the available sources will ever yield a more exact reconstruction of certain historical events. As a result, even the latest biographies of Resistance members still remain deeply entwined with the eloquent, image-laden narrative created by Dönhoff, her companions, and the interpretations they established long after the fact.[234] Moreover, although solid documentary evidence has been provided for the political stances of a handful of individuals who aligned themselves with the conservative Resistance—and although there is no reason to call these findings into question—historians still know very little about the anti-democratic milieus in which they must have developed the opinions that ultimately led them to join the plot of 20 July.

Remarkably, in 1933, some of the barriers to rapprochement that had been raised by a combination of wealth and Catholicism began to disintegrate in a number of prominent cases. A notable example is the political stance of Prince Max Egon zu Fürstenberg, an eminent south German aristocrat who openly celebrated the arrangement he reached with the fascist state after Hitler rose to power despite previously having kept his distance from National Socialism. Born in 1863, the multi-millionaire prince had studied law, became an honorary Major, enjoyed close contacts to the Prussian and Austrian high nobilities, and can be regarded as something of an aristocratic hybrid who embodied various different strands of noble culture. At the same time, however, both the prince's close friendship with Wilhelm II and his immense wealth—which was based on his ownership of latifundia, castles, mines, hotels, department stores, theatres, restaurants, bus lines, and sanatoria—also provide evidence of the rift that separated a southern German prince of his ilk from the usual social standards of the minor nobility.

Like many mediatized princes from the south of the country, Fürstenberg concentrated on implementing pragmatic strategies of damage limitation after the end of the First World War. He resolutely avoided becoming publicly involved in politics, for instance, gave military and *völkisch* associations a wide berth, and even refused membership of the DNVP, a party he regarded as 'agreeable'.[235] His correspondence does not give any hint that he had started gravitating towards right-wing, radical organizations prior to 1933. This made the enthusiastic account he wrote about his first audience with Hitler and Röhm in November 1933 all the more unexpected and unsettling. On that particular occasion—which Fürstenberg described as a 'wonderful experience'—the prince and his son were met by Hindenburg,

followed by the 'Führer', Ernst Röhm, and the exiled Kaiser's second wife. Dazzled by the style and taste of the Reich Chancellor's Palace, impressed by the 'nice young SS and SA members' he encountered, and, ultimately, overwhelmed by meeting Hitler in person, the seventy-year old prince presented himself to the Nazi leader as a simple SA foot soldier. 'I introduced myself with a raised hand as [having been] transferred to the SA and sent to the staff of the 470 Freiburg *Standarte* [a kind of SA regiment]', he recollected, adding that Hitler had 'gratefully accepted' his declaration 'in a truly enchantingly courteous manner' and 'immediately' added, 'but take a seat, Your Highness'. 'It was magnificent to have the chance to come face-to-face with this one great man', Fürstenberg later gushed. After Hitler had, among other things, indicated that the prince's good relationships with the Archbishop of Freiburg and Cardinal Pacelli in Rome could be a great help to National Socialism, Fürstenberg 'chatted' with Ernst Röhm in a 'very pleasant and jovial' way.[236] By mid-1933, the prince—whose sympathies for the National Socialist movement are first documented in January of that year[237]—had become a member of the NSDAP, the SA, and the *Stahlhelm*. He also used his famous name to benefit the new regime during his seventieth birthday celebrations in 1933, which included marches by the SS and the SA and performances of the Horst Wessel Song. Especially for a member of the southern German high nobility, this really was an astonishing political transformation.

If one wanted to find a single word to sum up why the Nazis' and the nobility's affinities eventually outweighed their differences, the term 'misreading' would be an apt choice. Indeed, examining the two groups' ambivalent relationship from both of their perspectives reveals that a double misreading took place. The first misreading was committed by the National Socialists, who—as the most significant heirs to *völkisch* traditions and as the group that, in some respects, were the closest to neo-aristocratic thought—never abandoned the term 'nobility' or the idea of the aristocracy outright. At the same time, however, their version of 'nobility' was based on nothing more than the word itself and a few fragments of noble tradition that were ripe to distort and misuse. In fact, although the 'aristocracy' remained a vital, cherished institution among the fascists' ranks, the National Socialists were only interested in the mutated form of 'nobility' that was dreamt up and finally brought to life by Hitler, Günther, Darré, the SA's commanders and—ultimately and most prominently—the leaders of the SS.

The second misreading was committed by the aristocratic majority who believed they had found a modern version of their own traditions in the objectives and guiding principles of National Socialism. Back in 1921, a Pan-German baron described the EDDA project as 'the conscious continuation' of the 'selective breeding' that the 'nobility had been practising since time immemorial by maintaining their knowledge of their forebears and their family tree'. As a consequence, he continued, aligning the nobility with notions of 'selectivity and racial breeding' was 'not a new objective for the aristocracy at all, but actually rather an obvious goal'.[238] As has been demonstrated above, however, the Nazis' and the nobility's apparent affinity, which was communicated in part by their shared rhetoric about 'blood' and 'race', was based on a fatal misinterpretation and the absurd—but remarkably widespread—noble belief that the National Socialist movement was the contemporary continuation of the very 'best' of aristocratic traditions. Overall, this misconception was based on the two groups' shared use of guiding principles that were phonetically—but not semantically—identical. Countless sources provide prime examples of this misapprehension. In 1932, one aristocratic text declared that, 'We have Adolf Hitler alone to thank' for the fact that 'opinions which correspond to our best traditions'—including 'character and race, space and pragmatism, warriorhood and a willingness to defend one's homeland, and the readiness to fight for the honour and freedom of the nation'—'have been revived within the broadest sections of the population today'.[239] Written by a retired aristocratic lieutenant general in a 1936 edition of the *Adelsblatt*, another article described the nobility as the forerunner to National Socialism, asserted that the aristocracy were nothing more than 'ennobled ordinary people' (*geadeltes Volk*), and claimed that even the nobility's detractors could not deny 'that the aristocracy as a whole [have] cultivated more nationalism and lived out more socialism over the centuries than any other social class'.[240] At around the same time, Prince Schaumburg-Lippe also published a text in which he declared that, 'From the very start, National Socialism was the sole legitimate heir of all the noble traditions of the past', and that 'those ancestors we have been pledging allegiance to our whole lives continued to act through' the movement.[241]

Before the Third Reich and the advent and consequences of its predatory war could wreak extensive havoc on the foundations of the German nobility's lives, the aristocracy—or at least the majority of their number—were among the groups that, to borrow Martin Brosatz's apt phrase, 'confused'

National Socialism 'with their own unarticulated notions and desires'.[242] The fact that the Nazis' and the nobility's ideals could easily be portrayed as similar was shown by Friedrich von Bülow in an after-dinner speech he delivered to the gathering of the Bülow family association in the summer of 1935. Even prior to 1933, this event, which was organized by one of the largest family associations in the land, had already been attended by a conspicuous, growing group of young National Socialist supporters.[243] During the metaphor-laden speech he delivered to his family members, the sixty-six-year-old former governor of Posen unwittingly provided vivid proof that the tale of the aristocracy's rapprochement with National Socialism was, in many respects, the history of a profound misreading. 'The Führer is building his Third Reich on blood and soil', he declared:

> We have been aware of blood selection [*Blutauslese*] for 7 centuries and have established and sustained our bloodstream with wise choices based on well-established ideas of culture and race. . . . All of the great ideals that the Führer has laid out for the German people stem from ancient German patrimony and, not least, from the German aristocracy's deepest treasure chambers. The German nobility are thus fundamentally similar to National Socialism in their character and heritage. During the era of the leftist governments, people said: down with the aristocracy, we all want to be proletarians. Now people say the opposite: that the simple man should rise up from the population and that we all want to be united again as members of a true aristocracy. . . . What the future will bring us we leave up to God's hand and the enlightenment of the Führer. But one thing we do know. Our old lineage is not an impurity that rots and decays in the Third Reich; it is a load-bearing stone in the edifice that has been hardened throughout the centuries . . . . Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil![244]

Conclusion

Back in December 2015, I received a rather unsettling letter from the public prosecutor's office in Hamburg which stated that Prince Georg Friedrich von Preußen—the head of the erstwhile Prussian royal family—had decided to bring legal charges against me. The prince's lawyers, it transpired, were accusing me of having breached a number of 'personal secrets' in an article I had written for a German weekly newspaper a number of months before.[1] This piece, which dealt with the Crown Prince's political position, had allegedly disclosed confidential information that was made available to me while I was serving as an expert witness in a lawsuit.

At first glance, this turn of events might seem like the vision of an overworked historian whose feverish dreams have summoned the subjects of his research back to life. Nevertheless, the accusation levelled at me arose as part of a very real, very complex, ongoing legal dispute about the former German royal family—the same Hohenzollern dynasty that reigned over the country until 1918 and was dispossessed during the Soviet occupation after the Second World War. For over twenty years, the family have been negotiating in the quiet chambers of specialist lawyers and government ministries to demand compensation from the German state for assets that were stripped from them many decades ago. The case itself hinges around the so-called 'Compensation Act' (*Ausgleichsleistungsgesetz*), a piece of legislation introduced in 1994 that regulates historical compensation claims in the German courts. Crucially, one instance in which the law does *not* allow such compensation to be awarded is where claimants' forebears can be proven to have provided 'substantial support' (*erheblichen Vorschub*) to the regime in the GDR or the Nazis' Third Reich. As such, the lawyers in the Hohenzollern case—and in similar suits brought by prestigious noble families like the Bismarcks since Germany was reunified in 1990—have had to wrestle with a central question that is simple to ask, but extremely difficult to answer:

namely, how can one apportion political responsibility for Hitler's rise to power in 1933?

As a result of the wording of the 'Compensation Act', the Hohenzollern's lawyers have spent many years trying to prove that Prince Wilhelm von Preußen—the last German crown prince and a scion of the dynasty—did not provide 'substantial support' to the National Socialist regime. Despite all of their efforts, however, the Hohenzollern family lost the first round of the case in October 2015 when the Potsdam Ministry of Finance ruled it would not pay them any compensation. In March 2016, the legal proceedings against me were also definitively dropped.

A number of expert witnesses with differing opinions have been called to weigh in on the matter. The renowned Cambridge historian Christopher Clark argued that Wilhelm was only a marginal figure—or 'a twit', as he phrased it—after 1918, for instance, while the historian Peter Brandt and I both claimed that the prince played an important role in facilitating the anti-republican coalition of conservative and fascist forces that ultimately brought the National Socialists to power. At a later stage in proceedings, Christopher Clark restated his belief in Wilhelm's insignificance, and Wolfram Pyta—one of the pre-eminent historians of the Weimar Republic whose expert assessment was commissioned by the Hohenzollern—asserted that the Crown Prince even tried to hinder Hitler's ascent in 1932.

The debate about the Hohenzollern's role in twentieth-century history was reignited with a vengeance in July 2019 when *Der Spiegel*—Germany's foremost news magazine—revealed that the former royal family had been conducting 'discrete' negotiations for a number of years in an attempt to gain compensation and retake possession of immense art collections and other considerable assets, including the perpetual right to reside in Potsdam's Cecilienhof Palace. In November 2019, a popular TV show also leaked the four confidential expert opinions on the case and thus turned the matter into a topic of debate that was followed by millions of people.[2] Some of the most renowned historians of modern German history subsequently commented on the subject in the country's leading newspapers, the *Bundestag* launched a commission that asked five historians and two lawyers to assess the relationship between the Nazis and the former Royal family, and a flood of documentaries, op-eds, and reactions on social media highlighted just how heated and controversial the discussion had become. While this conclusion is being written, the debate is still getting a fierce airing in the press and in the courts, and the Hohenzollern family have hired lawyers who fire

off legal letters to wherever they feel that factual errors or false statements have been made.

It still seems uncertain whether or not the compensation case will move to the Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgericht*) in Potsdam by the time this book goes to press. Nevertheless, historians, lawyers, politicians, and journalists are still working hard to get to grips with the historical situation. It is unclear whether any consensus will ultimately be reached. One thing that will have changed, however, is how the Hohenzollern's story will be regarded in the public eye: no longer as private family matters, but as important aspects of German history that might help unlock an additional perspective from which to discuss the motives, mechanisms, and responsibility for installing Hitler's first cabinet back in January 1933. This enormously significant issue that has yearned for a satisfactory answer ever since the Nazis first rose to power is not only of interest when it comes to Germany's former ruling family, but is also inextricably linked with the history of the entire German nobility and of the nation as a whole.

During the Nuremburg trials in 1945, the German elite's role in the Nazi state was staged in tones of high drama. In contrast, the Hohenzollern's recent efforts to downplay their family's arrangements with the National-Socialist movement have often seemed more akin to a farce.

A number of the arguments used by observers in the recent debate about the Crown Prince from 1930–34 bear an odd resemblance to key conservative narratives that were invented immediately after the Second World War.[3] For example, various observers have echoed the claims made by some of the lawyers in Nuremberg, who asserted that a variety of key conservative figures—including army generals, diplomats, and even a vice-chancellor—merely assumed high-ranking offices in the National Socialist state in order to stop 'worse' events from unfolding as time went on. Indeed, ever since it was first uttered, this argument has played a central role in every single conservative interpretation of the history of the Third Reich.[4]

Commentators who defend the German Crown Prince have recently claimed that he only ever supported the notion of imposing a noble-led military dictatorship because it was the sole realistic alternative to National Socialist rule by the end of 1932. As far as this reading of history is concerned, the German Crown Prince, his friend General Kurt von Schleicher, and their idea for restoring the monarchy represented the last practical line of defence against the Nazis' rise to power. If one were limited to examining the final few weeks of the Weimar Republic, this interpretation would

certainly have some degree of credibility. It must be remembered, however, that the state of affairs which made a military dictatorship under the Crown Prince's command seem like the lesser of two evils did not simply spring up and sweep the nation overnight.[5] Indeed, the fact that there was no noteworthy conservative alternative to Hitler in January 1933 was not the result of a raft of sudden, unexpected developments, but the product of at least three long decades of noble radicalization that ultimately led vast swathes of the aristocracy into an alliance with the National Socialist regime.

After suggesting the idea of sharing power with Hitler in March 1932, the Prussian Crown Prince drove his proposal home by serving as the Nazi leader's political campaigner, posing in swastika armbands for the photographers of various foreign newspapers, drumming up for support for the Third Reich's early anti-Semitic measures in the British and American press, and telling one of his friends that he would beat up anyone who stood in the way of Hitler's government.[6] All of these deeds sounded the death knell for a host of proud noble traditions and demonstrated that the aristocracy's once staunch resistance to an excessively powerful state had all but crumbled to dust. Of course, the Crown Prince was not alone in these political decisions. For instance, his younger brother enrolled in the Nazi party in 1930, paraded around in an SA uniform, reinvented himself as a storm trooper, and took his son with him when he joined the National Socialist fold. The Princes von Hessen—Wilhelm's relatives—enjoyed a meteoric rise through the ranks of the SS; various dukes established SA units at their castles; many representatives of the most renowned families—including the landowner and diplomat Duke Otto von Bismarck—joined the party by 1933; and even the exiled Kaiser held out hope that the Nazis would place him back on the throne while his wife toured Germany in an attempt to build bridges between monarchists and the National Socialist movement. In light of such tangible evidence of a drastic transformation, it is not easy to see how the aristocracy could have made anything like a valuable contribution to a conservative alternative that would have had a hope of standing up against the Nazis' growing might.

Aside from a handful of isolated individuals and smaller groups, the nobility's only consistent, major, conservative opposition to National Socialism emerged from sections of the Catholic aristocracy in Bavaria. Overall, however, this particular brand of southern conservatism was more than outweighed by the dominant tendencies in Prussia and other parts of the country. In fact, the nobility as a whole played a significant role in Germany's

tapestry of right-wing, radical organizations that championed mythology, combat, rebirth, radical change, and claimed to fight against the apparent decadence of democracy in all its forms.[7] Crucially, this same tendency towards fascist radicalization was hampered in other countries where bastions of conservative opposition remained effective and strong.[8] No such barrier existed in Germany, however, neither before 30 January 1933, nor after Hitler rose to power. As a result, it is possible to state that the contribution the nobility made to the disastrous political landscape of twentieth-century Germany was very considerable indeed.

Unlike some of the uprisings that came before it, the German Revolution allowed the members of the German aristocracy to keep their heads, their castles, their estates, a version of their titles, and many of their leading positions of power. Despite the revolutionaries' astounding willingness to compromise and come to agreements with the old order, however, the majority of nobles never accepted republican calls for peace and proved unable to play by the rules of democracy before 1945. Of course, the aristocracy did not invent political extremism, and many accounts suggest that they were swept along in a rampage of radical views rather than steering the current of history themselves. Moreover, even if the nobility had consciously wanted to transform their own ideological point of view, this was by no means an easy feat to achieve. Indeed, although the New Right presented individual aristocrats with an opportunity to regain their influence when it placed ideas of *Führertum*, warriorhood, elitism, racism, and the cult of decisive action front and centre in its political project, it also posed a serious threat to the identity of the historical nobility as a whole and ultimately stripped them of the vital distinguishing features that had kept them afloat in theory and practice for many hundreds of years. Furthermore, like people at all levels of society both in Germany and abroad, the nobility also fatally underestimated the dynamism, the masterful political aptitude, and—above all—the peerless brutality of the National Socialist state and only recognized their lack of judgement when the Nazis openly began directing their reign of terror against handpicked members of the former elite.

The philosopher Karl Jaspers once stated that Martin Heidegger—one of the few intellectual giants who openly offered his services to the Third Reich—had chosen to align himself with Nazism because he harboured ambitions to 'lead the leader' (*den Führer führen*) himself.[9] This same statement could also apply to the nobles in the DHK whose hunterly, equestrian idiom described the National Socialists as a team of horses whose reins were

destined to be held by noble Führers of their ilk. Although all sections of German society were liable to overestimate their own abilities in this regard and misjudge the Nazis' sheer power, the nobility's own misguided interpretations had far greater consequences than the miscalculations that were typically made by philosophers, democrats, socialists, and German Jews. Unlike these other groups, the aristocracy were also in a position to expect substantial benefits from forming an alliance with the National Socialist cause. Indeed, in a purely self-serving frame of mind, they were able to believe that siding with the Nazis would put them within a hair's breadth of precipitating the permanent downfall of democracy and regaining the reserves of power they had lost after the First World War. National Socialism promised to open crucial doors for the nobility and allow them to salvage what had been lost, safeguard what was under threat, and take hold of the leadership positions they most desired. After Hitler seized control, it did not escape the aristocracy's notice that their career prospects had suddenly blossomed in the diplomatic corps, in the ministries of state, in the freshly 'cleansed' ranks of the civil service, and in the officer corps of the *Wehrmacht* itself. They were also presented with a whole host of advantageous positions in the 'prerogative state'—a term coined by the political scientist Ernst Fraenkel in his influential book *The Dual State* (1941) to describe the raft of new institutions the Nazis set up that ran parallel to the state organizations of old. In fact, the upper levels of various National Socialist organizations—including the SA, the SS, the Reich Main Security Office, the Race and Settlement Main Office, the NSDAP's Office of Foreign Affairs, the new police apparatus, the new secret service, the new Agrarian Apparatus, and the ministries that dealt with the colonization of Eastern Europe—all provided opportunities for nobles to embark on astonishingly successful careers. From an aristocratic point of view, the National Socialists also seemed able to furnish the nobility with two highly materialistic rewards they had been yearning after for a very long time. Firstly, every single landowner in the country hoped that the new regime would guarantee the continued prosperity of hereditary estates by allowing them to be entailed in law. And secondly, every second and subsequent noble son, every noble daughter, and every noble family whose estates had been taken from them was mesmerized by the mighty new territories the Nazis had conquered in Eastern Europe since 1939. Indeed, this freshly acquired 'colonial land' seemed to offer the landed aristocracy a whole new world of opportunities, the likes of which they had never seen before.

In light of all these developments, it is possible to state that the majority of the German nobility profited from the rise of the Third Reich. National Socialist dominance was not uniformly positive for the aristocracy, however. Indeed, as the title of this book suggests, the link that was forged between the Nazis and the nobility can accurately be described as a 'misalliance'. This is not merely due to the disastrous consequences the union would cause for other sections of society, but also because of the negative effects it would mete out on aristocrats themselves. The nobility never managed to find a comfortable position within the Nazis' 'national community'. Admittedly, they were not averse to the concept's more elitist elements, and its hostile attitude to socialists, communists, unionists, democrats, Jews, homosexuals, and other 'inferior' human beings was far from unknown within the aristocratic milieu. The same could never be said of the more inclusive aspects of this notion, however. Indeed, the Nazis' aggressive promotion of a new national community that claimed to ignore one's origins and social rank was only something the nobility could get on board with after they had relinquished the idea that they deserved their outstanding status as a simple result of their birth. Although the promised dream of a thoroughly egalitarian *Volksgemeinschaft* never became a social reality,[10] the momentum that was unleashed by the concept threatened the entire framework on which the historical nobility's exclusive identity had always been based. One of the ways it did this was by making the idea of breeding a better nation by increasing the purity of its blood a central tenet of the overall Pan-German project. As 'pure' blood equally flowed through the veins of millions of peasants, factory workers, and seamstresses across the land, this racist notion meant that the nobility's influence necessarily shrank down to match the miniscule proportion they represented in the German population as a whole. To make matters worse, although the 'new nobility'—an idea that was based on notions of selection, breeding, upbringing, 'loyalty', and achievement—still contained the word 'nobility' in its name, it actually had very little in common with the traditions and family trees of the old aristocracy themselves. It is, of course, true that the *Volksgemeinschaft* opened up significant career opportunities for a number of noble individuals. In contrast to what some recent historical studies have claimed, however, the concept of the Nazis' racially defined 'national community' ultimately signed the death warrant of the historical aristocracy as a group.[11]

As the years progressed, social decline and political radicalization—twin phenomena that were hastened by the catalysts of revolution and military

defeat—inexorably drew the nobility ever closer into alignment with the ideas and organizations of the radical right. This development reached its peak in 1933 when the aristocracy formed an alliance with the National Socialist movement itself. It was around this time that Franz von Papen uttered his famous statement that the nobility had merely 'hired' Hitler to do their bidding. Far from being evidence of just one pompous individual's overestimation of his own abilities, this rather foolish declaration also mirrored a belief that was widespread among the majority of the German aristocracy as a whole. Indeed, instances of the nobility's overinflated self-regard abound in various sources. Rather uniquely, however, it seems as though this blistering self-confidence was also combined with a nervous awareness of their own weaknesses. This anxiety was by no means unfounded. For one thing, the economic and political challenges the nobility faced in a modern, industrialized society struck at the heart of the ruling habitus they had forged, annealed, and inherited for hundreds of years. These traditional guiding principles were then further stripped of all their substance when the aristocracy tried to find a place for them in a post-war society that was caught between dictatorship and democracy. To make matters worse, the nobility were not mere victims of this development, but actively worked to promote it themselves. In fact, as has been demonstrated in this book, their actions often showed clear symptoms of a self-destructive streak.

Prince Tomasi di Lampedusa's celebrated novel *The Leopard* features a famous passage that describes the nobility as majestic 'leopards' who are about to be supplanted by the inferior 'jackals' and 'hyenas' in society.[12] However compelling this zoological image might be, it can hardly be said to apply to the German aristocracy after the First World War. Indeed, the nobility displayed very few leopard-like traits when they attempted to navigate the morass of democracy and dictatorship that emerged after 1918, or when the majority of them fought to gain leading positions among the clans of hyenas that swiftly took control in the aftermath of the global conflict. Of course, it is not possible to make blanket claims about the aristocracy as a whole. After all, certain sections of the nobility—and the weakest parts of the minor nobility in particular—were responsible for the lion's share of the transformation that gripped members of their class. This statement is backed up by a number of aristocratic sources, which seem to suggest that the nobility's ideological shift was not precipitated by some mighty 'alliance of the elites',[13] but triggered by a bedraggled, fragmented, disorientated tangle of disenfranchized individuals who were desperate to find

solace and security in new coalitions. As such, they bore the hallmarks of Hannah Arendt's definition of the 'mob'—a gathering of individuals from all sections of society who have been stripped of the trappings of their status.

Even this image is incomplete, however. Indeed, it is important to note that some sections of the high nobility and the aristocracy's 'upper echelons' equally chose to walk the same ideological path as their less fortunate peers. This development was also encapsulated by Arendt, who pointed out that temporary alliances can emerge between the 'mob' and the 'elite' and declared that even dukes can find common ground with their coachmen based on a shared anti-Semitic idiom. In the 1930s, this type of alliance could be seen in every SA clubhouse, in every SS unit, in Franconian castles, in paramilitary training camps, in East Prussian manor houses, in Munich's clubs, and in salons and hotel lobbies in Berlin. Traditionally speaking, the loftiest strata of the nobility had fought the hardest to defend their autonomy from the state. As a result, by the time the Hohenzollern princes started wearing Nazi uniforms and the grandest dukes, princes, and princesses began supporting the 'mob', it had become increasingly difficult to locate opposition to National Socialism among the historical ranks of the aristocracy as a whole.

Of course, private little pockets of resistance to the Nazis undoubtedly did exist throughout the land. Nevertheless, astonishingly little is known about these islands of opposition so far. Most of the available information about the noblemen and noblewomen who refused to be beguiled by the *Volksgemeinschaft*'s siren song concerns the noble members of the German Resistance—a group whose towering life stories have been told hundreds of times and are replete with all the virtues and motifs that still fuel the public's fascination with the aristocracy to this day. Such outstanding individuals were not the only examples of noble opposition to the National Socialists, however. In fact, many glittering, headstrong, often fascinating aristocrats also defied the Nazi regime in a number of less celebrated ways from their country estates, from their castles and private residences, or from within the sheltered circles of their closest confidants.

The tide of successful biographies that are still being published about aristocratic members of the Resistance shows absolutely no signs of abating. There are various good reasons for this, of course. At the same time, however, even specialists would find it hard to name a mere handful of biographies about SA Führers, SS generals, Gestapo officers, Nazi ideologues, *Wehrmacht*

officers, Nazi diplomats, *Einsatzgruppen* officers, or masterminds of the colonization in Eastern Europe who harked from the nobility's ranks. Indeed, no systematic studies have ever been written about such individuals themselves. To make matters worse, very little is known about the grey areas in which headstrong noble *Eigensinn* resulted in countless little frictions and led aristocrats to thread a variety of winding paths between perseverance, collaboration, compromise, and resistance. Although there may be good commercial reasons for these deficiencies, there are no historical grounds for this shortage of more problematic aristocratic accounts. Moreover, the resulting imbalance has a number of serious consequences. For one thing, it warps readers' impressions of the nobility's political make-up. And more importantly, it hampers investigations into which groups opposed the Nazis after 1933, and which groups facilitated Hitler's rise to power and kept the Third Reich afloat until 1945.

Needless to say, the types of aristocrats that have dominated the pages of this book were not the only nobles that existed in twentieth-century Germany. In contrast to the vociferous figures who became increasingly radicalized after 1918, however, these other, far less conspicuous aristocrats are much more difficult to detect. The sources that keep their memories alive are hard to find, have been lost for good, or are kept under lock and key in a number of private noble archives. In spite of these challenges, this book has tried to give space to both strands of Germany's aristocratic history. Indeed, after weaving a narrative about the orientation of the most politically relevant noble groups—collections of individuals about which a surprising amount of detail is already known—it also attempted to touch upon the far less visible, far more complex spectrum of figures who deviated from the prevailing aristocratic trends. These latter individuals lived out their often overlooked, often fascinating lives in a wide variety of worlds. Some lived in the capital city, for example, while others lived out on the land; some were extremely wealthy, while others were gripped by relative poverty; and some dedicated themselves to academia, while others were drawn to adventure.

The history of this second cohort—a diverse group that mainly stayed out of the political limelight and can, in truth, hardly be described as a 'group' at all—remains largely unwritten to this day. Their tales are discernible to those who look closely enough, however. Indeed, their names crop up in old noble autobiographies and forgotten historical tomes[14] and they are gradually taking shape as marginal figures in newer works on the

Resistance.[15] Recent special studies that did not set out to investigate the nobility at all have also started stumbling upon treasure troves of these quietly defiant aristocrats and spotting connections between individual figures who have never been linked together before.[16] As more and more is known about them, it is becoming increasingly apparent that their headstrong, dissenting lives stood in stark, positive contrast to the more problematic trends that dominated the aristocracy overall. Despite such encouraging signs, however, writing the history of the entire nobility in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich is still a task that is a very long way from being complete.

The aristocrats who joined the Resistance were the bearers of a deep-rooted, deliberate tradition of opposition to the excessively powerful state that harked back to the noble *Frondeurs* who defied Louis XIV's centralized might in the 1600s.[17] A southern, Catholic variant of this tradition was represented in the Resistance by the Stauffenberg brothers, the two siblings with whom the memory of 20 July 1944 is most tightly bound. Southern aristocrats did not have a monopoly on noble defiance, however. Indeed, the Kreisau Circle—the most glitteringly intellectual hub of conservative resistance—included Count Helmuth James von Moltke and Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg, two key figures who were scions of prominent, ancient Prussian military clans. The group of officers who attempted to overthrow Hitler by force between 1940 and 1944 also boasted a number of outstanding aristocrats from the inner circles of old Prussian landed and military dynasties, including Count Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg, Erwin von Witzleben, Baron Rudolf-Christoph von Gersdorff, Henning von Tresckow, Axel von dem Bussche-Streithorst, Fabian von Schlabrendorff, and Ewald Heinrich von Kleist.[18] This impressive group of noblemen likely exhibited four traits that were typical of their milieu. Firstly, they maintained an ambivalent relationship with the state. Secondly, they demonstrated an impenetrable sense of self-confidence that the noble ruling habitus was in a particularly advantageous position to provide. Thirdly, they existed in a close-knit circle of individuals whose mutual trust was based on shared codes and experiences, a common idiom, and a jointly held stock of views. And fourthly, they were all very close to positions of power within the National Socialist apparatus itself.[19]

A final tradition that becomes apparent in the context of the Resistance is the aristocracy's masterful ability to frame the achievements of exceptional individuals as evidence of the merits of the nobility as a whole. As was

demonstrated in the very first chapter of this book, non-nobles have facilitated this project for hundreds of years and continue to do so to this day. In fact, even many of the most empirically valuable new studies about aristocrats in the Resistance still echo the same rose-tinted self-portrayals known as *Grafenerzählungen* ('lordly stories') that the nobility are most desirous to present. In so doing, they either downplay or simply ignore recent findings about the actual history of the aristocracy in the twentieth century.[20] Although only the authors themselves can say exactly why they do this, the abiding popularity of such tales is rather easy to explain. Indeed, readers of all stripes yearn for straightforward stories of exemplary figures who remain unsullied by ambivalence or evil. Happily for the aristocracy, they have not yet run out of narratives of idealized 'nobility' or biographies of outstanding individuals—figures who exhibit qualities that everyone desires but no one can attain—that continue to give audiences what they want to hear right up to the present day.

The nobility often transmit legends about themselves in glittering anecdotes that are laden with metaphors. This book began with one such tale that told the story of Count Stauffenberg's execution in 1944. Although highly compelling, some of the details of this particular version of the legend are founded on rather shaky ground. Other accounts of the incident are less sure that an officer really placed himself between Stauffenberg and the firing squad's bullets, for example, and it is unclear what Stauffenberg's last words actually were. One thing that is certain, however, is that the precise series of events that appeared in Bryan Singer's filmic portrayal could not possibly have taken place, as any ballistics expert would be able to point out.

Legends are merely stories that people agree on because they are captivating, and tales are told because they are engrossing, not necessarily because they are true. Indeed, the compelling nature of Singer's Hollywoodian version of the event—a rendition that presents Stauffenberg as a daring, powerful, almost superhuman figure who is able and willing to pit himself against an apocalyptic dictatorship—means that it will likely remain fixed in the collective memory for many decades to come. As arguably the most influential retelling of the incident, the film's narrative has also made a significant contribution to promoting an aristocratic mythology that has been many centuries in the making. In fact, even if the screenwriters were unaware of what they were doing, their script erected a monument to the same noble tradition that first arose when stories started circulating about the *Frondeurs*' own defiance of the state.

This highly dramatic scene that has immortalized the deeds of Stauffenberg and Haeften, his adjutant, actually shares a heritage with another heroic tale that has been heralding the German aristocracy's unique ability to face down injustice for around 250 years. The narrative in question originated in the eighteenth century and has been recounted time and time again in various guises throughout the intervening decades. It was swapped by noble conservatives in the nineteenth century, for example, told by the conspirators of 20 July 1944, and even formed part of the mythology that sprang up around the establishment of the current German Republic. The story goes as follows. In 1760, during the Seven Years' War, the Prussian King Frederick II ordered Johann Friedrich Adolf von der Marwitz—the commander of an elite regiment who had previously distinguished himself as an outstanding military leader—to go and plunder Hubertusburg, a palace in Saxony. Unexpectedly, the commander chose to disregard this particular order from his king. After remarking that the residence could be ransacked by a mercenary officer and that a soldier of his calibre was not required for the task, Marwitz turned around and withdrew back to his estate. Following his (unrelated) death in 1781, his nephew added an inscription to his gravestone that extolled his heroic deeds and ended with the famous sentence 'Wählte Ungnade, wo Gehorsam nicht Ehre brachte' ('Chose disgrace where obedience brought no honour'). This epitaph, which has been quoted tirelessly ever since, provides yet another example of how the aristocracy are able to use tales of exceptional independence and of their almost anarchic streak to present themselves as the upstanding, *Frondeur*-like opponents of dictatorships and the all-powerful, centralized state.

As with many aristocratic narratives, however, the details of the Marwitz anecdote are perhaps not as positive as they might at first have seemed. Indeed, it almost goes without saying that—like most other glowing tales of noble deeds—the many iterations of the Marwitz story are based on rather uneven ground.[21] It seems, for example, that the actual consequences of his 'daring' disobedience were rather mild, and that Marwitz might actually have won some of the booty from the ransacked castle later on in a game of cards with the man who did the job in his stead. In light of the 'plundering' that took place in the name of the Third Reich, this anecdote might even be seen to backfire on the nobility somewhat, portraying them as a group who are happy to let other 'inferior' beings do their dirty work while also taking a share in the spoils themselves. As with the story of Stauffenberg's death, however, such mundane details tend to fade into obscurity. Ultimately, it is

the narrative's anarchic power and the glimpses of 'bearing' and humanity it provides that remain the most lastingly memorable, fascinating elements of the tale.

Stubbornly defending one's own interests and reputation at all costs—even when it requires one to challenge the authority of the state—is a central theme that can be detected throughout the history of the nobility as a whole. Of course, it would be a mistake to let negative, self-serving traits obscure the highly ethical, exceedingly moral, oft-quoted motives that also inspired the noble Resistance members to forge ahead with their cause. If historians are to understand the uniquely noble way of dealing with the world in the twentieth century, however, these less laudable impulses must be taken into account alongside more honourable attributes. After all, although there were a handful of individual aristocrats who could live up to the semi-fictionalized portrayals of Marwitz and Stauffenberg in the post-war period, the fact that the overwhelming majority of their peers made a substantial contribution to the rise of the Nazi dictatorship is impossible to overlook.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 442–4, 598–9.
2. Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokatie*, 254; Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 106–16, 326–40.
3. Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*.
4. The most important pioneering studies include Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', and Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*.
5. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*. The original German version of this book included various elements that have been omitted from the present English translation for readability's sake. In addition to discussions on methodology, these included a portrayal of the historical developments that took place during the era of the German Empire, sections on the Catholic aristocratic associations, and analyses of a range of smaller noble groups.
6. For the current state of research, see: *Adel, Aristokratie*, 1–14; Reif, 'Der Adel im "langen 19. Jahrhundert" '; Conze/Wienfort (eds), *Adel und Moderne*, 1–18; Malinowski, 'Their Favorite Enemy'; Wienfort, 'Adlige Handlungspielräume'; Menning, 'Adlige Lebenswelten'.
7. Particular updates have been made to my analysis of both the high nobility and the minor nobility (a group that was characterized by its rural lifestyle and military outlook). Key works that have examined the history of the German nobility since my original book was published in 2003 include: Pomp, *Bauern und Großgrundbesitzer*; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*; Westernhagen, *Von der Herrschaft zur Gefolgschaft*; Wedel-Parlow, *Ostelbischer Adel*; Pyta, *Hindenburg*; Jones, 'Franz von Papen'; Jones and Pyta (eds), *'Ich bin der letzte Preuße'*; Gasteiger, *Kuno von Westarp*; Winkler, *Untergang auf Raten*. For an international comparison, see: Urbach, *European Aristocracies*.
8. D'Almeida, *High Society*.
9. Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*; Urbach, 'Zwischen Aktion und Reaktion'; Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*; Machtan, *Der Kaisersohn*; Malinowski, 'Ent-Schädigungen'; Büschel, *Hitlers adliger Diplomat*.
10. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 358–421; Raasch, *Adeligkeit, Katholizismus*; Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg, *Adel und Nationalsozialismus*.

11. Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*; Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*.
12. Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*.
13. Karlauf, *Stauffenberg*; Brakelmann, *Helmuth James von Moltke*; Brakelmann, *Peter Yorck von Wartenburg*; Vollmer, *Doppelleben*; Vollmer/Broder-Keil, *Stauffenbergs Gefährten*; Möckelmann, *Hannah von Bredow*; Harpprecht, *Die Gräfin*; Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*.
14. Wienfort, 'Adlige Frauen'; Malinowski, '"Wer schenkt uns wieder Kartoffeln?"'; Singer, *Arme adlige Frauen*; Enzensberger, *Hammerstein oder der Eigensinn*; Malinowski/Reichardt, 'Die Reihen fest geschlossen?'; Conze, 'Adel unter dem Totenkopf'.
15. Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"'; Jones, 'The Limits of Collaboration'.
16. Seelig, *Alltagsadel*; Reif, 'Rezension von: *Michael Seelig*'; Conze, 'Aufstand des preußischen Adels'; Conze, 'Der Edelmann als Bürger?'; Donig, *Adel in Schlesien*; Langelüddecke, *Alter Adel*.
17. Lieven, *The Aristocracy in Europe*, 13; Reif, *Adel, Aristokratie*, 328–38; Leonhard/Wieland (eds), *What makes the Nobility Noble?*, 7–34.
18. Tacke, 'Es kommt also darauf an'; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 21–7; Seelig, *Alltagsadel*; Matzerath, *Adelsprobe*, 11, 457–60; Frie, *Friedrich August Ludwig von der Marwitz*, 35.
19. The concept of the 'military clan' was developed by Marcus Funck. See: Funck, 'Meaning' and Funck, 'Schock'.
20. Reif, '"Adeligkeit"', 324.
21. *Der Schwur* (written in early July 1944), in Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 396–8, 463–72, quotation 396. English translation from Hoffmann, *Behind Valkyrie*, 342.
22. Schildt, 'Radikale Antworten'; Kraus, 'Altkonservativismus'; Kondylis, *Konservativismus*, 469–94; Stegmann, 'Vom Neokonservativismus zum Protofaschismus'; Eley, *Reshaping the German Right*; Eley, 'Origins, Post-Conservatism'; Flemming, 'Konservatismus'; Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit*.
23. Malinowski/Funck, 'Masters of Memory'; Malinowski/Funck, 'Geschichte von Oben'.
24. Reif, '"Adeligkeit"'; Malinowski/Funck, 'Geschichte von oben'; Menning, 'Adlige Lebenswelten'; Tacke, 'Es kommt also darauf an'; Kocka, 'Das europäische Muster', 9–75.
25. 'Habitus' is the term that social scientists and historians have used to describe the ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions through which individuals from a particular group perceive—and react to—the social world around them. See: Bourdieu, *Outline*, and Lizardo, 'The Cognitive Origins'.
26. Wienfort, 'Adlige Handlungspielräume', 418–19; Tacke, 'Es kommt also darauf an', 92–5; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 12–17; Leonhard/Wieland (eds), *What makes the Nobility Noble?*.
27. Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*. English translation from Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 128.

1. DEFINING 'NOBILITY'

1. Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 107.
2. Heine, *Reisebilder*, 181.
3. Werner von Alvensleben, letter from 1931, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Neugattersleben, Nr. 225, Fol. 441.
4. Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 15.
5. Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 10.
6. Bülow family newsletter, 1926, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H v. Bülow, Nr. 52, Fol. 1.
7. Speech by Baron Wilhelm von Reitzenstein, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle', 9.
8. Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 352.
9. Maurer, *Biographie des Bürgers*, 255–66; Hettling, 'Die persönliche Selbständigkeit', 57–78.
10. Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 38; Renn, *Adel im Untergang*, 27.
11. Nora, 'Mémoire et Histoire', XVII–XLII.
12. Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 29.
13. Braun, *Memoiren einer Sozialistin*, 12; Dönhoff, *Namen, die keiner mehr nennt*, 16.
14. Nostitz, *Aus dem alten Europa*, 13f., 28f.; *Arnim, Als Brandenburg*, 29–31; Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 17; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 20; Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 13; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*; Dönhoff, *Namen, die keiner mehr nennt*, 17.
15. LHAM-AW, Rep. H Stolberg-Wernigerode, O, L, Nr. 8, Fol. 18–21.
16. Löwenstein's denazification questionnaire, in BayHStA, GKE, vol. 20.
17. LHAM, Rep. E v. Bülow, vols 30, 50, 52, and 90.
18. BLHA, Rep. 37, Friedersdorf, Nr. 259, 1–4; Seckendorff, *Gelebt und gewebt*, 44; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 123.
19. Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 173–200; Wienfort, 'Gerichtsherrschaft, Fideikommiss', 90–113.
20. Statutes of the Bismarck family association from 1904 (quotation) and 1939 (see particularly §4), in LAG, Rep. 38d, Karlsburg, Nr. 1062 and 1076.
21. Comment from 1923, in LHAM-AW, Rep. E v. Bülow, Nr. 50, 175.
22. Reif, '"Erhaltung adligen Stamm"', 275–309.
23. Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 148–88; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 190–4.
24. Simmel, 'Exkurs über den Adel', 824.
25. Malinowski/Funck, 'Masters of Memory', 86–103; Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 344–55.
26. Walter von Bogen, undated publication, 'Der neue Weg der DAG', in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS'.
27. Baron Wilhelm von Reitzenstein, speech of 5 October 1931, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle'.
28. Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreußen*, 57.

29. Frie, *von der Marwitz*, 9–27, 333–41; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 194–7.
30. Simmel, 'Exkurs über den Adel', 824.
31. Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 176.
32. Halbwachs, *Das kollektive Gedächtnis*, 320.
33. Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 148–64, 314; Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 119f., Seckendorff, *Gelebt und gewebt*, *passim*.
34. Schiller, *Vom Rittergut zum Großgrundbesitz*, 299–333, 499–512.
35. Flemming, 'Bewaffnung des "Landvolks"', 7–36. The common aristocratic image of the landed estate as a place of romantic still lifes and melancholic retreat was immortalized in the novels of Theodor Fontane.
36. Baron A. von Redwitz, speech at a DAG conference, 24 April 1924, in AVBG, folder 'Bodenreform 1923–1932'.
37. Oldwig von Uechtritz, 'Land und Stadt', in DAB 1890, 21.
38. Kleist-Schmenzin, 'Adel und Preußentum', 379.
39. Franz von Papen, speech of 12 August 1922, in Keinemann, *Vom Krummstab zur Republik*, 391.
40. Rittmeister a. D. von Ramin, 'Die Stellung des Adels in Staat und Volk', (10/11 December 1932), in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Korrespondenz 24/34'.
41. Geulen, 'Center Parcs', 257–82.
42. Budde, *Weg ins Bürgerleben*, 90.
43. Erich Wentscher, 'Berliner Finanzadel', in *Archiv für Sippenforschung*, vol. 11, 1929, 403f.
44. Lehndorff, *Menschen, Pferde*, 26; Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben*, 130; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 18.
45. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Eine Idee*, 28; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 23; Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 23; Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Erinnerungen*, 18; Wilmowsky, *Rückblickend möchte ich sagen*, 187; Schoenaich, *Mein Damaskus*, 220; Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 78.
46. Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 163; Stackelberg, *Verwehte Blätter*, 99; Bernstorff, *Erinnerungen und Briefe*, 13; Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 331; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 353–6.
47. Puhle, *Agrarische Interessenpolitik*, 275.
48. Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 228; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 241f.; Bernstorff, *Erinnerungen und Briefe*, 13f.; Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 10; Guttenberg, *Beim Namen gerufen*, 22f.
49. Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 18–21; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 23, 26–8; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 325.
50. Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 19, 328; Hutten, *Im Luftschloß*, 117; Nostitz, *Aus dem alten Europa*, 13f.; Lehndorff, *Menschen, Pferde*, 286f.; Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 10, 263; Dönhoff, *Namen, die keiner mehr nennt*, 17f.; Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*, 225.
51. Description by Heinrich Laube, 1833, quoted in Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 3, 805.

52. Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverrräters*, 40f.; Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben*, 51; Abercron, *Offizier und Luftfahrtpionier*, 40. Cf. the interpretation in Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, vol. 1, 13–54.
53. Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 177; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 70f.; Killinger, *Ernstes und Heiteres*, foreword; Lehndorff, *Menschen, Pferde*, 59f.
54. Lehndorff, *Menschen, Pferde*, 100f.; Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 29–31; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 75; Hentig, *Mein Leben*, 250.
55. Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 116; Killinger, *Ernstes und Heiteres*, foreword; Salm, *Ein fürstliches Leben*, 61ff.; Maltzan, *Schlage die Trommel*, 35; Eulenburg-Hertefeld, *Aus 50 Jahren*, 2f.; Reibnitz, *Im Dreieck*, 126, 133. Photograph of the saddle in Pohl/Wilderotter (eds), *Der letzte Kaiser*, 129.
56. Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 23; Oldenburg, *Erinnerungen*, 212.
57. Theilemann, *Adel im grünen Rock*, 74–111; Tacke, 'Die "Nobilitierung" von Rehbock und Fasan', 223–48.
58. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 22; Gerlach, *Von rechts nach links*, 35f.
59. Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 373–80.
60. Salm, *Ein fürstliches Leben*, 38–41; Gerlach, *Erinnerungen eines Junkers*, 36; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 23; Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 34; Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 175; Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 40f.; Stahlberg, *Als Preußen noch Preußen war*, 176–9.
61. Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 108.
62. Seiffert, *Junker*, 263–75; Spenkuch, *Das Preußische Herrenhaus*, 285; Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 156.
63. For a discussion of the 'walk in the woods' as a right-wing intellectual construct with pseudo-aristocratic overtones, see Niethammer, *Posthistoire*, 89–104.
64. Ortega y Gasset, *Aufstand der Massen*, quoted in Theilemann, *Adel im grünen Rock*, 55.
65. Theilemann, *Adel im grünen Rock*, 61–88.
66. 'Für Berlin', in DAB 1900, 794f.
67. Wilhelm II, *Aus meinem Leben*, 34; Reischach, *Unter drei Kaisern*, 46–9; Freytag-Loringhoven, *Menschen und Dinge*, 43; Deimling, *Aus der alten*, 28.
68. Frhr. von Lüninck, 'Adel und Staat', lecture at an 'aristocratic youth gathering' (*Jungadelstagung*) in Heidelberg, 16/17 May 1931, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815.
69. Freytag-Loringhoven, *Menschen und Dinge*, 109; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 229f.; Selchow, *Hundert Tage*, 16, 10f.; Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 125, 165, 169.
70. Lenger, *Werner Sombart*, 136–42; Zimmermann/Reulecke (eds), *Die Stadt als Moloch?*.
71. H. von Knebel Doeberitz, 'Großstadtbildung und ihre Folgen', in DAB 1909, 290–2, 305–7, quotation 307. Cf. H von Knebel Doeberitz, 'Agrarstaat oder Industriestaat?', in ibid., 90–2, 138–40.
72. Puschner, *Die völkische Bewegung*, 115–19.
73. Adolf Reinecke, 'Entartung und Verfall—Das Hauptstück der völkischen Frage', in Heimdall 12 (1907), 14–18.

74. 'Corn mills': Eugen Fischer, 'Eugenik und Anthropologie. Der Untergang der Kulturvölker im Lichte der Biologie', in WAB, Nr. 4–6/1929, 49–63, quotation 61–2.
75. Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 290, 292, 401; Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 68.
76. Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*, 125.
77. 'Das Land und Berlin', in DAB 1897, 156–8.
78. Salburg, *Deutsches Bilderbuch*, 182f., 264; Zobeltitz, *Ich habe so gern*, 202f.; Bülow, *Aus verklungenen Zeiten*, 9–12, 40f.; Nostitz, *Aus dem alten Europa*, 56–8; Unruh, *Ehe die Stunde schlug*, 91.
79. Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 136–38; Seckendorff, *Gelebt und gewebt*, 33; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 88f.; Zobeltitz, *Ich habe so gern*, 172, 208; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 195–9.
80. Liebermann, *Erinnerungen eines deutschen Juden*, 170.
81. Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall*, 54–71, 112–38, 559–72; Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords*, 21–40, 417–29.
82. Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords*; Lieven, *Abschied von Macht*, 147–53; Brelot, *La noblesse réinventée*, 748–66; Jocteau, 'Un censimento', 113–45.
83. Reischach, *Unter drei Kaisern*, 169–71; Reif, 'Hauptstadtentwicklung und Elitenbildung', 694–6; Spenkuch, *Das Preußische Herrenhaus*, 474–80.
84. Augustine, *Die wilhelminische Wirtschaftselite*, 193–214; Augustine, *Patricians and Parvenus*; Reif/Feichtinger, *Berliner Villenleben*; Reif, '"Tout Berlin"'.
85. Heinrich von Gleichen, 'Adel—eine politische Forderung', in *Preußische Jahrbücher*, August 1924, 131–45, quotation 139.
86. Musil, *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, vol. 1, chapter 23.
87. Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 108.
88. Schulenburg, *Weibliche Kadetten*; Reventlow, *Autobiographisches*, 7–28; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 46–54; Diemel, *Adelige Frauen*, 36, 56–8; Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 319–29.
89. Spenkuch, 'Herrenhaus und Rittergut', 386.
90. Rumschöttel, 'Bildung und Herkunft', 81–131; Reif, *Adel im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 80f.
91. Buchsteiner, 'Pommerscher Adel', 359–63; Reif, *Westfälischer Adel*, 315–69; Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 287–329.
92. Hull, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II and the Liebenberg Circle', 193–20; Gusejnova, 'Adel als Berufung', 252–80.
93. Eulenburg-Hertefeld, *Aus 50 Jahren*, 50; Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 33; Eckardstein, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 19, 23, 27; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 31, 45, 58f., 61, 71, 77, 79, 136, 153; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 21–31, 38, 42f., 77, 88f., 123f., 146, 243–5; Hohenlohe, *Aus meinem Leben*, 82; Löwenstein, *Abenteurer der Freiheit*, 9f.; Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Eine Idee*, 28, 32f., 59, 100–2. Cf. Spenkuch, *Das Preußische Herrenhaus*, 267–72.
94. ASB 1908, 67–9, 79f., 91f., 102f., 114f., 126f., 137f., 150f.
95. Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 4, 21–7.

96. Reif, 'Die Junker', *passim*.
97. Stolberg-Wernigerode, *Die unentschiedene Generation*, 197.
98. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 84f.; Stark, *Banned in Berlin*, 211.
99. Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 123–5.
100. Vierhaus, 'Bildung', 508–51; Assmann, *Arbeit am nationalen Gedächtnis*; Hettling/Hoffmann, *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel*, 14–16.
101. Maurer, *Biographie des Bürgers*, 439–517; Budde, *Weg ins Bürgerleben*, 91, 117–19, 164, 335, 339; Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 382–9.
102. Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*, 125; Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 57. For similar accounts, see Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreußen*, 58–9; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 168–71; Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 38.
103. Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 20, 25; Hentig, *Mein Leben*, 8; Unruh, *Ehe die Stunde schlug*, 21–3; Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 112f., 138, 142f.
104. Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 70, 142f.; Bismarck, *Erinnerungen einer 95-Jährigen*, 80–2; Bismarck, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, 36–8.
105. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 63; Rohan, *Europa*, 11; Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Eine Idee*, 58; Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 24; Brackel, *Mein Leben*, 31.
106. Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 20, 25; Schaumburg, *Zwischen Krone und Kerker*, 40f.; Salm, *Ein fürstliches Leben*, 56f. For similar accounts, see Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 128; Reischach, *Unter drei Kaisern*, 14f.; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 62f.; Kessler, *Gesichter und Zeiten*, 142.
107. Reif, *Westfälischer Adel*, 150–2, 336–64.
108. Maurer, *Biographie des Bürgers*, 494–511.
109. Wilmowsky, *Rückblickend möchte ich sagen*, 28–33; Lehndorff, *Ostpreußisches Tagebuch*, 219–24; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 36f.; Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. 4, 114–26; Eckardstein, *Lebenserinnerungen*, 90; Hohenlohe, *Aus meinem Leben*, 15, 19–33; Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 95; Prittwitz, *Zwischen Petersburg und Washington*, 22; Schoenaich, *Mein Damaskus*, 52; Eulenburg, *Aus 50 Jahren*, 57, 60, 203–6.
110. Correspondence between Bernhard von der Marwitz and Baron Goetz von Seckendorff, in BLHA, Rep. 37, Friedersdorf, vol. 781.
111. Harald von Königswald to Bodo von der Marwitz, 16 November 1929, in BLHA, Rep. 37, Friedersdorf, Nr. 384, Fol. 43.
112. Königswald, *Stirb und Werde!*.
113. Oldenburg, *Erinnerungen*, 6; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 113.
114. Johst, *Schlageter*, 26.
115. Oldwig von Uechtritz, 'Land und Stadt', in DAB 1890, 4–6, 20–2, 35, quotations 35.
116. Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben*, 64.
117. Kleist-Schmenzin, 'Adel und Preußentum', 379.
118. Dr von Trotha-Treyden, 'Die Teilnahme des Adels an den akademischen Berufen', in DAB 1921, 19–20; Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 246–50.
119. Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 197–226.

120. Funck, 'Schock', 151–60.
121. Brakelmann, *Peter Yorck von Wartenburg*, 21–63.
122. Mombauer, *Helmuth von Moltke*; Jarausch, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*; Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 300; Schulenburg, 'Deutscher Adel und deutsche Kultur'.
123. Fürst Eulenburg, 'Quem deus perdere vult—dementit', (unpublished text, December 1918), in BLHA, Rep 37, Liebenberg, Nr. 653, 6–7.
124. Unruh, *Ehe die Stunde schlug*, 21–23; Freytag-Loringhoven, *Menschen und Dinge*, 12–13, 36–41; Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 14, 33, 36.
125. Ulrich, 'Der deutsche Offizier stirbt', 11–20.
126. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, II, 42; Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, 201–27.
127. Wegner, *Hitlers politische Soldaten*, 149–71.
128. Wolzogen, *Links um*, 38–40.
129. Ludwig Flügge, 'Die rassenbiologische Bedeutung des Adels und das Prinzip der Immunisierung', in *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 5/1926, 403–9.
130. Magnus von Levetzow to William von Levetzow, 24 November 1927, in Granier, *Levetzow*, 248.
131. Stefan George, quoted in Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 27.
132. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Erinnerungen*, 72, 292, 296.
133. Wilhelm II, *Aus meinem Leben*, 24–33; Röhl, *Wilhelm II. Die Jugend des Kaisers*, 134–87.
134. Letters by Löwenstein and Galen of 12 and 20 October 1928, in WAAM, Nl. Galen, Nr. 34.
135. Max von Pfetten, 'Stellung und Aufgabe des Adels in bezug zum Volksganzen', in DAB 1921, 193–7.
136. Moeller van den Bruck, in *Gewissen*, 17 March 1920, 1–2.
137. Baron Wilhelm von Reitzenstein, speech in Aystetten, 25 October 1931 (emphasis in original), in DAAM, DAG, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle 24–34'; Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 36–7; Malinowski/Funck, '"Charakter ist alles"'.
138. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 10; Görlitz, *Junker*, 306–9.
139. Maurer, *Biographie des Bürgers*, 378–435; Reitmayer, *Bankiers im Kaiserreich*, 206–24.
140. Alois Fürst zu Löwenstein, 'Aufgaben des Adels in der Gegenwart', in 'Adel', *Staatslexikon*, Freiburg 1926, vol. 1, column 44 (emphasis in original).
141. This phrase originated in a famous novel by Robert Musil. Musil, *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, vol. 1, see particularly chapters 47 and 48.
142. Hettling/Hoffmann, *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel*, 347–8.
143. Ludwig Flügge, 'Die rassenbiologische Bedeutung des Adels', in *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 5/1926, 404.
144. Volkov, 'Soziale Ursachen', 146–65.
145. Reif, 'Die Junker', in François/Schulze (eds), *Erinnerungsorte*, vol. 1, 521.
146. Kondylis, *Konservativismus*, 169–81.
147. Buddensieg, *Villa Hügel*; Köhne-Lindenlaub, *Villa Hügel*; Reif, *Berliner Villenleben*; James, *Krupp*, 89–123.

148. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 26; Reibnitz, *Gestalten rings um Hindenburg*, 114.
149. Reibnitz, *Gestalten rings um Hindenburg*, 126.
150. Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*, 128; Einem, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten*, 19.
151. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 24, 56.
152. Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 94f., 194.
153. Hohenlohe, *Aus meinem Leben*, 390f., 291, 331.
154. Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 108–10, 251.
155. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 24f.; Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 24–6; Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreußen*, 60; Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*; Zobeltitz, *Ich habe so gern*, 203; Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 396f.; Oldenburg, *Erinnerungen*, 225–8; Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 85; Sachsen, *Mein Lebensweg*, 12; Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 15–18, 40–2, 346; Salburg, *Erinnerungen einer Respektlosen*, 222.
156. Dönhoff, *'Um der Ehre Willen'*, 77, 80–2, 100; Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 16; Schwerin, 'Dann sind's die besten Köpfe', 67.
157. Salm, *Ein fürstliches Leben*, 289; Wilhelm II, *Aus meinem Leben*, 211–16; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 76; Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 241; Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 97; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 27; Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 26; Bülow, *Erinnerungen*, 164; Hessen, *Der kristallene Lüster*, 37; Max Graf Spiegelfeld, 'Nachruf auf Franz Graf v. Merveldt', in WAB 1929, 141–4.
158. Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 18; Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreußen*, 104, 115, 144, 191, 209.
159. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 70; Augustine, *Patricians and Parvenus*, 219–26.
160. Hodenberg, 'Der Fluch des Geldsacks', 79–104.
161. Gehlen, 'Die Rolle des Lebensstandards'; Gehlen, 'Das Elitenproblem', 108, 19.
162. Neckel, *Status und Scham*.
163. For the speech Strasser gave on 10 May 1932, see Kissenkoetter, *Gregor Straßer und die NSDAP*, 83–7.
164. Moeller van den Bruck, 'Unser Stil ist die Haltung', in *Der Tag*, 3 July 1915; Moeller van den Bruck, *Der preußische Stil*.
165. Schwierskott, *Moeller, passim*; Stern, *Kulturpessimismus*, 248–66; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 11–50.
166. Reibnitz, *Gestalten rings um Hindenburg*, 135; Invitation to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg dated 14 January 1931, in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 2647.
167. 'Jugend unter sich—ohne Tanz. Ein Versuch.', in DAB, *Adlige Jugend* (DAB supplement), 1 February 1930, 7.
168. DAB 15 September 1931, 614; DAB 30 September 1933, 704.
169. This phrase was first uttered by Ernst Ludwig von Gerlach in 1851 in answer to the revolutionaries' criticism of the nobility. Quoted in Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*, 194.
170. For a discussion of the term 'military clans' and its analytical function, see Funck, 'Meaning', and Funck, *Kriegertum*.

171. Schoenermarck, *Helden-Gedenkmappe*; Schmettow, *Gedenkbuch des deutschen Adels*.
172. MGKE, 18 January 1920, 1.
173. Alex-Victor von Frankenberg und Ludwigsdorff, 'Präludium', in Schoenermarck, *Helden-Gedenkmappe*.
174. After-dinner speech by the 'Family Führer' (*Familienführer*) Friedrich von Bülow at the 'family gathering' (*Familientag)* of 8 July 1935, LHAM-AW, Rep. E v. Bülow, Nr. 52, Fol. 65–9.
175. Schoenaich, *Mein Damaskus*, 52; Liebermann, *Erinnerungen eines deutschen Juden*, 43; Preußen, *Im Strom der Geschichte*, 101; Hohenlohe, *Aus meinem Leben*, 19, 28; Salm, *Ein fürstliches Leben*, 27; Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 98; Müller, *Im Wandel einer Welt*, 97; Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 86; Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben*, 3, 66; Oettingen, *Abenteuer meines Lebens*, 10, 37, 44, 50; Selchow, *Hundert Tage*, 322f.; Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preußen, *Erinnerungen*, 345–7.
176. Guttenberg, *Beim Namen gerufen*, 17f.; Maltzan, *Schlage die Trommel*, 14; Salburg, *Erinnerungen einer Respektlosen*, 10; Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 28; Seckendorff, *Gelebt und gewebt*, 14.
177. Trepp, 'Emotion und bürgerliche Sinnstiftung', 23–55; Malinowski/Funck, 'Geschichte von oben', 241–2.
178. Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 288.
179. Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 201.
180. Salburg, *Erinnerungen einer Respektlosen*, 166.
181. 'Aufruf an den deutschen Adel!', in DAB 15 December 1921, 353 (front page). Around thirty prominent aristocrats signed the appeal, including Hindenburg and von Berg, the '*Adelsmarschall*' of the DAG.
182. Directive issued by Wilhelm I, 2 May 1874, quoted in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815.
183. 'Ritterlichkeit in alter und neuer Zeit', lecture by Count Franz von Galen at the general assembly of the Association of Catholic Nobles (VKE) in Münster, 1 September 1921, in WAAM, Galen, Nr. 51.
184. Erwein Frhr. von Aretin, 'Adel und Krone', in Aretin, 'Erster Rundbrief'.
185. Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 41.
186. Chytraeus-Auerbach, *Inszenierte Männerträume*.
187. W. von Hagen, 'Adel verpflichtet', in DAB 1921, 37; Hans Georg von Studnitz, 'Kann der Adel wieder führen?', in *Politik und Gesellschaft* 11/1932, 10–17.
188. Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, 136f.
189. Count Friedrich von Galen, speech to the Association of Catholic Nobles (VKE) in Münster, 12 February 1912, quoted in Keinemann, *Vom Krummstab zur Republik*, 29.
190. Erwein Frhr. von Aretin, 'Vom Adel in Bayern', in *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 5/1926, 385–91, quotation 387f.
191. Article commemorating the deceased Prince Carl Friedrich zu Öttingen-Wallerstein, in *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1931, 50.

192. Reinold von Thadden-Vahnerow, 'Der Adel in Norddeutschland', in *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 5/1926, 391–6.
193. Kleist-Schmenzin, 'Adel und Preußentum', 378–84.
194. Friedrich von Berg-Markienen, 'Die deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft', in *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 5/1926, 402–3.
195. Otto Frhr. von Taube, 'Vom deutschen Adel', in Aretin 'Erster Rundbrief', in FÖWA, VIII, 19.1c, Nr. 117; Baron Kurt von Reibnitz, 'Der Gotha', in *Querschnitt* 2/1928, 73.
196. Heinickel, *Adelsreformideen*, 73–114; Reif, 'Adelserneuerung und Adelsreform in Deutschland', 203–30.
197. Stein to Gneisenau, 17 August 1811, quoted in Freiherr vom Stein, *Briefe und amtliche Schriften*, vol. 3, 567.
198. Spenkuch, 'Herrenhaus und Rittergut', 375–403, quotation 384.
199. The liberal journalist Theodor Wolff described this aristocratic archetype as 'a pleasant group of liberalizing *grands seigneurs*'. See Spenkuch's discussion of Prince Hermann von Hatzfeld in Spenkuch, 'Herrenhaus und Rittergut', 252–76, 382–92. See also the professions of sympathy towards the *grands seigneurs* in Weber, 'Wahlrecht und Demokratie', 233–79. Lieven, *Abschied von Macht*, 53–70, 91–103; Reif, *Adel im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 11–15, 71–4, 89–96.
200. This contrast between the minor nobility's frugal mindset and the expansive ethos of the *grands seigneurs* also identifies what is perhaps the most significant dividing line within the German aristocracy as a whole. In the context of the twentieth century, such terminology can even usefully replace the distinction between the 'high' and the 'low' nobility that was previously used in historical discourse, but which was rendered largely obsolete by the changing economic fortunes of a number of noble groups.
201. Alois Fürst zu Löwenstein, 'Aufgaben des Adels in der Gegenwart', in 'Adel', *Staatslexikon* (Görres Society), Freiburg 1926, vol. 1, 44. (Emphasis added.)
202. Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 23; Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 11–12; Schwerin, 'Dann sind's die besten Köpfe', 19; Schiller, *Vom Rittergut zum Großgrundbesitz*, 242–54; Niemann, *Mecklenburgischer Großgrundbesitz*, 55.
203. Freytag-Loringhoven, *Menschen und Dinge*, 34.
204. Erwein Frhr. von Aretin, 'Adel und Krone', in Aretin, 'Erster Rundbrief'.
205. Simmel, 'Exkurs über den Adel', 825.
206. Berdahl, 'Preußischer Adel', 123–45.
207. Oldenburg, *Erinnerungen*, 72.
208. Tocqueville, introduction to Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 8.
209. Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 17; Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreußen*, 76; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 13; Erdödy, *Fast hundert Jahre*, 14; Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 107; Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 20; Gerlach, *Von rechts nach links*, 42; Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 14.
210. Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 179; Salburg, *Erinnerungen einer Respektlosen*, 15; Dönhoff, *Namen, die keiner mehr nennt*, 72;

Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 30, 209; Liliencron, *Krieg und Frieden*, 197; Oppen, *Lebensskizzen*, 162.

211. Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 61; Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Eine Idee*, 36; Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreußen*, 60, 158; Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 179; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 179; Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 15; Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 44, 67, 124; Kronprinzessin Cecilie, *Erinnerungen an den deutschen Kronprinzen*, 85; Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*, 145, 159; Maltzan, *Schlage die Trommel*, 32–4; Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 149; Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 44; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 97, 167.
212. Ludwig von Gerlach in a speech to parliament in the summer of 1848, quoted in Heidenreich (ed), *Politische Theorien des 19. Jahrhunderts*, 170.
213. Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 107.
214. Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 15; Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Eine Idee*, 36; Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*, 160; Lehndorff, *Ostpreußisches Tagebuch*, 175, 274; Lerchenfeld-Koefering, *Erinnerungen*, 6.
215. Dönhoff, *'Um der Ehre Willen'*, 64.
216. Lehndorff, *Ostpreußisches Tagebuch*, 175; Dönhoff, *'Um der Ehre Willen'*, 64; Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 58; Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 41.
217. Freytag-Loringhoven, *Menschen und Dinge*, 150; Tirpitz, *Erinnerungen*, 206; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 215.
218. Windisch-Graetz, *Helden und Halunken*, 10; Selchow, *Hundert Tage*, 75; Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 36, 213; Rheinbaben, *Kaiser, Kanzler*, 17.
219. Oldenburg-Januschau, *Erinnerungen*, 43–4. Oldenburg coined this phrase in a speech he gave to the *Reichstag* on 29 January 1910.
220. Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau coined the pejorative term 'talking shop' (*Quatschbude*) in 1910. Oldenburg, *Erinnerungen*, 109–11; Görlitz, *Junker*, 314; Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 226; Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 56.
221. Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 84–99, 412–14.
222. Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg to the Prussian Crown Prince, 18 April 1924, in BAP, 90 Mu 1, Nr. 3, 223.
223. W. von Hagen, 'Adel verpflichtet', in DAB 1921, 37.
224. von Bodelschwingh-Steinhauk in an inflammatory, anti-Semitic speech he gave at the DAG's *Adelstag* (noble congress) in 1921, in DAB 1921, 177–9, quotation 178.
225. Karl Anton Prinz von Rohan, 'Adel und Nation', *Archiv für Sippenforschung*, vol. 2, 1929, 62; Ernst Domeier, 'Führung oder Herrschaft?', in DAB 1 January 1933, 5.
226. Mommsen, 'Schulenburg', in Mommsen, *Alternative*, 245–53; Schulenburg's unfinished, unpublished text from 1943, reproduced in Heinemann, *Rebell*, 226–41.

227. 'Die Adelsreform und ihre Träger', in DAB 1890, 573; Baranowski, *Sanctity of Rural Life*, 68–78.
228. Mussolini's response to a question from a Finnish journalist, quoted in Reibnitz, *Im Dreieck*, 26.

2. THE APOCALYPSE AND BEYOND

1. Excerpt from an after-dinner speech the prince delivered to his sons after their return from the First World War. Quoted in Dohna, *Adel*, 16.
2. Haffner, *Die verratene Revolution*; Rürup, 'Demokratische Revolution', 285f.
3. Text taken from an entry Thomas Mann made in his diary on 10 November 1918, quoted in Longerich, *Republik*, 80.
4. Troeltsch, *Spectator-Briefe*, 24.
5. Rosenberg, *Entstehung*, 235.
6. Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution*, 48–51.
7. Kolb, *Weimarer Republik*, 22; Winkler, *Weimar*, 33–68; Wehler, *Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 4, 148–30.
8. Schönpflug, *World on Edge*; Gerwarth, *November 1918*; Leonhard, *Der überforderte Frieden*.
9. Ilsemann, *Kaiser*, vol. 1, 39.
10. For a detailed account, see Ilsemann, *Kaiser*, vol. 1, 36–49, quotation 45.
11. Diary entry by Sigurd von Ilsemann, 22 August 1934, quoted in Kohlrausch, 'Flucht', 67. English translation from Röhl, 'The emperor's new clothes', 32.
12. Machtan, *Abdankung*. The most precise analysis of the Kaiser's flight can be found in Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*, 302–85.
13. Tyrell ' "Trommler" '.
14. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 2, 421.
15. Afflerbach, *Auf Messers Schneide*, 458–506.
16. Wilhelm Kronprinz von Preußen, *Erinnerungen*, 304.
17. Graf zu Eulenburg-Wicken, 'Warum ging der Kaiser nach Holland?', in *Kreuzzeitung*, 29 August 1926.
18. Vietinghoff, 'Sie wissen nicht, was sie tun', in DAB 37/1919, 331, and *Kreuzzeitung*, 10 October 1919.
19. Cecil, *Wilhelm II*, vol. 2, 288; Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*, 325–34.
20. Declaration by Wilhelm II: foreword by Werner Conze in Westarp, *Ende*, 190.
21. Wilhelm II to Minister Drews on 1 November 1918, in Ilsemann, *Kaiser*, vol. 1, 31.
22. Schulenburg's memorandum regarding 9 November, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Karow, Nr. 219, 48–57.
23. Sösemann, 'Pardon', see particularly 79–81.
24. Ilsemann, *Kaiser*, vol. 1, 35.
25. Schulenburg's memorandum regarding 9 November, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Karow, Nr. 219, 56. Cf. Wilhelm Kronprinz von Preußen, *Erinnerungen*, 306f.

26. Schulenburg to Count von Arnim-Boitzenburg, 30 October 1918, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg.
27. Westarp, *Ende*, 47.
28. BAMA, N 266, Nr. 83; Cramon, *Schuld Hindenburgs*; Pomp, *Arnim*, 61.
29. Niemann, *Kaiser und Revolution*, 142f.
30. Westarp, *Ende*, 95.
31. Niemann, *Kaiser und Revolution*; Niemann, *Revolution von oben*.
32. Westarp, *Ende*, *passim*.
33. Westarp, *Ende*; Huber, *Verfassungsgeschichte*, vol. 5, see particularly 658–06; Cecil, *Wilhelm II*, vol. 2, 274–96.
34. Westarp, *Ende*, 177f.
35. Jones/Pyta (eds), *'Ich bin der letzte Preuße'*.
36. Hindenburg to Plessen, 15 July 1919, in Jones/Pyta (eds), *'Ich bin der letzte Preuße'*, 207.
37. Groener's account of 1 June 1922, in BayHStA, N 1101, Nr. 88, quotation 6.
38. Groener to Westarp, 2 February 1919, in BAP, 90 We 4, Nr. 190, 8f. Cf. Westarp, *Ende*, 146, and Kohlrausch, *Warlord*, 14–17.
39. Gutsche, *Wilhelm II*, 15; Thaer, *Generalstabsdienst*, 251f., 260; Huber, *Verfassungsgeschichte*, 705; see also Kohlrausch, 'Flucht', 80–9.
40. Kaehler, 'Problem', 291; Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*, 362–75.
41. Niemann, *Kaiser und Revolution*, 142; Thaer, *Generalstabsdienst*, 260; Westarp, *Ende*, 171f.; Huber, *Verfassungsgeschichte*, 705f. For a summary, see: Kohlrausch, *Warlord*, 41–7.
42. Holtzendorff, *Biographische Aufzeichnungen* (private archive of Henning von Holtzendorff, Hamburg), 17f.
43. Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*, 383; Kaehler/Michaelis/Sethe, 'Problem', 695–504.
44. Born in 1894, the woman Ehrhardt married in Neuruppin in 1927 was a princess from the Lutheran branch of her family (GHdA, F, 1951, 236).
45. Baron F. W. von Bissing, 10 December 1918, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Karow, Nr. 220, 3.
46. Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 26.
47. Stahlberg, *Als Preußen noch Preußen war*, 90.
48. Oppen, *Lebensskizzen*, 455.
49. Müldner to Schulenburg, 28 May 1919, in BAP, 90 Mu 1, vol. 1, 149.
50. Letter to his 'cousin' William von Levetzow, 24 September 1927, in Granier, *Levetzow*, 247; BAP, 90 Mu 1, vol. 1, 98f., 158–60. Reibnitz, *Im Dreieck*, 206–9.
51. Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 61f.; Winterfeldt, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens*, 248; Hohenlohe, *Aus meinem Leben*, 335–363, 382f.; Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 121, 124; Wilmowsky, *Rückblickend möchte ich sagen*, 59, 85; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 107f., 183; Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 73f., 115f.; Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 20, 23, 26, 123; Schaumburg, *Zwischen Krone und Kerker*, 35–7, Weizsäcker, *Erinnerungen*, 47.

52. Letters by Arnim-Boitzenburg, 15 December 1918 and 26 January 1919, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Karow, Nr. 220, 72, 98.
53. Arnim to Wilhelm II, 1 November 1918, letter reproduced in Arnim, *Arnim-Boitzenburg*, 361. Facsimilie of the letter-telegram of 5 November 1918 in Arnim, *Arnim-Boitzenburg*, 363f. Cf. Arnim 6 November 1918, presumably to Hindenburg, in LAM-AW, Rep. H Karow, Nr. 220, 27f.
54. My argument here follows the interpretation presented by Kohlrausch, see Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*, 378–86.
55. Friedrich Wilhelm Prinz zur Lippe, 'Prinzen heraus!', 16 July 1919, in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 533.
56. Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf*, 52.
57. Weber, *First War*, 28–200; Kershaw (1998), *Hitler 1889–1936*, 125–47.
58. Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen*. Cf. Soesemann, 'Der Verfall'.
59. Hiller Frhr. von Gaertringen, 'Zur Beurteilung', 138–85; Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*, 386–42; Hofmann, 'Obsoleter Monarchismus', 241–60.
60. Collection of thank-you letters, in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 2656. Quotation taken from a letter by the Bülow Family Association, 8 September 1929 (ibid.).
61. Stahlberg, *Als Preußen noch Preußen war*, 94f., Salm, *Ein fürstliches Leben*, 281f.
62. Letter by Arnim of 15 December 1918, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Karow, Nr. 220, 72.
63. Scheurig, *Kleist-Schmenzin*, 25–8, 102; Flemming, 'Konservativismus', 323–31.
64. Seating arrangements, 8 November 1926, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815.
65. F. von Grünberg to Count von Arnim-Boitzenburg, *c.*1925, quoted in Pomp, *Arnim*, 50.
66. Kuno Graf von Westarp, letter of 1919, in BAP, 90 We 4, vol. 190, 84.
67. Hoensbroech, *Wilhelms II. Abdankung und Flucht*; for the mismatch between Count Westarp's private and public comments, see: BAP, 90 We 4, vol. 230.
68. Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*; Hofmann, 'Obsoleter Monarchismus', 241–60.
69. BAP, 90 We 4, vol. 200, 34 and 43.
70. Reventlow, *Monarchie?*; Stapel, 'Königstreue, positiv rezensiert', in *Der Ring*, 38/1928, 727; Boog, *Graf Ernst zu Reventlow*.
71. Reventlow, *Monarchie?*, quotations 86, 100f., 104, 119. For a similar source, see: L. Frhr. von Viethinghoff-Scheel, *Grundzüge*, 22, 28, 37.
72. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, I, 250–3.
73. Newspaper report about a speech Darré gave in Altenesch (archive stamp: 28 May 1934), in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 1621 (emphasis in original).
74. Conze, *Adel*, 166f. For the function and exclusivity of aristocratic balls, cf. ibid., 334f.
75. Zollitsch, 'Adel'.
76. For the nobility's perception of these monarchist associations, see: DAB, 15 December 1921, 355. Hofmann, 'Wir sind das alte Deutschland', 60f.
77. Aretin, 'Adel', 520–41; Aretin, 'Die bayerische Regierung', 205–37; Donohoe, *Hitler's Conservative Opponents*; Dornheim, *Adel*; Endres, 'Der Bayerische'; Garnett, *Lion, Eagle and Swastika*.

78. Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg to Count Dietlof von Arnim, 18 March 1932, quoted in Pomp, *Arnim*, 45.
79. Mansel/Riotte (eds), *Monarchy and Exile*.
80. For the most recent works on the subject, see: Mühleisen, 'Das Testament Hindenburgs', and Pyta, 'Konstitutionelle Demokratie'.
81. Ritter, *Carl Goerdeler*, 308ff; Ulrich von Hassell, 21 December 1941, in Hassell, *Tagebücher*, 288–91, 134, 198.
82. Quoted in Reventlow, *Monarchie?*, 115.
83. Schulenburg to Arnim, 15 April 1928, 25 November 1928, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg.
84. Crown Prince Wilhelm to von Dryander, 14 May 1924, in GStAPK, Rep. 54, Nr. 21.
85. Schulenburg to Arnim, 10 December 1919, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg.
86. Schulenburg to Müldner, November 1920, BAP, 90 Mu 1, vol. 3, Fol. 75f.
87. Magnus von Levetzow to a 'cousin', 24 September 1927, quoted in Granier, *Levetzow*, 248. For a Westphalian perspective on this line of argument (which remained unchanged until 1933), see: Ferdinand Frhr. von Lüninck-Ostwig, 'Deutschland und die Monarchie', in DAB, 1 January 1933, 4. The same observer would later view the rise of the newly formed state as an 'inescapable self-evidence' (*zwangsläufige Selbstverständlichkeit*).
88. Diary entries by Andreas von Bernstorff-Wedendorf, June 1926 and March 1928, quoted in Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 164, 166.
89. Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*, 439, 441, 469–73; Hofmann, 'Obsoleter Monarchismus', 258–60.
90. Melgunov, *Der rote Terror in Rußland*; Ryan, 'Sacralization of Violence'; Gerwarth, 'Bolshevism', 40–52, Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 474–555; Mayer, *The Furies*.
91. Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*, 128–64.
92. Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 10f., 16f.; Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 48; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 58f., 69f.; Wilhelm Kronprinz von Preußen, *Erinnerungen*, 327; Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 111.
93. Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 46.
94. Moltke, 'Wie alles war, als ich klein war', 17; Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 30; Schaumburg, *Zwischen Krone und Kerker*, 36f.; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 108.
95. Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 16f.; Schulenburg, *Weibliche Kadetten*, 58f.; Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 32; also see particularly Stackelberg, *Verwehte Blätter*, 127–32.
96. Guttenberg, *Beim Namen gerufen*, 30ff.
97. Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 30f. The text describes a (failed) attempt that was made to kill his father with a pistol.
98. Clara von Arnim, *Der grüne Baum*, 99.
99. Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 64; cf. Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 164f.

100. Guttenberg, *Beim Namen gerufen*, 38f.; Stackelberg, *Verwehte Blätter*, 129; Oertzen, *Mein Leben*, 105f.
101. Cf. the letter by Prince Max Egon Fürstenberg of 21 May 1919 regarding one of his relatives/acquaintances who had been taken hostage, in FFAD, Hofverw., Fü.H, vol. bb II/4. Geyer, *Verkehrte Welt*, 50–129, 278–318.
102. Gilbhard, *Die Thule-Gesellschaft*, 116; Rose, *Thule-Gesellschaft*, 58–66.
103. Reproductions of the images can be found in Herz/Halfbrodt, *Revolution und Fotografie*, see particularly 183–92. Quotation: *Bayerischer Kurier*, 3/4 May 1919, quoted in ibid., 184.
104. Letter from Hans-Hasso von Veltheim to his mother, 13 November 1918, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Ostrau, II, 188.
105. Diary entry by Gerhard von Donop, 3 December 1918, in NWSAD, D 72, v. Donop, Nr. 3, 174–8.
106. Oldenburg, *Erinnerungen*, 208f; Görlitz, *Junker*, 329; cf. *Der Januschauer*, in *Der Ring*, 10/1932.
107. Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 12.
108. Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 32.
109. Wilhelm Kronprinz von Preußen, *Erinnerungen*, 330.
110. Sachsen, *Mein Lebensweg*, 116f., 126, 130. Cf. Eberhardt, *Kriegserinnerungen*, 272f.
111. Malinowski/Funck, 'Masters of Memory'.
112. Joseph de Maistre, 1797, quoted in Boffa, 'La Contre-Révolution', 291.
113. Payne, 'Roger Griffin, Fascistologist: A Preface', in Feldman, *A Fascist Century*, X.
114. Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution*, 34 (emphasis in original).
115. Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 34–9.
116. Merkenich, *Front*, 54, 142–52; Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft*, 163–84; Pomp, 'Brandenburgischer Landadel', 186ff., 200ff.; Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 39; Thimme, *Flucht in den Mythos*, 27f.
117. Taken from a circular letter the prince composed and distributed among members of the German Association of Princely Houses, 20 March 1919, in FFAD, Kab.Sekr.Verein der dt. Standesherren; Max Egon Fürst zu Fürstenberg nach 1918: FFAD, Hofverw. Fürstl. H, vol.bb II/4, (Briefe 1916–1922).
118. Prince Max Egon von Fürstenberg, letter of 19 November 1920, in FFAD, Hofverw. Fürstl. H, vol. bb II/4.
119. Correspondence between Müldner von Mülnheim and Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg, before 1923, in BAP, 90 Mu 1, vol. 1. 163.
120. Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 55. Cf. the letter Prince Otto von Bismarck wrote to his mother on 12 November 1918, in AOBS, I, vol. 5a.
121. Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 43 (regarding the Counts von Bernstorff-Wedendorf).
122. Grand Duke Friedrich Franz von Mecklenburg to von Rantzau, his leading court official, 28 December 1918, in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 533. Mecklenburg stayed with his sister, the Queen of Denmark, after his arrival in Copenhagen.
123. Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 182f.

124. Muth, 'Die Entstehung der Bauern- und Landarbeiterräte'; Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 29–50; Pomp, *Bauern und Großgrundbesitzer*, 239–64.
125. Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*.
126. Merkl, *Political Violence under the Swastika*.
127. Peukert, *Weimarer Republik*, 25–31; Jaeger, 'Generationen in der Geschichte'; Herbert, '"Generation der Sachlichkeit"'.
128. Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 317–35, 416–30.
129. Schulenburg, *Weibliche Kadetten*; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 70.
130. Lüttwitz, *Im Kampf gegen die November-Revolution*.
131. Horne/Gerwarth (eds), *War in Peace*.
132. Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 122.
133. Krüger, *Treudeutsch*, *passim*.
134. Funck, 'Schock', 148.
135. Gumbel, *Verschwörer*, 62–71; Schildt, 'Putsch'; Erger, *Der Kapp-Lüttwitz-Putsch*.
136. Berghahn, *Stahlhelm*, 56–7, 133.
137. Liulevicius, *War Land*.
138. Zimmerer (ed), *Von Windhuk nach Ausschwitz?*; Kuß, *Deutsches Militär*; Bührer, *Die Kaiserliche Schutztruppe*.
139. Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 7–70; Kamissek, 'Lothar von Trotha', 67–93.
140. Malinowski/Gerwarth, 'Hannah Arendt's Ghosts'; Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust*, 203–45; Stone, 'Defending the Plural'; Moses, 'Das römische Gespräch'; Moses, 'Raphael Lemkin'; Moses, 'Colonialism'.
141. Sauer, '"Mythos"'; Liulevicius, *War Land*, 227–43.
142. Krüger, *Brigade Erhardt*; Hillmayr, *Roter und weißer Terror*.
143. Jones, *Founding Weimar*.
144. Klingler, *Negotiating Violence*.
145. Weisbrod, 'Gewalt in der Politik'.
146. Funck, 'Meaning'.
147. Creveld, *The Culture of War*.
148. Heydebreck, *Wir Wehr-Wölfe*; Lettow-Vorbeck, *Heia Safari!*; Killinger, *Ernstes und Heiteres*; Hülsen, *Kampf um Oberschlesien*; Salomon, *Das Buch vom deutschen*; Goltz, *Meine Sendung*; Medem, *Stürmer von Riga*.
149. Salomon, *Die Geächteten*, 167f.
150. Oertzen, *Die deutschen Freikorps*, 61f.
151. Bose, 'Vormarsch gegen Essen', 395; Funck, 'Schock', 150–1; Gerwarth, 'Sexual and Nonsexual Violence'.
152. Stackelberg, *Verwehte Blätter*, 157.
153. Schulenburg, *Weibliche Kadetten*; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 71.
154. Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg to Count Arnim, 8 April 1933, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg. Schulenburg's memoir, *Die deutsche Führung im Kriege*, was intended to be published after all the people mentioned in it had died.

155. Schulenburg to Arnim, 21 November 1920 and 21 April 1921, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg.
156. Fritzsche, 'Breakdown or Breakthrough?'.
157. Moeller van den Bruck, 'Wir wollen die Revolution gewinnen' (emphasis in original).
158. Hertzberg to Claß, quoted in Krebs, 'Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund'.
159. Baron Jakob von Uexküll to Prince Eulenburg, 13 January 1919, in BLHA, Rep. 37 Liebenberg, Nr. 657, 33f.
160. Jones, *Founding Weimar*, 235–9.
161. Count Anton von Arco-Valley was a member of both the Munich Herrenklub and the Association of Catholic Aristocrats; cf. the lists of members from 1925 and 1930 in BayHStA, GKE, vol. 2/2 and BayHStA, Slg. Varia, Nr. 160 (Herrenklub). Hitzer, *Anton Graf Arco*.
162. Report written by a Bavarian aristocrat to Baron Lüninck on 12 June 1925, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 696; Andreas von Bernstorff, diary entry of 17 January 1919, quoted in Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 156. Cf. Count Karl von Bernstorff to Count Kuno von Westarp, 19 March 1930, in AFHG, Nl. Westarp, VN 1, 1930, A–C, Nr. 55.
163. Andreas von Bernstorff, diary entry of 17 January 1919, quoted in Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 156; Count von Bernstorff to Count Kuno von Westarp, 19 March 1930, in AFHG, Nl. Westarp, VN 1, 1930, A–C, Nr. 55.
164. Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*, 150–3.
165. Crown Prince Wilhelm to Schleicher and Hindenburg, 24 June 1932, in BAMA, N 42, Nr. 27, 43–9.
166. Letters written by the Crown Prince, some of which were destined for Berg, Schleicher, Hindenburg, Papen, and Neurath, June 1932, in BAMA, N 42, Nr. 27, 43–9.
167. Crown Prince Wilhelm to Hitler, 25 September 1932, in GStAPK, Rep. 54, Nr. 137.
168. Crown Prince Wilhelm to Groener, 14 April 1932, quoted in Jonas, *Der Kronprinz Wilhelm*, 232.
169. Groener used this expression in a letter he sent to his former pupil Kurt von Schleicher on 29 November 1932. 'The riding crop manners have to stop', he wrote: 'Hitler can make that happen.' See: *Ursachen und Folgen*, vol. 8, 711.
170. Killinger, *Ernstes und Heiteres*, 13ff. and 52f.
171. Zobeltitz, *Die Entthronten*.
172. Spenkuch, *Das Preußische Herrenhaus*, 87–149; Löffler, *Kammer*, 562–8.
173. Funck, 'Schock', 141.
174. Demeter, *Das deutsche Offizierskorps*, 20.
175. Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 299.
176. Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 242f.; Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 41–8, Eckert, *Der Kampf*.
177. Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 30–40.

178. Stenographic reports from the Reichstag on 11/15 July 1919, vol. 328, 1497, 1560ff. Cf. the commentary in DAB 1919, 345.
179. Kalm, *Das preußische Heroldsamt*, 236–46; Porombka, *Felix Krulls Erben*.
180. Memoirs of Countess Antonie zu Eulenburg (1950), in BAK, Kl. Erw., Nr. 708, 118. Similar perspectives can also be found in Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 26 and Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Adel*, 247.
181. Renn, *Adel im Untergang*; Renn, *Kindheit und Jugend*.
182. Information about Dissow (i.e. Rantzau), in BAK, N 1424, vol. 1.
183. *Ehrentafel der Kriegsopfer des reichsdeutschen Adels 1914–1919*; *Nachtrag zur Ehrentafel 1914–1919*. Also see particularly Schoenermarck, *Helden-Gedenkmappe*; cf. Funck, 'Meaning'.
184. Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 20–3, and Funck, 'Schock', 139–41; for more information, see: Görlitz, *Junker*, 318–20.
185. Schoenermarck, *Helden-Gedenkmappe*, foreword.
186. Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 148–89.
187. Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*; Singer, *Arme adlige Frauen*.
188. Aretin, 'Erster Rundbrief'.
189. Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 56.
190. 'Märkischer Adel' (issue of the DAB, 26 September 1931), title page (emphasis in original).
191. Meeting of the regional branch of the DAG in Frankfurt/Oder, 10 March 1927, and letters by Bodo von der Marwitz of 17 October 1922 and October 1926, in BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 478, 65, 108, 136; Malinowski, '"Wer schenkt uns wieder Kartoffeln?"', 503–37.
192. The Bavarian regional branch's annual report for 1926, in AFLH.
193. *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1931, 3; and the DAG's statement of assets (*DAG-Vermögensnachweis*) of 31 December 1932, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Rundschreiben 26/34'.
194. Thadden-Trieglaff to the executive board of the DAG, 17 March 1928, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 11, folder 'Korrespondenz mit anderen Landesabteilungen'.
195. Singer, *Arme adlige Frauen*; Wienfort, 'Gesellschaftsdamen, Gutsfrauen, Rebellinen', 181–204.
196. Dullinger, *Obenbleiben*, 57–61.
197. DAAM, LAB, vol. 14, folder 'Zentralhilfe' (Report by the DAG's central aid organization for 1930). The Prussian Crown Princess was the central aid organization's patroness.
198. For the list of 'gainfully employed ladies' (*Erwerbstätige Damen*), see: 'Bericht der DAG-Zentral-Hilfe über das Jahr 1930', in DAAM, LAB, vol. 14, folder 'Zentralhilfe 30/43'.
199. Isenburg, 'Berufswandel im deutschen Uradel', in DAB 1937, 887.
200. 'Die deutsche Edelfrau und ihre Aufgabe in der Gegenwart' in DAB 1884, 543.
201. Helene Prinzessin von Isenburg, 'Der Berufswandel im deutschen Adel (1912–1932)', in AfS 12/1935, 32ff., 70ff. See also 'Berufswandel im deutschen

Uradel während des letzten Vierteljahrhunderts, 1912–1937', in DAB 55/1937, 887f.; Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 378–05.

202. Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 394–402.
203. DAAM, LAB, vol. 14, folder 'Anzeigen' (letters and advertisements for the *Adelsblatt*, July 1930).
204. 'Standesgenossen heraus!', undated proclamation by the *Wirtschaftsstelle* (*c.*1931), in DAAM, LAB, vol. 11, folder 'Korrespondenz'.
205. Alois Prince Löwenstein, 'Aufgaben des Adels in der Gegenwart', in 'Adel', *Staatslexikon* (Görres Society), Freiburg 1926, vol. 1, column. 45f.
206. Alois Prince Löwenstein, 'Aufgaben des Adels in der Gegenwart', in 'Adel', *Staatslexikon* (Görres Society), Freiburg 1926, vol. 1, column 45f.
207. Leopold Graf Görtz und von Wrisberg (sic), 'Fort mit der politischen Passivität des deutschen Adels!', in DAB 1921, 242f.
208. Dr von Trotta-Treyden, 'Die Teilnahme des Adels an den akademischen Berufen', in DAB 1921, 19f.
209. 'Standesgenossen heraus!', undated proclamation by the *Wirtschaftsstelle* (*c.*1931), in DAAM, LAB, vol. 11, folder 'Korrespondenz'.
210. 'Vorschläge zur Organisation des kaufmännisch berufstätigen Adels in Deutschland' (December 1928), in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle'; 'Standesgenossen heraus!', undated proclamation by the *Wirtschaftsstelle* (*c.*1931) in ibid., vol. 11, folder 'Korrespondenz'.
211. Speech by Count Dürckheim-Jassen at a meeting of the Mecklenburg regional branch of the DAG, 23 January 1923, in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 2647.
212. Sombart, *Händler und Helden*. Cf. Lenger, *Werner Sombart*, 245–52.
213. Advertisements in the advertisement section of the *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1931, XXXIII ff. ('Standesgenossen, welche ihre Firmen bzw. Vertretungen den Mitgliedern der DAG zur Berücksichtigung empfehlen'); 'Employment wanted' advertisements in DAB 1921, 5f., 24f., 40, 217.
214. Helene Prinzessin von Isenburg, 'Der Berufswandel im deutschen Adel (1912–1932)', in *Archiv für Sippenforschung* 12/1935, quotation 38.
215. Confidential additions to the report about the *Adelskapitel*, 12 December 1929, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Korrespondenz 24/34'.
216. Berg to all regional departments, 28 June 1931, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 14, folder 'Korrespondenz 29/32'.
217. DAAM, LAB, vol. 14, folder 'Korrespondenz 29/32'.
218. Advertisement in the advertisement section of the *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1931, XXXIII ff.
219. DAB 17 April 1930 (chocolate), and 16 July 1932 (cigarettes); Berghoff, 'Adel und Industriekapitalismus'; Berghoff, 'Aristokratisierung des Bürgertums?'.
220. Speech by von Dassel (Hamburg) according to a confidential addition to the report about the meetings of the *Adelskapitel* of 22–3 May 1928, in AFLH.
221. Putlitz, *Bildersaal*, 37.
222. Wilmowsky, *Rückblickend möchte ich sagen*; Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 130f.

223. Wilmowsky, *Rückblickend möchte ich sagen*, 36.
224. Wichard von Moellendorff, *Deutsche Gemeinwirtschaft*.
225. Holtzendorff, *Biographische Aufzeichnungen* (private archive of Henning von Holtzendorff, Hamburg), 2–3, 24–5; Warburg, *Zeiten und Gezeiten*, 51.
226. Reinhold Frhr. von Lüdinghausen-Wolff, unprinted memoirs, in BAK, *Kleine Erwerbungen* Nr. 732.
227. Granier, *Levetzow*, 122–5.
228. Oppen, *Lebensskizzen*, 161, 172f.; Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 313–17.
229. *Warum ist der Zusammenschluß des reinblütigen deutschen Adels notwendig?* (DAG circular letter from 20 May 1938), in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 2647.
230. Schumacher, *Land und Politik*, quotation 190.
231. Winkler, *Weimar*, 13f., 47f.; Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Adel*, 250–4; Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 136f.; Flemming, *Landwirtschaftliche Interessen*, 252–65.
232. Weber, 'Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik' (1895), in Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. I/4, 545–74, quotation 567.
233. Schiller, *Rittergut*, see particularly 113–80, 260–348, 473–12; Theilemann, *Adel im grünen Rock*, 226–50; Reif, *Adel im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 96–9.
234. Becker, *Handlungsspielräume*, see particularly 210–305; Gessner, *Agrarverbände*, 83–96; Niemann, *Mecklenburgischer Großgrundbesitz*, 54–69; Merkenich, *Front*, 247–56.
235. Reif, *Adel im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 89–96.
236. Schiller, *Rittergut*, 202–40; Weber 'Die Nobilitierung der Kriegsgewinne', in Weber, *Gesamtausgabe* I/15, 204–14.
237. Preradovich, *Die Führungsschichten*, 112–14.
238. Letter by Governor (*Oberpräsident*) Friedrich von Bülow, 15 November 1929, in NSSAB, AFM, Depo 3F, IX 1, Nr. 8, 60–71. DAB 1922, 208f.
239. Möller, 'Die preußischen Oberpräsidenten der Weimarer Republik als Verwaltungselite', in Schwabe (ed.), *Die preußischen Oberpräsidenten*, 183–217.
240. Doß, 'Vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik', in Schwabe (ed.), *Das Diplomatische Korps*, 82–7.
241. Krüger, 'Struktur, Organisation', in Schwabe (ed.), *Das Diplomatische Korps*, 116–17, 158–60, 167.
242. Bald, *Der deutsche Offizier*, 89–91; Funck, 'Schock', 135f., 160f.; Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 279–304.
243. Abelshauser/Faust/Petzina (eds), *Sozialgeschichte*, 91.
244. Oldwig von Uechtritz, 'Streifzüge im Gebiet der adligen Stiftung', in DAB 1884, 52.
245. Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 246–50.
246. Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 330–45.
247. Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 241–6.
248. Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 165–81.
249. Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 359–406.
250. Drechsel, *Entwürfe*, 94; Urbach, 'Zwischen Aktion und Reaktion', 323–54; Gollwitzer, *Die Standesherren*.

251. LHAM-AW, Rep. H Stolberg, O, L, Nr. 8.
252. Prince Albert von Thurn und Taxis to the *fürstliche Generalkasse* (the family's central financial administrative body), 28 April 1916, and payments to the hereditary prince (March 1930), in FTTZA, HMA, Nr. 3596.
253. The children of the Franconian Prince Castell-Castell could each expect an annual allowance of between 15,000 and 30,000 Marks in 1921. FCAC, I dVI, Nr. 25 (1 May 1921).
254. Count La Rosée to Baron Moritz von Franckenstein (chairman of the Bavarian Association for Entailed Landed Property), 2 October 1929, in FÖWA, VIII 19.1.c., Nr. 52.
255. STAWKB, Lit D, 662/1.
256. Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*, 50–97; Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*, 217–308.

3. THE NOBILITY RELOADED

1. Ernst Domeier, 'Führung oder Herrschaft?', in DAB, 1 January 1933, 5, (emphasis in original); Schreiner, '"Wann kommt der Retter"', 107–60.
2. Weber, 'Die Nobilitierung der Kriegsgewinne'; Weber, 'Wahlrecht und Demokratie'; Weber, 'Aristokratie und Demokratisierung in Deutschland', in Weber, *Gesamtausgabe* I/15, 204–14, 344–96, 733–8; Kaesler, 'Junker oder Bürger?', 128–47; Torp, *Max Weber und die preußischen Junker*, 62–106.
3. Meinecke, speech delivered at the University of Freiburg, 14 June 1913, quoted in Fehrenbach, *Wandlungen*, 91.
4. Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 168.
5. Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 197–207.
6. Jünger, *Das Abenteuerliche Herz*, 131.
7. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 8.
8. Linse, *Barfüßige Propheten*.
9. Gleichen, 'Adel. Eine politische Forderung', 131–45.
10. Drechsel, *Reorganisation des deutschen Adels*; Reif, 'Adelserneuerung und Adelsreform in Deutschland', 203–30; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 73–172; Heinickel, *Adelsreformideen*, 653–70; Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 7–32, 110–43.
11. Mohler, *Konservative Revolution*.
12. Kondylis, *Konservativismus*, 11–61, 447–507; Kraus, 'Konservativismus im Widerstreit', 225–49; Laak, '"Nach dem Sturm"'.
13. Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution*, 47.
14. Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit*; Breuer, *Die Nordische Bewegung*; Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution*; Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 527–39; Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 157–97, 293–9.
15. Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit*, 11.
16. Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, 214–22; Sieferle, *Konservative Revolution*, 7–44; Kondylis, *Konservativismus*, 473–4; Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*; Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution*, 96–104; Breuer, *Grundpositionen*, 11, 50–7, 75–80, 132–9; Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit*, 105–46, 172–80.

17. Langewiesche, 'Bürgerliche Adelskritik', in Fehrenbach (ed.), *Adel und Bürgertum*, 11–28; Reif, 'Adelserneuerung und Adelsreform in Deutschland', 203–30; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 33–58, Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 9–32.
18. Krumeich, 'La place de la guerre', 9–17; Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*, 48–77; Jones, *Founding Weimar*, 1–26; Bessel, 'Die Krise', 98–114.
19. Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 218.
20. Paul, *Aufstand der Bilder*, 13.
21. Moeller van den Bruck, *Das dritte Reich*, foreword, quoted in Klemperer, *LTI*, 151.
22. Oexle, 'Aspekte der Geschichte des Adels', in Wehler (ed.), *Europäischer Adel*, 52–5.
23. Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*; Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 157–97.
24. Felken, *Oswald Spengler*, 36–9.
25. Stern, *Kulturpessimismus*, 51–98.
26. Weber, 'Wahlrecht und Demokratie', in Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*, I/15, 344–96, quotation 381, (emphasis in original).
27. Weber, 'Die Nobilitierung der Kriegsgewinne', in Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*, I/15, 210.
28. Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution*, 206.
29. Günther, *Ritter, Tod und Teufel*; Weisenburger, 'Der "Rassepapst"', 161–99; Schwandt, *Hans F. K. Günther*; Breuer, *Die Nordische Bewegung*, 49–97.
30. Stern, *Kulturpessimismus*, 48, 99–110; Lagarde, *Deutsche Schriften*.
31. Hübinger, 'Von Bildungsbürgern und Übermenschen', 402–10.
32. Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 197–4.
33. Adorno, 'Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10, 429; Mehring, 'Kritische Theorie', 467–82.
34. Heinrich Rogge, 'Adels-Verschleierung', in *Der Ring* 10/1928, 187; also see the confused demands in Boesch, *Vom Adel*.
35. Werner Henneke, 'Adel und die Krisis des europäischen Bürgertums' (series of five articles), in DAB 1930, 591–2; Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 284–94.
36. Section entitled 'Der bürgerliche "Stil"', in Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 173–8.
37. Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 324–32, 101–5, 168–73; Struve, *Elites*, 317–52; Jahnke, *Edgar Julius Jung*; Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 464–500; Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 129–62.
38. Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 329, 336; Jung, 'Falsches und echtes Führertum', 522–4.
39. Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 171f., 237f., 249–55, 469–72, 477; Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 129–62.
40. Struve, *Elites*, 350–2; Jones, 'The Limits of Collaboration', 473–5.
41. Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 246.
42. Edgar Julius Jung, 'Adel oder Elite?', in *Europäische Revue* 9/1933, 533–5.
43. Struve, *Elites*, 274–16.

44. Rohan, *Heimat Europa*; Müller, 'Jenseits des Nationalismus?'.
45. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Adel*; Ziegerhofer-Prettenthaler, *Botschafter Europas*; Conze, *Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi*.
46. Müller, 'Jenseits des Nationalismus?', in Reif, *Adel und Bürgertum*, vol. 2, 235–68.
47. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Adel*, 43; Müller, 'Jenseits des Nationalismus?', in Reif, *Adel und Bürgertum*, vol. 2, 266.
48. As far as the German nobility were aware, the English gentry were a group of aristocrats whose titles were passed down exclusively to the eldest son and whose second and subsequent offspring had greater freedom to intermarry with 'good', non-noble families and excel in such middle-class fields as finance, banking, and trade.
49. Mayer, *Vom Adel und der Oberschicht*, 6–7, 16–19, 23.
50. Gustav Steinbömer, 'Oberschicht und Adel', in *Gewissen*, 22 March 1926.
51. Heinrich von Gleichen, 'Adel—eine politische Forderung', in *Preußische Jahrbücher* 2/1924, 131–45.
52. English translation from Gray, 'Metaphysical Mimesis', 39.
53. Stefan George, 'Dies ist reich des Geistes', in *Der Stern des Bundes*, in George, *Sämtliche Werke in 18 Bänden*, Vol. VIII, 83.
54. English translation from Petropulos, 'Spirit', 105.
55. Karlauf, *Stefan George*, 396–426; Conze/Meteling, *Aristokratismus und Moderne*, 9–29; Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 110–84, 501–8; Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus*, 45–52.
56. George styled himself as the *Meister* ('master') of his select group of acolytes in a manner which chimed in with the wider desire for leadership that characterized Germany's post-war political Right. By being referred to as a *Meister*, he became aligned with a number of different ideas, concepts, and attributes, including: rare artistic genius; superior knowledge, intellectual capacity, and aesthetic sensitivity; the sovereignty and dignity of a medieval master craftsman; and mastery of a magical force that far exceeded the boundaries of the rational world.
57. Höllerer, 'Elite und Utopie'; Landfried, *Stefan George*, 155–65.
58. Karlauf, *Stefan George*, 563–6, 618–20; Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus*, 52–72; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 25–9; Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 61–78.
59. Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*.
60. Quoted in DAB 1936, 1.
61. Oswald Spengler, 'Aufgaben des Adels', in DAB 42/1924, 209; Circular letter of 1929 in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '24/34'; Adolf von Ernsthausen, 'Zeitfragen im Lichte Spenglerscher Philosophie', in DAB 1922, 2–3; Gebsattel to Kerckerinck, 17 October 1923, in DAAM, Nl. Kerckerinck, Nr. 143; Hoser, 'Ein Philosoph im Irrgarten'.
62. Letter by Kerckerinck, 9 January 1924, in WAAM, Kerckerinck, Nr. 144.
63. Heinz Brauweiler to Baron Engelbert von Kerckerinck, 4 January 1920, in WAAM, Nl. Kerckerinck, Nr. 140. See also correspondence between Eduard

Stadtler and Count Dietlof von Arnim, May/June 1931, and Prince Ulrich zu Schönburg-Waldenburg to Count Dietlof von Arnim, 7 January 1930; for further evidence, see: Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 311.

64. Dr von Stegmann, 'Wir müssen aus dem Turm heraus', in *Jahrbuch der DAG*, 1927, 7–12, quotation 12.
65. Quoted in Gutsche, *Ein Kaiser im Exil*, 120; Wilderotter, 'Zur politischen Mythologie', 131–42.
66. Walter von Zeddelmann, 'Adelsdämmerung—Adelserneuerung', in DAB, 3/1930, 34–6.
67. Articles by Max von Binzer, Carl Gustav von Platen, Carl von Behr-Pinnow, and Baron Heribert von Lüttwitz, in DAB, 1930, 66f., 82f., 139f., 166f.
68. Studnitz, 'Kann der Adel wieder führen?', 14–16; Studnitz, 'Deutscher Adel um 1930'.
69. Gehlen, 'Das Elitenproblem', in Gehlen, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 7, quotation 107.
70. Weber, 'Wahlrecht und Demokratie', in Weber, *Gesamtausgabe* I/15, 378–81.
71. Karl August Graf von Drechsel, 'Aberkennung und Niederlegung des Adels in deutschen Staaten', speech at the annual meeting of the DAG in Berlin, 18 February 1911, 8, in BSHA, GKE, Nr. 3; Kekule von Stradonitz, 'Gedanken über eine Um- und Ausgestaltung des Adelswesens', 299; Kekule von Stradonitz, 'Armut und Reichtum'.
72. Wilhelm von Oertzen-Roggow, 'Nuradel', in *Adlige Jugend* (DAB youth supplement), 1 January 1930, 4; Graf zu Eulenburg, 'Gesinnungsadel oder Namensadel', in *Adlige Jugend* (DAB youth supplement), 1 February 1930, 6.
73. Goltz, *Ernste Gedanken*, quotations 24, 27, and 31.
74. DAG meeting (*Adelskapitel*) in Dresden (22/23 May 1928), speech by von Bogen, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Korrespondenz 24/34'; Brockdorff, 'Soziologie des deutschen Adels'.
75. Closing remarks by Walter von Bogen, DAB 1930, 168f.
76. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*; DAB 8 November 1930, 613–14.
77. Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*.
78. Börries Frhr. von Münchhausen, 'Adel und Rasse', in DAB 42/1924, 63–5 (emphasis in original); Ditfurth, *Der Baron, die Juden*, 235–46.
79. 'Herrenschicht und Gegenwart', in DAB, 32/1929, 419.
80. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 144–97; Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus'; Seelig, 'Die "soziale Aristokratie" ', 148–70.
81. Appeal (*Werberuf*) by the leaders of the DAG, DAB, 30 December 1919, 413f.
82. Alois Fürst zu Löwenstein, 'Mitteilungen der GKEB', 10 April 1918; Aretin, 'Erster Rundbrief', 3; Christian Ernst Fürst zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, Open letter on the occasion of the first *Adelstagung* in Wernigerode, September 1924, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Stolberg-Wernigerode, O, L, Nr. 9, vol. 1.
83. 'Der ganze Adel soll es sein', in DAB 30 September 1919, 415–17; DAB 30 December 1919, 413f.; AFLH, minutes of the Bavarian regional branch of the DAG, 20 September 1924; Appeal (*Werberuf*) by the Hannover-Oldenburg-Braunschweig regional branch of the DAG, December 1920: 'Deutscher Adel, schließe Deine Reihen!' in NSSAB, AFM, Depos. 3F, IV 12, Nr. 31b.

84. Geheimer Regierungsrat (Privy Government Councilor) von Baumbach, 'Der neue adlige Mensch', in DAB 26 April 1930, 233f.
85. Baron Wilhelm von Leonrod to Prince von der Leyen, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 1, folder 'Erster Vorsitzender 22/30'.
86. Christian Ernst Fürst zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, Preparatory letter to the first *Adelstagung* in Wernigerode, September 1924, in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Stolberg-Wernigerode, O, L, Nr. 9, vol. 1; Frhr. von Lüninck, 'Adel und Staat', presentation at a DAG youth conference in Heidelberg, 16/17 May 1931, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815.
87. Lists of members and executive directors for 1930/31, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle', also in *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1931; Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 325.
88. Baron Konrad von Stotzingen spoke to the *Adelskapitel* on 25 November 1925. Minutes in FFAD, XXVIII/i (Vereine).
89. Debate between northern and southern regional branches, 25 October 1929, 10 November 1929, and 12 January 1931, in DAAM LAB, vol. 11, folder 'Korrespondenz'.
90. Disputes between the DAG's leaders in Berlin and the regional branches in Bavaria and Württemberg, March and October 1927, in BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 478, 132–8. For disputes of 30 June 1929 and 23 November 1929, see AFLH.
91. DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle: Bericht Bogens', July 1928.
92. The son of a Prussian government councilor, Baron Albrecht von Houwald (1866–1958) had been married to Countess Helen von Carmer, the daughter of a Major General, since 1909.
93. Kurt Frhr. von Reibnitz, 'Der Gotha', in *Querschnitt*, 2/1928, 73.
94. Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 143f.
95. Niemann, *Mecklenburgischer Großgrundbesitz*, 256.
96. *Jahrbuch der DAG*, 1927, 77–80.
97. *Jahrbuch der DAG*, 1927, 75.
98. Baron Wilhelm von Leonrod, 18 July 1930, and Prince von d. Leyen, 9 July 1930: DAAM, LAB, vol. 1, folder '1. Vors'. Prince von der Leyen, Prince Öttingen-Wallerstein, and Prince Öttingen-Spielberg succeeded one another as the head of the regional department. For a list of members in Bavaria, see: *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1927, 73–112.
99. Details from curricula vitae from 1947 and 1959, in FÖWA, VIII. 19.1.c, Nr. 42 and Nr. 144.
100. See Öttingen's article 'Der Adel im modernen Deutschland', in *Augsburger Postzeitung*, 14 February 1920.
101. The prince first attempted to gain an 'Aryan certificate' in 1939. The clear distance he kept from the National Socialist movement is documented in various sources, see: FÖWA, VIII. 19.1.c, vols 16, 33h, 118, and 144.
102. Urbach, 'Zwischen Aktion und Reaktion', 323–54.
103. *Adelsausschuss* ('committee of the nobility') in Munich, 22–3 April 1925, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle 24/34', also *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1931.

104. *Kalender der DAG* 1920, 12–13; *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1931, 391.
105. Letters of invitation to the Grand Duke from the DAG's regional branch in Mecklenburg, July 1931 and 17 November 1932, in MLHA, GHK III, vol. 2647.
106. Letter by Baron zu Rhein, Crown Prince Rupprecht von Bayern's asset manager, 5 June 1926, in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 743.
107. Jung, *Volksgesetzgebung*, 545.
108. Bodo von der Marwitz, confidential letter to the secretary (*Schriftführer*) of his family association, 11 November 1933, in BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 259, 184.
109. Report about the first north-west German *Jungadelstagung* ('noble youth conference') in Hamburg on 11/12 October 1930, in *Adlige Jugend* (DAB youth supplement), 1 November 1930, 44; DAB 1931, 39, 254, 336, 464a–464c, 668–670, 782a–782d.
110. Report about the *Jungadelstagung* (noble youth conference) in Berlin, 10/11 December 1932, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle'.
111. Prof. Dr Dr Ludwig Pesl, 'Zur politischen Einstellung des Jungadels', in *Gelbe Hefte*, 11/1930, 665–80, quotation 671.
112. Dr J. von Volkmann, 'Geistiges und politisches Führertum', in *Adlige Jugend* (DAB youth supplement), 1 January 1930, 1.
113. Kuno Frhr. von Eltz-Rübenbach, 'Wer kämpft mit?', in *Adlige Jugend* (DAB youth supplement), 1 January 1930, 3.
114. DAB, 31 July 1920, 241–3.
115. Leopold von Vietinghoff-Scheel, 'Die rassischen Pflichten und Aufgaben des deutschen Adels', in DAB 15 February 1921, 33–7.
116. DAB, 31 December 1920, 426f.
117. DAB, 31 July 1920, 241–3; §3, paragraph 8 of the DAG's statutes, in *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1927, 17; the DAG's statutes from December 1920, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815.
118. §1, paragraph 3 of the DAG's statutes from December 1920 (WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815).
119. Friedrich von Berg to all the regional branches of the DAG, 26 November 1926, DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '25/26', (emphasis added).
120. Fabréguet, 'Artur Dinter', 233–44; Essner-Conte, *'Nürnberger Gesetze'*, 15–24.
121. Appeal (*Werberuf*) by the DAG, April 1926, signed by Berg (DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '24/34').
122. Bogen to Baron Wilhelm von Leonrod, 13 January 1926, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '25/26'.
123. Baron Wilhelm von Leonrod to the *Hauptgeschäftsstelle* (main office of the DAG) in Berlin, 6 March 1929, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 13, folder 'Unterfranken 24–31'.
124. FCAC, I d VI, Nr. 49 (printed statutes from 1922).
125. FCAC, I d VI, Nr. 179, 7–8.
126. Aretin, 'Zweiter Rundbrief an den jungen deutschen Adel', FCAC, I d VI, Nr. 179.
127. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 358–421.

128. Kalm, *Heroldsamt*, 241–6.
129. WAAM, Nl. Kerckerinck, Nr. 515 (list compiled by the DAG of all those nobles who had offered their titles for sale, May 1928); DAB 10/1930, 142.
130. BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, vol. 478, 3–4 and NSSAB, AFM, Depos. 3 F, IV 12, Nr. 31b. Cf. the appeal entitled 'Deutscher Edelmann, sei auf der Hut!' in BAMA, N280/48.
131. BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 478, Fol. 11 and LAM-AW, Rep. H Karow, Nr. 220, Fol. 201.
132. Appeals from 1920/21 in BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, vol. 478, 12–14.
133. DAB 1935, 315; *Alldeutsche Blätter*, 6 December 1930; Lohalm, *Radikalismus*, 96, 364f.; Görlitz, *Junker*, 370.
134. Houwald's curriculum vitae in his NSDAP records, 7 July 1938, in BAB (BDC), Personalakte: Albrecht Frhr. von Houwald, 10 June 1866. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 144–97.
135. Debate between Baron von Houwald and Count Spee, in BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 478, 16–17 and in NRWSAD, L 114 v. Donop, Nr. 508.
136. This was the crucial wording in §8 of the EDDA statutes, quoted in DAB, 15 April 1921, 98; DAB 15 August 1920, 259f.; 39/1921, 82, 97–9, 115–17. For a summary, see the pamphlet entitled 'Überblick über die Entwicklung der Adelsschutzeinrichtung, Potsdam 1921', in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815.
137. DAB, 38/1920, 402–4. 'Advice' regarding the possibility of breeding out 'harmful' blood from one's lineage was provided by the DAG institution known as the *Buchungshauptstelle*; see: DAB, 18/1930, 246. Essner-Conte, *'Nürnberger Gesetze'*, 70–1, Spörri, *Reines und gemischtes Blut*, 73–198.
138. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 194–6.
139. von Engelbrechten, in DAB 1921, 84. For Houwald's response, see ibid., 99.
140. *Semi-Gotha* (1912); *Semi-Imperator* (1919).
141. Wilhelm II to Poultney Bigelow, 15 August 1927, in Urbach, 'Nützliche Idioten', 69; Röhl, 'Des Kaisers Kreuzzug', 11.
142. Houwald's foreword in *Ausgewählte Ahnentafeln der EDDA. Hg. von der Buchungshauptstelle Deutschen Adels' (Arbeitsabteilung VI der DAG)*, vol. 1, *Gotha* 1925, (DAAM).
143. Houwald, foreword, in EDDA, vol. 2, *Gotha* 1929, IV, (DAAM).
144. EDDA, vol. 3, *Gotha* 1936, foreword, III–IV, (DAAM).
145. Houwald on the EDDA, in *Jahrbuch der DAG*, 1927, 16f.
146. Bogen, undated publication, 'Der neue Weg der DAG' (presumably late 1933), in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS'.
147. Houwald, foreword, in *Ausgewählte Ahnentafeln der EDDA (Eisernes Buch Deutschen Adels Deutscher Art), Hg. von der Buchungshauptstelle Deutschen Adels (Arbeitsabteilung VI der Deutschen Adelsgenossenschaft*, vol. IV, *Gotha* 1942, III.
148. Bogen's report to a meeting of the DAG's executive board in Nuremberg on 6 March 1938, DAAM vol. 3, folder 'Jugendfrage 1937/39'. Cf. his report from *circa* late 1933, 'Der neue Weg der DAG', in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS'.

149. Letter from Prince Bentheim to Count Stauffenberg, 15 January 1934; also Walter von Bogen, 'Der neue Weg der DAG' (*c.* late 1933); both in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS'.
150. AFLH, confidential letters and responses to/from the regional branches, 22/23 May 1928 and July 1928. Both Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin and von Bogen (the editor of the DAG) countered southern German objections and insisted that the DAG was not a charitable organization, but a 'pressure group' (*Kampfbund*) that was primed to 'attack'.
151. BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 478, 96.
152. Letter by the publisher Justus Perthes, late January 1932; also Houwald's letter to Baron Karl von Aretin, 5 September 1933, containing Houwald's complaint that he was forced to 'do everything alone' in his 'rural solitude'. Both letters in DAAM, LAB, vol. 9, folder 'EDDA 26/33'.
153. AFLH, minutes of the executive board meeting of the Bavarian regional branch of the DAG, 23 November 1929.
154. Baron Wilhelm von Leonrod to the editors of the DAB, 17 July 1926, and Prince Öttingen's circular letter, February 1932, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 9, folder 'EDDA 26/33'.
155. Drechsel (presumably to Karl Aretin), 17 August 1932, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Korrespondenz Öttingen/Aretin 1932'.
156. Baron Karl von Aretin to Houwald, 28 August 1933, and Houwald's response of 5 September 1933, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 9, folder 'EDDA 26/33'.
157. Baron Karl von Aretin to Baron von Imhoff, 26 October 1934, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 9, folder 'Ahnentafeln 33/34'.
158. Baron Karl von Aretin to Baron Otto von Berchem, 22 October 1934, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 9, folder 'Ahnentafeln 33/34'.
159. Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 118–21; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 392–404.
160. For Achim Gercke's memoranda about the practice of 'racial divorce' (*Rassenscheidung*), cf. Essner-Conte, *'Nürnberger Gesetze'*, 73–5.
161. See Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 122–4.
162. Baron Wilhelm von Leonrod, 23 October 1933, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 13, folder 'Mittelfranken 29/33', folder 'Mittelfranken 33/36'; correspondence in MLHA, GHK III, vol. 2647.
163. Bogen to LAB, 16 December 1933, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '33/34'; letter by Baron Karl von Aretin, 10 February 1934, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 9, folder 'Ahnentafeln'.
164. BAB (BDC), PA: Gottfried Graf von Bismarck-Schönhausen, 29 March 1901 (expert genealogical report, 9 November 1933).
165. Letter of 15 February 1935, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 13, folder 'Mittelfranken 33/36'.
166. Bentheim to Stauffenberg, January 1934, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '33/34'.
167. Alfred von Goßler-Schätz, the regional leader of the DAG's Silesian branch, resigned from his position after mounting unsuccessful protests, but

remained a member of the DAG, cf. Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 124.

168. Löwenstein to Bentheim, 7 December 1933, in BayHStA, GKE, Nr. 6.
169. Bogen 'Der neue Weg der Deutschen Adelsgenossenschaft' (c. 1934), see particularly 4–6, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel/NS 29/35'; Statement from the executive board of the Silesian regional branch, 2 September 1933, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 11, folder 'Korrespondenz'; Bentheim to Löwenstein, 12 October/2 December 1933, in BayHStA, GKE, Nr. 6 ('ticket collector').
170. Letter by Baron Karl von Aretin, 15 February 1934, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 9, folder 'Ahnentafeln'.
171. BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, vol. 259, 177: letter of protest to the family council (*Familienrat*) from secretary (*Schriftführer*) Heinrich von der Marwitz, 7 October 1933.
172. BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, vol. 259, 197: letter from the DAG's leaders to the Marwitz family association, 22 February 1934; also ibid., 203, 215, and 220.
173. Correspondence between Marwitz and DAG regional leader von Zychlinski, February/March 1935, in, BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, vol. 478, quotation 146–9 (emphasis in original).
174. BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 641; Göse, 'Der preußische Adel', 67; Pomp, 'Brandenburgischer Landadel', 216f.
175. Bodo von der Marwitz to Count von Hardenberg, 27 February 1932, in BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 366, 45f.
176. Marwitz to the secretary (*Schriftführer*) of the family association, 2 November 1933, in BLHA, Rep. 37 Friedersdorf, Nr. 259, 183f.
177. Malinowski, 'Kuno Graf v. Westarp', 9–32; Gasteiger, *Kuno von Westarp*, 309–44; Jones, *The German Right*; Jonas, *Die Volkskonservativen*.
178. Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 111–21; Berghahn, 'Die Harzburger Front', 64–82.
179. Cf. Friedrich von Berg's controversial appeal on Hindenburg's behalf, in DAB, 6 February 1932; see also Berg's circular letter to all of the DAG's regional branches, 17 February 1932, in DAAM, DAG, LAB, vol. 1, folder 'Berlin 31/32'; also see the account presented in Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 116f.
180. In 1937, Prince Bentheim owned 3,097 hectares of land and a fortune of around 3.5 million marks. See: BAB (BDC), PA: Adolf Fürst zu Bentheim-Tecklenburg-Rheda, 29 June 1889.
181. WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 811. The Prussian Crown Princess was also seated at Prince Bentheim's central table.
182. Memorandum about a meeting of the regional chairmen on 6/7 May 1932, and correspondence between the DAG's regional branches in the Rhineland and Bavaria from April 1932, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adelsmarschall 32/39'.
183. DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS 1929/35'. Bentheim to Baron von Lüninck, 19 April, 24 April, and 12 June 1932; Lüninck to Bentheim, 1 May

1932, 20 June 1932, to Bogen (17 April 1932), and Bogen's response (15 April 1932), in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815. Cf. Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 115f.

184. Schoeps, *Der deutsche Herrenklub*; Petzold, *Wegbereiter*; Ishida, *Jungkonservative*; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*.
185. Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 29–43; Petzold, *Wegbereiter*, 89–110; Stern, *Kulturpessimismus*, 267–92; Schwierskott, *Moeller*, 20–71; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 118–30.
186. Moeller van den Bruck, *Das dritte Reich*; Schwierskott, *Moeller*; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 11–64.
187. Schwierskott, *Moeller*, 71–4; Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 39–44; Clemens, *Martin Spahn*; Jungcurt, *Alldeutscher Extremismus*.
188. Heinrich von Gleichen, 'Adel. Eine politische Forderung', in *Preußische Jahrbücher* 197 (1924), 131–45.
189. *Richtlinien und Satzung* (Guidelines and Statutes) of the DHK, undated (1924/25), in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Ostrau, II, 158, 2–5. Minutes of the members' meeting of the DHK, 17 November 1927 and the DHK's annual report for 1926/27, both in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 820. Cf. 'Ring, Gemeinschaft der Führenden' (December 1929), in an appendix in Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 237–41. Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 51–5; Petzold, *Wegbereiter*, 175–82; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 220–30.
190. Wilhelm von Oertzen-Roggow to Oswald Spengler, June 1926, in MLHA, HGM, vol. 1, 124–6.
191. For Batocki's quotation, see the minutes of the members' meeting of the DHK, 17 November 1927, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 820.
192. Interestingly, club member Franz von Papen was still referencing the concept of the 'Führer elite' in a fateful speech he gave on 16 December 1932. This address played an important role in establishing connections that facilitated the transfer of power to Hitler just six weeks later. For Papen's speech, see: *Der Ring*, 5/52, 23 December 1932, 894ff.
193. Reibnitz, *Im Dreieck*, 217, cf. 67–73.
194. Schwierskott, *Moeller*, 60; Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 23; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 121f.; Felken, *Oswald Spengler*, 135f.
195. LHM-AW, Rep. H Ostrau, II, 158, 2–5: *Richtlinien und Satzung* (Guidelines and Statues) of the DHK.
196. Turner, *Großunternehmer*, 265.
197. Malinowski, '"Führertum" und "Neuer Adel"', 173–211.
198. WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 820.
199. WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 820.
200. Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 65–8; speech delivered by Dohna on 25 July 1926 entitled 'Von meiner sozialen Arbeit als Grundbesitzer und von der "Ring"-Bewegung', in *Waldenburger Schriften* 6/1926, 100–102 (private archive of Count Jesko zu Dohna).

201. Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 62; Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 43f.; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 225f.
202. Lists of members from 1926 and 1928, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 820. Cf. the lists from 1932 in an appendix in Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 244–57.
203. Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 62; Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 43f.; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 225f.
204. Schulz, 'Der "Nationale Klub von 1919"', 299–22; Holzbach, *'System Hugenberg'*, 138–45.
205. Statutes of the Casino Society in FFAD, Kab.Sekr., Casino-Gesellschaft.
206. *Jahrbuch der DAG* 1931 (alphabetical list).
207. DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle': Report by the *Hauptgeschäftstelle* (main office of the DAG), July 1928, January 1929, and report about the *Jungadelstagung* (noble youth conference) in Berlin, December 1932.
208. Baron Heinrich von Gleichen (1882–1959), information from: GHdA, FH 1980, 107; NSDAP personnel files in BAB (BDC), Personalakte. Cf. his portrayal of himself from 1947 in BAK, Kl. Erw. 402, 4f.; Schwierskott, *Moeller*, 43–6.
209. Count Hans Bodo von Alvensleben (1882–1961), information from: BAB (BDC), Personalakte: Hans Bodo Graf von Alvensleben; Lieven, *Abschied von Macht*, 173f; Jacob, 'Das Engagement des Adels', 312–13.
210. Seiffert, *Junker*, 312, 319–25.
211. Neebe, *Großindustrie, Staat*, 54f., 161–3.
212. BAMA, N 42 (Nl. Schleicher), Nr. 27, 20–3, 66–9.
213. Elsner, *Herrengesellschaft*, 137–40.
214. Count Franz von Galen to J. Schönberg, 22 June 1925, in WAAM, Nl. Galen, Nr. 32.
215. See the correspondence between Heinrich von Gleichen and Prince Carl z. Castell-Castell from 1923: FCAC, I d VIII, Nr. 29.
216. WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 820 (annual report of the DHK, 1926/27): conference in Plawniowitz at Count Nikolaus von Ballestrem's estate, 14–16 May 1927; Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 44–6, 619–21.
217. WAAM, Lüninck, Nr. 820: meeting of the DHK's entire executive board with representatives from various gentlemen's societies on 9.4.1927; pamphlet in LHAM-AW, Rep. H Stolberg, O, E, Nr. 32; Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 229.
218. DHK membership lists from 1926 to 1932, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 820; Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 244–57.
219. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 430–31.
220. BAMA, Nl. Schleicher, Nr. 7, 6.
221. GStAPK, Rep. 303, Nr. 173–75; BAK, R 118, Nr. 53 and 54; Schwierskott, *Moeller*, 61–6, 179f.; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 143–68, 215–20; Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 219–22.
222. Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 219–22.

223. MHSA, HGM, vol. 10, 160–79.
224. Keyserling, *Was uns Not tut*, 54f.; Keyerling, *Reise durch die Zeit*.
225. Struve, *Elites*, 274–316.
226. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 398–412.
227. MLHA, Großherzogliches Kabinett III, Nr. 2653.
228. Bogen to Lüninck, 1 December 1931, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 815.
229. Mommsen, 'Regierung ohne Parteien'; Granier, *Levetzow*, 263–76, 145–9; letter by Baron von Redwitz, 8 November 1928, in FÖWA, VIII 19.1.c., Nr. 52.
230. Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 29–88, 275–80; Jones, 'Franz von Papen', 191–217; Petzold, *Franz von Papen*, 15–47.
231. Wilmowsky, *Rückblickend möchte ich sagen*; Jacob, 'Das Engagement des Adels', 313–14; Zollitsch, 'Das Scheitern', 254–73; Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft*, 366–7.
232. Minutes of the DHK conference on 9 April 1927, in LHAM-AW, Rep. Stolberg, O, E, Nr. 32.
233. Wilmowsky to Krupp von Bohlen, 28 February 1929, quoted in Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 229.
234. Winkler, *Weimar*, 567–8; Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 265.
235. Records of the Corps Borussia, in FFAD, Fürstl. Hs., Erziehung, Corps Borussia 1901ff.
236. Krüger, *Treudeutsch*, 70ff.; StAD, Herrschaft Schlitz, F 23 A, 1219/1 and ibid. 1219/2.
237. Holzbach, *'System Hugenberg'*, 147–55.
238. LAM-AW, Rep. H Ostrau, including II, 194; II, 159; II, 163; II, 24; II, 258; Alvensleben, *Besuche vor dem Untergang*; Palatini/Rosentreter (eds.), *Alter Adel, neuer Geist*.; Italiaander, *Hans-Hasso von Veltheim-Ostrau*.
239. Cf. Petzold, *Wegbereiter*, 320–36, 350–64; Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 238–63; and Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 274–86.
240. For the DHK's concept of restructuring the state along authoritarian lines, see: Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 92–107.
241. Cf. Walther Schotte, 'Die parteifreie Regierung', in *Reich und Staat* 11/1932, in *Der Ring* 34/1932; cf. the article 'Für das Reich!', in *Der Ring*, 17/1931, 295; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 257–73.
242. Bracher, *Die Auflösung*, 472; Mommsen, 'Regierung ohne Parteien', 472; Ishida, Jungkonservative, 192–225.
243. Speech by Hitler, 7 September 1932, quoted in Nolte, 'Konservativismus', in Schumann (ed.), *Konservativismus*, 256.
244. *Angriff*, 23 September 1932; *Der Ring*, 31 July 1931 (31/1931), 573–7; 'Zehn Fragen an Hitler—sozialistische Antworten', in *Der Ring* 9/1932, 139; Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 251.
245. *Der SA-Mann*, 8 October 1932, 22 October 1932, 3 December 1932.
246. Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 355–407; Jones, 'Franz von Papen', 191–217; Evans, *Third Reich in Power*, 20–120.
247. Schoeps, *Der Deutsche Herrenklub*, 138–59; Ishida, *Jungkonservative*, 238–63; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 274–86; Petzold, *Wegbereiter*, 320–36; 350–64.

248. Alvensleben rose through the ranks of the SA and ultimately became a brigadeer general (GGT, G 1942, 10f.).
249. Kartowitsch, *Herrengesellschaft Mecklenburg*; Elsner, *Herrengesellschaft*; Niemann, *Mecklenburgischer Großgrundbesitz*, 236–49.
250. BAK R 18, Nr. 5330: Membership list of the Mecklenburg Gentlemen's Society, as of 1 July 1932.
251. Kartowitsch, *Herrengesellschaft Mecklenburg*, 43.
252. Oertzen to Gayl and to Hereditary Grand Duke von Oldenburg (February/May 1927), in MHSA, HGM, vols 1, 34, and 62.
253. Correspondence between Oertzen, Gleichen, and Bruck, and conference planning (1927), MHSA, HGM, including vol. 1, 19–21, 32, 44, 52–8.
254. Wilhelm von Oertzen-Roggow, 'Nuradel', in *Adlige Jugend* (DAB youth supplement), 1 January 1930, 4.
255. Letter by Oertzen, 8 November 1930, quoted in Elsner, *Herrengesellschaft*, 35f. (quotation) and 48 (number of participants). For details about the lectures organized by Oertzen, see Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 58f., and Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 138f.
256. Correspondence, Oertzen and Franz Bracht, March 1928, in HSAM, HGM, vol. 3, 224f.; Petzinna, *Erziehung zum deutschen Lebensstil*, 235f.
257. For documentation about the conference in Güstrow, (28 February–1 March 1931), see HSAM, HGM, vol. 7, 71–5, 91.
258. Kartowitsch, *Herrengesellschaft Mecklenburg*, 49f.
259. BAK, R 118, Nr. 9, see particularly 3–11.
260. Wilhelm von Oertzen, 26 February 1931, in MLHA, HGM, vol. 7, 106. Cf. Elsner, *Herrengesellschaft*, 65–72.
261. Correspondence between Oertzen, Gleichen, and Bruck (autumn 1927), in MHSA, HGM, vol. 2, including 76f., 97f., 108, 115, 123–6, 138, 160f. and ibid., vol. 3, 195 (Oertzen to Lüninck, 15 April 1928); Elsner, *Herrengesellschaft*, 20.
262. Wilhelm von Oertzen to Hitler, 4 June 1928, and to the NSDAP's *Kanzlei* ('Chancellery'), 26 September 1928, in MLHA, MGH, vol. 3, 148 and 7, cf. 105–7.
263. Oertzen to Epp, March 1929, quoted in Niemann, 242f.; Elsner, *Herrengesellschaft*, 65–73; for further correspondence, see: BAK, R 118, Nr. 9, 3–11; MLHA, MGH, vol. 3 and vol. 7.
264. Oertzen to *Gauleiter* ('District Official') Friedrich Hildebrandt, 29 July 1928, in MLHA, HGM, vol. 3, 96.
265. Baron Heinrich von Gleichen, 'Offener Brief an Hitler', in *Der Ring*, 6 November 1931, 835; Heinrich von Gleichen to Eduard Stadtler, 7 October 1925, in BAK, R 118, vol. 35, 6f.
266. Correspondence, in MLHA, HGM, vol. 9, 100.
267. Oertzen to Bruck, 25 June 1928, in MLHA, HGM, vol. 3, 130. Cf. Kartowitsch, *Herrengesellschaft Mecklenburg*, 75–81.
268. Correspondence, 1932, in HSAM, HGM, vol. 10 and vol. 7, 155–158, 205–10.
269. For the HGM's rapprochement with National Socialism, see Kartowitsch, *Herrengesellschaft Mecklenburg*, 74–105. Statistics for 1934 can be found on page 99.

270. Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*, 165–216; Büschel, *Hitlers adliger Diplomat*, 37–41, 97–123.
271. For the 'German Day' (*Deutscher Tag*), see: Kershaw (1998), *Hitler 1889–1936*, 227–30.
272. Telegram from the duke to Adolf Hitler, 1 November 1932, in BAK, Rep. 18, Nr. 5330.
273. NSDAP personnel files, in BAB (BDC), Personalakte: Karl Eduard Herzog von Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha (1884–1954). Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler.*
274. See: correspondence and the Club's statutes, in BAK, Rep. 18, Nr. 5334, 5337.
275. Gietinger, *Der Konterrevolutionär.*
276. BAK, Rep. 18, Nr. 5330, 402–14. (Emphasis in original.)
277. Herbert, *Best*, 42–109.
278. Report regarding the advisory board (*Beirat*) meeting of 11 May 1936, in BAK, Rep 18, Nr. 5336.
279. BAB, NSDAP index cards re: Ewald von Massow; GGT, A 1941, 310; Berghahn, *Stahlhelm*, 56f., 114; Görlitz, *Junker*, 396.
280. BAMA, N 324/32, 45–50; Wichmann, *Waldemar Pabst*; Hoepke, *Die deutsche Rechte*, 295–303.
281. For membership lists, see the appendix in Wichmann, *Waldemar Pabst*.
282. Letter from the Crown Prince to his father, Wilhelm II, 7 May 1928, in Ilsemann II, 95 (italics added); cf. Preußen, *Hohenzollern*, 198.
283. 'Kaiser Wilhelm über das Italien Mussolinis' (report about an interview Wilhelm conducted with Pietro Solari for the *Gazetta del Popolo*), in *Berliner Börsenzeitung* 6 May 1932.
284. Manfred von Binzer, 'Faszismus', in DAB, 21 July/21 September/1 October 1927; Manfred von Binzer, 'Deutscher Faschismus?', in DAB, 21 June 1930. Cf. Rößling, 'Faschismus', 165–83.
285. Copius, 'Zur Rolle', 113–16; Baranowski, *Sanctity of Rural Life*, 154; Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm*, 311–21; Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 52–60; Schieder, 'Das italienische Experiment', 73–125; Hoepke, *Die deutsche Rechte*, 318–24; Reichardt/Nolzen, *Faschismus*.
286. Kartowitsch, *Herrengesellschaft Mecklenburg*, 91–4. Compare with Hassell, *Tagebücher*, 147.
287. Carl Werner von Jordans to Baron Hermann von Lüninck, 14 September 1932, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 819.
288. Cf. Aretin, 'Adel', 520–3, and Dohna, *Adel*, 31–5.
289. Correspondence between Baron Heinrich von Gleichen and Prince Carl zu Castell-Castell, 1923, in FCAC, I d VIII, Nr. 29.
290. List of participants at the inaugural meeting (*Gründungstagung*), 3–5 November 1922, in FCAC, I d VIII, Nr. 3.
291. Aretin, 'Adel', 520–7; Dohna, *Adel*, 31–5.
292. *Gäa* pamphlet: 'Bauer, weißt Du was der Versailler Vertrag für die Landwirtschaft bedeutet?' in FCAC, I d VIII, Nr. 3. Count Otto von Stolberg-Wernigerode to Martin Spahn, 26 April 1924, in BAK, R 118, vol. 35, 141.

293. Prince Stolberg-Wernigerode, 12 June 1922, in FFAD, Kab. Sekr., Verein der dt. Standesherren.
294. Turner, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power*, 147; Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 301–8.

4. NAZIS AND NOBLES: CONFLICTS

1. Siemens, *The Making of a Nazi Hero*, 60–4, 136–9.
2. Urbach, *European Aristocracies*.
3. Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Adel*, 259.
4. Aretin, 'Adel', 526–30, 542.
5. Sendtner, *Rupprecht von Wittelsbach*, 537–9; Aretin, 'Die bayerische Regierung', 224–35; Bottlenberg-Landsberg, *Die 'Weißen Blätter'*.
6. Fröhlich (ed.), *Goebbels-Tagebücher*, part 1, vol. 3, Entry from 9 November 1939, 636.
7. Aretin, 'Adel', 539; Aretin, 'Die bayerische Regierung', 236.
8. Baron Erwein von Aretin, 9 December 1940 to *Reichsjustizminister* (Minister of Justice) Gürtner, see also his curriculum vitae and various letters to the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* (Chamber of Writers of the Reich) (1939–42), in BAB (BDC), PA: Baron Erwein von Aretin, 19 September 1887.
9. Scheurig, *Kleist-Schmenzin*, 138–50, 189–200.
10. Flemming, 'Konservativismus', 323–31.
11. Baranowski, *Sanctity of Rural Life*, 145–86.
12. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, vol. 1, 250–3.
13. Otto Strasser, 'Die Sozialisten verlassen die NSDAP', in *Der Nationale Sozialist*, 4 July 1930.
14. Schulenburg to Arnim, 19 November 1929, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg.
15. Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg to Count Dietlof von Arnim, 8 April 1933, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg.
16. Preußen, *Hohenzollern*.
17. The first marriage of Princess Hermine Reuß (Elder Line) (1887–1947) was to Prince Johann Georg Prinz von Schönaich-Carolath (1873–1920).
18. Prince von Fürstenberg (27.11.1933) regarding the reception in Berlin on 24/25 November 1933 (FFAD, Hof.verw., Fü.Hs., Vol. bb II/5).
19. Malinowski, 'Ent-Schädigungen', 586–92; 'Aufruf des Kronprinzen', in *Schlesische Zeitung*, 3 April 1932; the Crown Prince's rejection of the counter-appeal for Hindenburg, in BLHA, Rep. 37 Lübbenau, Nr. 6643; Pomp, 'Brandenburgischer Landadel', 213–16; Berghahn, *Stahlhelm*, 195–219.
20. Pyta, *Hindenburg*, 671–85; Stribrny, 'Versuch einer Kandidatur', 199–210.
21. Ilsemann, *Kaiser*; Röhl, *Into the Abyss*, 1188–267.
22. Ilsemann, *Kaiser*, vol. 2, 152–9, 193–5; Preußen, *Hohenzollern*, 78–85; Granier, *Levetzow*, 160, 287–9.

23. Preußen, *Hohenzollern*, see particularly 124–63, 252–4; Granier, *Levetzow*, 126–89; Jung, *Volksgesetzgebung*, 540–5; Cecil, *Wilhelm II*, vol. 2, 317–56.
24. Granier, *Levetzow*, *passim*.
25. Granier, *Levetzow*, 151–89.
26. Scheel, *Der Tag von Potsdam*.
27. Minutes of the three meetings with Hitler (9 May 1933, 24 October 1933, 2 February 1934) and of a meeting with Hitler's State Secretary (*Staatssekretär*) Hans Heinrich Lammers (26 September 1933), in GStAPK, BPH, Rep. 53, Nr. 167, 1–6. Partially reproduced in Gutsche/Petzold, 'Verhältnis', 934–9; Gutsche, *Ein Kaiser im Exil*, 169–179; and Preußen, *Hohenzollern*, 182–222.
28. Cramon's memorandum to Hindenburg, 'Argumente für eine Rückkehr Seiner Majestät des Kaisers und Königs in Seine Rechte anlässlich des 75. Geburtstages', in BAMA, N 266, Nr. 46, Fol. 1–4. For Hindenburg's response, see: ibid., Nr. 83, Fol. 17f.
29. Gasteiger, *Kuno von Westarp*, 467–86; Biskup and Kohlrausch (eds), *Erbe der Monarchie*, 11–34; Kohlrausch, *Der Monarch im Skandal*, 386–444, 469–75.
30. Description from Ilsemann, *Kaiser*, vol. 2, 247–50, quotation 248.
31. BAB (BDC), NSDAP local card indexes (*Ortskartei*), Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz, 8 December 1865.
32. Retired Major General Count Rüdiger von der Goltz to Johann von Leers, 27 January 1934, in BAMA, N 266, Nr. 42, Fol. 1–12 (also contains letters by Cramon and von Leers).
33. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 175–76; Johann von Leers to Cramon, 31 January 1934, in BAMA, N 266, Nr. 42, Fol. 14–16.
34. Cramon's missive was not the only letter of protest that was aimed at the Nazis after the incident. Other letters were also signed by a number of Prussian officers—including Schulenburg, Berg-Markienen, Cramon, Mackensen, and Hindenburg—who were all between seventy-three and eighty-six years of age at that time.
35. Johann v. Leers to Cramon, 31 January 1934, in: BAMA, N266, Nr. 42, 14–16.
36. Letter from Detlev von Arnim to Wilhelm II, 30 November 1930, quoted in Gutsche, *Ein Kaiser im Exil*, 129.
37. Achim von Arnim, 'Der Adel am Scheidewege!', in DAB, 12 August 1933.
38. 'Die Sozialisten verlassen die NSDAP (Aufruf der Gruppe um Otto Strasser)', in *Der Nationale Sozialist*, 4 July 1930; Kühnl, *Die Nationalsozialistische Linke*, 64–7, 79–81, 248–61.
39. Ludwig Pesl, 'Zur politischen Einstellung des Jungadels', in *Gelbe Hefte* 6/1930, 665–80, see particularly 671ff. For Pesl's correspondence with Count Drechsel, Baron von Redwitz, and Prince Öttingen concerning landownership and the NSDAP (1929 and 1931), see: AVBG, folder 'Bodenreform 1923–1932' and BayHStA, GKEB, Nr. 6.
40. Manfred von Binzer, 'Politische Bewegungen in Deutschland (Vortrag auf dem DAG Adelskapitel, 6.12.1930 in Berlin)', in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS', see particularly 17–19.

41. Maser, *Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP*, 470; Kühnl, *Die nationalsozialistische Linke*, 65.
42. Turner, *Großunternehmer*, 232–43.
43. These overtures included the attention-grabbing speech Hitler delivered to the Düsseldorf Industrial Club in January 1932. Turner, *Großunternehmer*, 259–73.
44. Talks held in Berlin on 29 September 1930, see: Granier, *Levetzow*, 278.
45. Wilhelm von Oertzen to Hitler, 4 June 1928, and to the NSDAP's *Kanzlei* ('Chancellery'), 26 September 1928, in MLHA, MGH, vol. 3, Fol. 148, Fol. 7, Fol. 105–7.
46. Speech delivered in Aystetten by Baron Wilhelm von Reitzenstein, Chairman of the DAG's Swabian regional group (*Bezirksgruppe*), 25 October 1931, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle'. Reitzenstein's letter to Prince Öttingen-Spielberg, in ibid., vol. 1, folder '1930–1931'.
47. Hitler's responses as given in the prince's minutes of their meeting, reproduced in Gossweiler/Schlicht, 'Junker', quotation 653f.
48. Count Dietlof von Arnim to Prince Eulenburg, 26 February 1931, reproduced in Gossweiler/Schlicht, 'Junker', 655.
49. Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 268.
50. Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin, *Der Nationalsozialismus—Eine Gefahr*, Berlin 1932, in Scheurig, *Kleist-Schmenzin*, 255–64.
51. Schwerin, 'Dann sind's die besten Köpfe', 40f.
52. Statement made by Walter von Corswant (1886–1942), August 1930, in Baranowski, *Sanctity of Rural Life*, 153.
53. Pesl, 'Zur politischen Einstellung des Jungadels', in *Gelbe Hefte* 6/1930, 665–80, see particularly 671ff.
54. Pesl to Redwitz, 15 June and 29 November 1931; Redwitz to Pesl, 19 June 1931; Redwitz to Öttingen 16 June 1931; all in AVBG, folder 'Bodenreform 1923–1932'. Pesl to Drechsel 29 November 1929 and 5 December 1929, in BayHStA, GKE, Nr. 6.
55. Gies, *Richard Walther Darré*; Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 130–47; Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 203–85.
56. Pomp, *Bauern und Großgrundbesitzer*, 378.
57. Lower, *Nazi Empire-building*, 261(n1).
58. Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung*, 9–119; Breuer, *Die Nordische Bewegung*, 223–34; Conze, 'Rittergüter—Erbhöfe—Hegehöfe', 339–52; Ingaro, *Hitlers Elite*, 77–106, 177–240; Hein, *Elite für Volk und Führer?*, 92–149.
59. Günther, *Rassenkunde Europas*; Günther, *Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes*.
60. Günther, *Adel und Rasse*, 82–6. Günther's text also includes a hint that Friedrich Wilhelm Prinz zur Lippe made similar claims.
61. Günther, *Adel und Rasse*, 93.
62. Günther, *Adel und Rasse*, 86; Breuer, *Die Nordische Bewegung*, 93–7.
63. Müller, *Wilhelm II*, 12 and 77–80.
64. The 'Agrarian Apparatus' (*Agrarpolitischer Apparat*) was an internal National Socialist organization that aimed to create and propagate a new agrarian policy which would be attractive to Germany's farmers and aligned with the party's

settlement programmes. Darré began developing his concept of the New Nobility from within the Agrarian Apparatus from 1930. Corni/Gies, *Blut und Boden*; Gies, *Richard Walther Darré*.

65. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*.
66. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, 11, 163.
67. Wolfgang Frhr. von Gersdorff, ' "Neuadel"?', in *Nordische Stimmen. Zeitschrift für deutsche Rassen- und Seelenkunde* 1/1931, quotation 4f.
68. Breuer, *Die Nordische Bewegung*, 180–90.
69. Neumann, *Behemoth*.
70. Corni/Gies, *Blut und Boden*, 228–48, 397–421.
71. Neumann, *Behemoth*, 394.
72. §3 and §5 of the *Reichserbhofgesetz* ('law on inherited farms') from 29 March 1933, in Corni/Gies, *Blut und Boden*, 104–9.
73. Prince Dohna, 11 July 1938, in BAB (BDC), PA: Alexander Fürst zu Dohna-Schlobitten, 1 December 1899; Darré to Dohna and Himmler, 18 August 1938, and Dohna's letter of apology, 21 August 1938, 173–80.
74. Regional Farmers' Leader (*Landesbauernführer*) for the Province of Kurhessen to Darré, 21 July 1938; Board of Directors (*Verwaltungsrat*) of the Hesse-Nassau Regional Farmers' Association (*Landesbauernschaft)* to Darré, 10 September 1938; Darré to Himmler, 11 February 1939, in BAB (BDC), PA: Josias Erbprinz zu Waldeck-Pyrmont, 13 May 1896.
75. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 25 November 1933 and 2 December 1933, in AOBS, I, vol. 26.
76. Gestapo reports of 6 December 1940 and 7 January 1941; judgement of the *Anerbengericht* (a court dealing with the inheritance of *Erbhof* estates) of 27.5.1940; and Löwenstein's appeal of 27 June 1940, in BAB (BDC), PA: Alois Fürst zu Löwenstein, 15 September 1871.
77. Reference to the abbreviated form of the 'blood' and 'soil' imagery in Klemperer, *LTI*, 306.
78. In addition to being a philologist, Hans F. K. Günther was also much-vaunted as an 'anthropologist'. Weisenburger, 'Der "Rassepapst" ', see particularly 163–81.
79. Eidenbenz, ' "Blut und Boden" ', 206.
80. Darré, *Bauerntum als Lebensquell*, 343, 371, 397, 466–72.
81. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, see particularly the section entitled 'Tierzüchterische Tatsachen als Erkenntnisquelle und Anleitung', 144ff., 175–80; Eidenbenz, ' "Blut und Boden" ', 67.
82. Darré's advice was very practical indeed. He offered tips about 'selective breeding', 'rearing', 'feeding', and 'animal husbandry', for instance, and explained why it was less important to pay attention to 'stallions' than to 'mares'. See: Darré, *Bauerntum als Lebensquell*, 375–7.
83. Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, 64.
84. Baroness Charlotte von Vietinghoff-Scheel (*1900) was the daughter of an estate owner and had five siblings who were married to aristocrats. GHdA, FA, vol. VIII, 1971, 366. Eidenbenz, ' "Blut und Boden" ', 29.

85. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, 171.
86. Dr J. von Volkmann, 'Artamanenbewegung', in DAB, 18/1930, 250; Correspondence between Ludwig Pesl, Baron Alfons von Redwitz, and Karl Ludwig Guttenberg, 1929, in AVBG, folder 'Bodenreform 1923–1932'; Kater, 'Die Artamanen', 577–638.
87. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, 11.
88. Eidenbenz, '"Blut und Boden"', 69–84, quotation 80.
89. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, 12, 14.
90. This idea was also shared by Hans F. K. Günther. See: Günther, *Der Nordische Gedanke*. For the notion of *Aufnordung* (increasing the level of 'Nordic' genetic material among the population), a central component of the Nordicist strains of *völkisch* race theories, see: Lutzhöft, *Der Nordische Gedanke in Deutschland*, and Essner-Conte, *'Nürnberger Gesetze'*, 25–42. In contrast, for the standpoint of the most radical and uncompromising theorists of 'racial purity', see: Essner-Conte, *'Nürnberger Gesetze'*, 14–24.
91. Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden*, 92–9, see particularly 96.
92. Houwald, *Eisernes Buch*, 13f.; Leopold Frhr. von Vietinghoff-Scheel, 'Neuadel', in DAB 1930, 662.
93. *SS-Ahnentafeln* (SS Genealogical Tables) of the SS officer Count Hermann zu Dohna-Finckenstein, produced for his daughter's marriage to the SS officer Count Reinhold von Krockow, in BAB (BDC), PA: Hermann Graf zu Dohna, 10 October 1894.
94. Wegner, *Hitlers politische Soldaten*, 38–56; Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 255–61.
95. Kuno Graf von Dürckheim, 'Nationalsozialismus und Adel' (memorandum, autumn 1935), in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '35/36'. Article entitled 'Zweierlei Adel', in *Das Schwarze Korps*, 13 May 1935; Conze, 'Adel unter dem Totenkopf', 151–76; Conze, 'Rittergüter—Erbhöfe—Hegehöfe', 339–52.
96. Dürckheim, 'Nationalsozialismus und Adel' (autumn 1935), in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '35/36'.
97. 'Warum ist der Zusammenschluss des reinblütigen deutschen Adels notwendig?' (DAG circular letter, 20 May 1938), in MLHA, GHK III, Nr. 2647.
98. Count Franz von Galen to Baron Ferdinand von Lüninck, 10 March 1934, in WAAM, Nachlaß Galen, Nr. 39.
99. See: Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie*, 431–48; Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution*, 275–2891; Prinz/Zitelmann (eds), *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*; Frei, 'Wie modern war der Nationalsozialismus?', in GG 19 (1993), 367–87.
100. Dahrendorf, *Gesellschaft und Demokratie*, 448.
101. Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 61–137, 431–50; Longerich, *Braunen Bataillone*, 93–109; Siemens, *Stormtroopers*, 75–116.
102. Hindenburg's oft-cited remark was made on 10 August 1932 during a meeting with Franz von Papen. According to Hindenburg, it was a 'bit of a stretch' to expect him to appoint the 'Bohemian corporal' as Chancellor. Quoted in Winkler, *Weimar*, 509.

103. Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 396f., 463–72; Raab, 'Adeligkeit und Widerstand', in Raasch (ed.), *Adeligkeit, Katholizismus*, 235–61.
104. Görlitz, *Junker*, 383 (armchair/cigar fumes); the same anecdote also appears in Scheurig, *Kleist-Schmenzin*, 95 and Lehndorff, *Menschen, Pferde*, 177, 252 (also here: Goebbels/Oldenburg/boots); Guttenberg, *Beim Namen gerufen*, 79, 134, 207; Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse*, 195 (lower-middle-class); Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 102, 106, 114, 116, 196f.; Reibnitz, *Im Dreieck*, 21, 26, 32 (waiter-like); Sachsen, *Mein Lebensweg*, 162, 208, 213f., 23; Schlabrendorff, 124, 169f. (distance); Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 72f., (criminal's face), 112f., 142, 227; Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 51, 66 (puffed-up/vegetable soup/lad); Wilmowsky, *Rückblickend möchte ich sagen*, 149; Arnim, *Als Brandenburg*, 193; Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*, 134; Maltzan, *Schlage die Trommel*, 81; Dönhoff, *'Um der Ehre willen'*, 48; Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 213; Rheinbaben, *Kaiser, Kanzler*, 210; Löwenstein, *Abenteurer der Freiheit*, 115; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 199; Carsten, *Geschichte*, 9 (flag).
105. Lehmann, '"Grafenerzählungen"', 65 ('narrative community'). For different versions of the pistol-shooting incident, see: Maltzan, *Schläge die Trommel*, 108; Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang*, 62; and Dönhoff, *'Um der Ehre willen'*, 72.
106. Levetzow to Ludendorff (29 July 1923) and Prince Guidotto von Donnersmarck (11 May 1930), in Granier, *Levetzow*, 242, 269; Count Dietlof von Arnim to Wilhelm II, 11 October 1931 ('drummer'), to Hindenburg, 2 March 1932, in Gossweiler/Schlicht, 'Junker', 659–61.
107. *Fränkischer Kurier*, 10 September 1932. Emphasis in original.
108. Speech in Bamberg on 14 February 1926, quoted in Kershaw, *Hubris*, 275.
109. Gerstner, *Neuer Adel*, 133–40, 314–18; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 341–67.
110. Machtan, *Der Kaisersohn*.
111. Speech in Gotha on 26 March 1931, quoted in Preußen, *Hohenzollern*, 265. The brawl took place in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad) on 20 March 1931. The story caught the attention of both the press and the Prussian provincial legislature (*Preußischer Landtag*).
112. SD report from Stettin (Szczecin) to the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* (Chamber of Writers of the Reich), undated curriculum vitae and questionnaire, 1940/1941, in BAB (BDC), PA: Konrad Graf Finck von Finckenstein, 23 February 1910.
113. Report by the NSDAP *Kreisleiter* ('county leader') regarding Baron Karl Adam von Aretin, the owner of Schloß Haidenburg, 6 January 1945, in BAB (BDC), PA: Karl Adam Frhr. von Aretin, 22 August 1907.
114. Wilhelm Kube to Strasser, 9 October 1931, and Helmuth Brückner's comments from March 1932, both quoted in Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft*, 342, 353.
115. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 57 (entry of 15 March 1932).
116. Combs, *The Voice of the SS*.
117. *Das Schwarze Korps*, 29 May 1935, 7, and 'Der neue Menschentypus', in *Das Schwarze Korps*, 6 March 1935, 5 September 1935; Combs, *The Voice of the SS*.

118. SD reports from 1938/39, in Boberach (ed.), *Meldungen aus dem Reich*, vol. 2, 76, 244.
119. According to Prince Otto von Bismarck's account, 16 April 1934, in AOBS, I, Vol. 31.
120. Arnim's statements, 25 October 1938, and the Party Court's ruling, 16 January 1939, in BAB (BDC), PA: Hans-Arno von Arnim, 20 May 1903.
121. *NSKK-Sturmführer* ('National Socialist Drivers' Corps Storm Leader') Vollhardt in the trial against Arnim, 7 August 1937 and 25 October 1938, in BAB (BDC), PA: Hans-Arno von Arnim, 20 May 1903.
122. Hereditary Prince Josias zu Waldeck-Pyrmont to Heinrich Himmler, 30 March 1933, in BAB (BDC), PA: Waldeck-Pyrmont, 13 May 1896.
123. Keinemann, *Vom Krummstab zur Republik*, 408. Additional documentation in Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 32f.
124. Schleicher, 24 November 1933, in BAB (BDC), PA: Erasmus Frhr. von Malsen-Ponickau, 5 June 1895; Aretin, 'Adel', 525, 536, 554; Houwald to Karl Holz, 7 July 1938, minutes from 8 July 1938, and Holz to Houwald, 21 July 1938 ('slaps in the face'), in BAB (BDC), PA: Albrecht Frhr. von Houwald, 10 June 1866, *Der Stürmer* Nr. 16/1938 and Nr. 27/1938.
125. BAB (BDC), PA: Otto Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, 11 July 1878, SD report of 16 June 1943.
126. Mallmann/Paul, 'Resistenz oder loyale Widerwilligkeit?', 99–116.
127. Quoted in Niemann, *Mecklenburgischer Großgrundbesitz*, 267.
128. Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn*, 9–22.
129. Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*.
130. Schaumburg, *Zwischen Krone und Kerker*, 87f.; BAB (BDC), PA: Friedrich Christian Prinz zu Schaumburg-Lippe, 5 January 1906, see also the self-portrayal in the personal files (PA) of Prince August Wilhelm von Preußen.
131. BAB (BDC), PA: Klaus Graf von Baudissin, 4 November 1891 (including the count's self-portrayal).
132. *SA-Gruppenführer-Ost* Krüger, 'Haben wir Führer?', in *Der SA-Mann*, 19 January 1932.
133. Anonymous SA-Führer, September 1932, *Völkischer Beobachter*, in StAA, Nl. Waldbott, box '449'.
134. Koch, *Männer im Braunhemd*, 220f.
135. *Der SA-Mann*, 11 September 1937.
136. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 97–103 (entry of 10 March 1933).
137. Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 401–75.
138. Bogen to all regional branches, 25 February 1936, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Presse/Angriff'.
139. Letters from Öttingen, Aretin, Quadt, and the DAG's press department (*Presseabteilung*) in Berlin, February 1936, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Presse/Angriff'.
140. Letter to Count Eugen von Quadt-Wykradt-Isny, 27 February 1936, and letter of 15 April 1936, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Presse/Angriff'. BAB (BDC), NSDAP-OK, Aufseß; Aretin, 'Adel', 554.

141. Letter of 24 October 1938, in FTTZA, HMA, Nr. 3068.
142. Letters of 1 December 1934 and 20 June 1936, in FTTZA, HMA, Nr. 3068; *Hofmarschallamt* (Court Chamberlain's Office) to the 'scrap metal task force' run by the NSDAP's *Kreisleitung* (district leaders) in Regensburg, 17 November 1938, in FTTZA, HMA, Nr. 3068.
143. Letters of 15 September 1933, 5 March 1934, and 15 March 1934, in FTTZA, HMA, Nr. 3068.
144. Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 358–371, 385–407; Longerich, *Braunen Bataillone*, 127–36.
145. Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 362.
146. Malinowski/Reichardt, 'Die Reihen fest geschlossen?'
147. Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 416–31, quotation 416; Jamin, *Klassen*, 77–159.
148. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 25/26 September 1932. DAB, 24 June 1933, 445f.
149. Achim von Arnim, 'Adel am Scheidewege', in DAB, 12 August 1933, 573f., 621–3.
150. Otto Weber-Krohse, 'Adel und Nationalsozialismus', in DAB 24 June 1933, 445f. Also see the reactions to this article in DAB 1933, 286, 807.
151. Graf zu Solms-Laubach, 'Der Adel ist tot—es lebe der Adel', in Schaumburg-Lippe (ed.), *Wo war der Adel?*, 8.
152. Prince Friedrich Christian zu Schaumburg-Lippe (closing remarks), in Schaumburg-Lippe (ed.), *Wo war der Adel?*, 50.
153. Pyta, *Hindenburg*; Jones, 'Franz von Papen', 272–318; Möckelmann, *Franz von Papen*; Lüdicke, *Constantin von Neurath*, 158–72, 211–12.
154. Scheidemann, *Brockdorff-Rantzau*.
155. Hansen, *Bernstorff*; Conze, *Von deutschem Adel*, 199–206; Dönhoff, *'Um der Ehre willen'*, 56–66; Vollmer/Broder-Keil, *Stauffenbergs Gefährten*; Doerries, 'Individualist und Diplomat', 35–50.
156. Gerlach, *Von rechts nach links*, and Gerlach, *Erinnerungen eines Junkers*; Koch (ed.), *Vom Junker zum Bürger*.
157. Easton, *The Red Count*.
158. Biographical information from the *Gotha* and the records (*Handakten*) from his time as Minister of State, in MLHA, Handakten Reibnitz, see particularly Nr. 554, 559, and 562.
159. Reibnitz, *Mein Ausscheiden aus dem preußischen Staatsdienst*.
160. Reibnitz to Count Schwerin-Mildenitz, 30 March 1922, MLHA, Handakten Reibnitz, Nr. 554.
161. Reibnitz, *Gestalten rings um Hindenburg*; Reibnitz, *Im Dreieck*; Reibnitz, *Wilhelm II. und Hermine*.
162. Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 163; Krockow, *Reise nach Pommern*, 208; Dönhoff, *'Um der Ehre willen'*, 79f.; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 229f.; Putlitz, *Bildersaal*, 16f.; Arnim, *Der grüne Baum*, 73; Merkenich, *Front*, 137.
163. Stenbock-Fermor, *Der rote Graf*; Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 163; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 229; Arnim, *Der grüne Baum*, 73.
164. Wala, 'Republikaner ohne Republik'.

165. Gerlach, *Erinnerungen eines Junkers*, 32–5.
166. Zedlitz-Trützschler, *Zwölf Jahre*.
167. Stahlberg, *Als Preußen noch Preußen war*, 131; Jordan, *Unser Dorf*, 204–6; Schlabrendorff, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 43–5; Erwein Frhr. von Aretin, 'Adel, Nation und Krone', in *In Treue fest*, 21 July 1924.
168. Prittwitz, *Zwischen Petersburg und Washington*, 100.
169. Gräper, 'Die Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft', in Wette (ed), *Pazifistische Offiziere*, 201–17.
170. Schoenaich, *Mein Damaskus*.
171. Rheinbaben, *An den Deutschen Adel*, quotations 7, 8, 17, 26f.; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 229f.; Rheinbaben, *Kaiser, Kanzler*.
172. Machtan, *Max von Baden*.
173. Löwenstein, *Botschafter ohne Auftrag*; Löwenstein, *Abenteurer der Freiheit*.
174. The *Vortrupp Schwarz-Rot-Gold* youth organization bore strong formal similarities with the elitist *Bündische Bewegung* youth movement and had a clear affection for the Republic and its values.
175. Löwenstein, 'Das Dritte Reich ante portas', in *Vossische Zeitung* 12 July 1930.
176. Löwenstein, *Abenteurer der Freiheit*, 42, 69.
177. Löwenstein, *Botschafter ohne Auftrag*, 9–21.
178. Löwenstein, *Als Katholik im republikanischen Spanien*, 146–53.
179. Löwenstein, *Botschafter ohne Auftrag*; Zühlsdorff, *Deutsche Akademie im Exil*, 25–43, 69–105; Lehmann (ed.), *Deutsche Intellektuelle*, 417–21; Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 170–84.
180. Renn, *Adel im Untergang*; Renn, *Kindheit und Jugend*; Renn, *Der Spanische Krieg*; Barth (ed.), *Wer war Wer in der DDR*, 694–5; Auer, *Ludwig Renn*.
181. Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*; Maltzan, *Schlage die Trommel*; Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreußen*; Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*; Harpprecht, *Die Gräfin*.
182. Enzensberger, *Hammerstein oder der Eigensinn*; Enzensberger, *The Silences of Hammerstein*.
183. Hoffrogge, *Werner Scholem*; for biographical details from the German Communists' Handbook, see: https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/wer-war-wer-in-der-ddr-%2363;-1424.html?ID=4419.
184. Enzensberger, *Hammerstein oder der Eigensinn*, 60.
185. Wienfort, 'Gesellschaftsdamen, Gutsfrauen, Rebellinnen', 197–202.
186. Graf, 'Rezension'; Aly, 'Im Geschichtskino'; Ullrich, 'Ein General'.
187. Strenge, *Ferdinand von Bredow*, 12–15, 42–50.
188. Franz von Papen, speech to the *Universitätsbund* in Marburg, 17 June 1934, in Michaelis/Schraepler (eds), *Ursachen und Folgen*, vol. 10, 157–64; Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 451–73.
189. Ernst Röhm, 'S.A. und deutsche Revolution', in *Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte*, Nr. 39 (June 1933), 251–4; speech by Ernst Röhm, in *Der S.A.-Mann*, 7 April 1934.
190. Jones, 'Limits', in Jones/Retallack (eds), *Reform*, 465–501; see also Noakes, 'German Conservatives', in Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives*, 71–92.

191. Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 243–50, 441–9.
192. Grass, *Edgar Jung*; Höhne, *Mordsache Röhm*; Görlitz, *Junker*, 397f.
193. Broszat, *Staat Hitlers*, 271.
194. Müller, *Das Heer und Hitler*, 122–41; Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, 83–95.
195. Müller, *Witzleben, Stülpnagel, Speidel*, 6.
196. Aretin, 'Adel', 556–65; Dohna, *Adel*, 65–70; Fröhlich, 'Falle', 209–27.
197. Conze, 'Adel und Adeligkeit', in Reif (ed.), *Adel und Bürgertum*, vol. 2, 267–95.
198. Zuckmayer, speech of 20 July 1969, in Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand (ed.), *Der 20. Juli 1944*, 112; Conze, 'Aufstand des preußischen Adels'.
199. Helmut Kohl, speech in Berlin, 20 July 1994, in *Bulletin der deutschen Bundesregierung*, 22 July 1994, 68–94.
200. List of aristocrats linked to the plot of 20 July 1944 who lost their lives, in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 915.
201. Robert Ley, 'Gott schütze den Führer', in *Der Angriff*, 23 July 1944.
202. Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat*; Fest, *Staatsstreich*; Hoffmann, *Die Sicherheit des Diktators*; Schwerin, *'Dann sind's die besten Köpfe'*, 14–16.
203. Klemperer et al. (eds), *Die Männer des 20. Juli*; Hamerow, *Die Attentäter*, 29–178.
204. Hassell, 22 January 1943, in Hassell, *Tagebücher*, 347; Hamerow, 'The Conservative Resistance', in Jones/Retallack (eds), *Reform*, 433–63.
205. Höhne, *Mordsache Röhm*, 232; Orth, '"Amtssitz der Opposition"', 441–5; Brakelmann, *Peter Yorck von Wartenburg*, 114.
206. Rouette, *Die Widerstandslegende*; Hamerow, *Die Attentäter*, 409–21.
207. Conze, 'Adel und Adeligkeit', 289–95; Conze, 'Aufstand des preußischen Adels'.
208. Görlitz, *Junker*, 407–10; Scheurig, *Kleist-Schmenzin*, *passim*; Scheurig, *Tresckow*, *passim*; Dönhoff, *'Um der Ehre willen'*, 168 ('austerity').
209. Brakelmann, *Peter Yorck zu Wartenburg*; Brakelmann, *Helmuth James von Moltke*; Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*; Harpprecht, *Die Gräfin*; Heinemann, *Rebell*; Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*; Krusenstjern, *'daß es Sinn hat'*; Steinbach, *Der 20. Juli*; Mommsen, *Alternative*.
210. Conze, 'Adel und Adeligkeit', 284–9.
211. Mommsen, 'Gesellschaftsbild und Verfassungspläne', in Mommsen, *Alternative*, 53–158; Mommsen, 'Neuordnungspläne der Widerstandbewegung', in Mommsen, *Alternative*, 159–206; Dipper, 'Der deutsche Widerstand'; Steinbach, *Widerstand im Widerstreit*; Heinemann, 'Arbeit am Mythos' (Part I); Heinemann/Krüger-Charlé, 'Arbeit am Mythos' (Part II), 475–501.
212. Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 388.

5. NAZIS AND NOBLES: AFFINITIES

1. Schmitt, *Begriff des Politischen*.
2. BLHA, Rep. 37 Boitzenburg, Nr. 4434; MLHA, HGM, vol. 7, 50–2; Gossweiler/Schlicht, 'Junker', 644–62; Pomp, 'Brandenburgischer Landadel', 208–10; Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft*, 340f.; Merkenich, *Front*, 323–5.

3. Prince Eulenburg-Hertefeld, circular letter (February 1931) and letter to Count Dietlof von Arnim (27 February 1931), in Gossweiler/Schlicht, 'Junker', 652f., 657f.
4. Quast-Langen to General von Dommes, 4 December 1930, quoted in Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft*, 341.
5. The event took place in Berlin on 21 January 1931. Gerbet, *Carl-Hans Graf von Hardenberg*, 61; Pomp, 'Brandenburgischer Landadel', 209.
6. Count Dietlof von Arnim to Prince Eulenburg, 26 February 1931, and Prince Eulenburg's notes regarding his meeting with Hitler, quoted in Gossweiler/Schlicht, 'Junker', 655f. (Emphasis in original). Tellingly, this same passage is not quoted in Arnim, *Arnim-Boitzenburg*, 275–9.
7. Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg to Arnim, 19 November 1929, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg. Cf. Arnim, *Arnim-Boitzenburg*, 274.
8. Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg to Count Dietlof von Arnim, 23 November 1932 and 8 April 1933, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg.
9. Wirsching, '"Man kann nur Boden germanisieren"', 517–50.
10. Bernstorff's diary (5 March 1933), quoted in Conze, *Vom deutschen Adel*, 170–6.
11. Grand Duke Friedrich Franz von Mecklenburg-Schwerin to Kurt von Schleicher, 18 November 1932, in BAMA, N 42, Nr. 31.
12. Baron Enoch von Guttenberg, 7 December 1930 and 13 December 1931, quoted in Aretin, 'Adel', 529f., and Dohna, *Adel*, 43–5.
13. Baron Alexander von Elverfeldt-Canstein, 8 August 1932, in WAAM, Nl. Galen, Nr. 43, 11.
14. Visker, 'Zum Unbegriff des Politischen', 116–17. English translation from Hohendahl, *Perilous Futures*, 136.
15. Rürup, 'Antisemitismus', in Rürup, *Emanzipation*, 130–43.
16. Malinowski, *Vom König zum Führer*, 157–97.
17. Volkov, 'Antisemitismus als kultureller Code', in Volkov, *Antisemitismus*, 13–36.
18. Arendt, *Elemente*, see particularly Chapters 3, 4, and 6.
19. Volkov, 'Jüdische Assimilation und Eigenart im Kaiserreich', in Volkov, *Antisemitismus*, 131–45.
20. Bering, *Name als Stigma*; Reif, 'Antisemitismus', in Reif (ed.), *Agrargesellschaft*, 402f.
21. Malinowski, 'Politische Skandale', in *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 5 (1996), 46–65; Geyer, *Kapitalismus und politische Moral*.
22. Puhle, *Agrarische Interessenpolitik*, 111–40, and particularly Reif, 'Antisemitismus', in Reif (ed.), *Agrargesellschaft*, 379–411.
23. Sartre, *Réflexions*, 10, 14.
24. Horkheimer/Adorno, *Dialektik*, 177.
25. Adorno, *Studien zum autoritären Charakter*, 110.

26. Prince Wilhelm von Preußen, memorandum to Prince Solms, March 1919, in GPSTA, Rep. 45, Nr. 17a.
27. BLHA, Rep. 37 Boitzenburg, Nr. 4369, Fol. 71: speech Arnim delivered at the Arnim family gathering (*Familientag*) in 1924.
28. Friedrich von Berg, 'Rede vor dem Adelskapitel', in DAB 1 July 1928.
29. Wedel, 'Rasse und Adel', in Schaumburg-Lippe (ed.), *Wo war der Adel?*, 10.
30. Walter von Bogen, 'Der neue Weg der DAG' (undated publication, *c.*1934), in DAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS'.
31. For the *Sippenamt*, see: Essner-Conte, 'Nürnberger Gesetze', 68f. For the SS's marriage practices, see: Schwarz, 'Herrinnen der Zukunft', in Breymayer/Ulrich/Wieland (eds), *Willensmenschen*, 123–33, see particularly 128.
32. Müldner von Mülnheim to an aristocratic colonel, 23 March 1924, in GStAPK, BPH, Rep. 54, Nr. 9.
33. Cf. Müldner von Mülnheim's letter (June 1924), in BAP 90 Mu1, vol. 3, Fol. 119–24, quotation Fol. 122.
34. Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg to the Prussian Crown Prince, 18 April 1924, in BAP, 90 Mu 1, Nr. 3, Fol. 223.
35. According to a report delivered by one Herr von Langen at the thirty-forth *Adelstag*, DAB 31 July 1920, 243.
36. BAB (BDC), PA: Ernst Erbprinz zur Lippe, 12 June 1902.
37. Baron Kurd von Gleichen-Uslar to Adolf Hitler, 18 January 1934, quoted in Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 124.
38. Baron Otto von Berchem to Baron Karl von Aretin, 24 October 1934, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 9, folder 'Ahnentafeln'.
39. Harrison, '"Alter Kämpfer"', 391–2; Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 539.
40. Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit*, 327–69.
41. Schulenburg to Arnim, 8 April 1933, in Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg.
42. Various letters from an SS court, including of 26 February 1938, in BAB (BDC), PA: Alexander Fürst zu Dohna-Schlobitten, 1 December 1899.
43. Killinger, *Ernstes und Heiteres*, 101.
44. Pomp, *Bauern und Großgrundbesitzer*, 239–64, 336–80.
45. Pyta, *Dorfgemeinschaft*, 324–383; Gessner, *Agrarverbände*, 242–58; Merkenich, *Front*, 287–52; Falter, *Hitlers Wähler*, 256–66.
46. Cf. Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit*, 105–46.
47. Stern, *Kulturpessimismus*, 284.
48. Adolf Hitler, speech at an NSDAP meeting in Munich, 4 May 1923, in Hitler, *Sämtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, quotation 924.
49. Kershaw (1998), *Hitler 1889–1936*, 215–397, and Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth*, see particularly 13–47.
50. Baron Engelbert von Kerckerinck, December 1927, in WAAM, Nl. Kerckerinck, Nr. 178.
51. Schreiner, 'Wann kommt der Retter Deutschlands?', in *Saeculum* 49 (1998), 107–60, and Schreiner, 'Es wird kommen der Tag', in FAZ, 14 November 1998, appendix I–II.

52. In essence, the ideal of National Socialist *Führertum* followed the same model of charismatic leadership that Ian Kershaw's biography of Hitler ascribed to the Nazi leader himself. See: Kershaw (1998), *Hitler 1889–1936*.
53. Neumann, *Behemoth*, 90–7, 485.
54. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, II/81.
55. 'Ohne mich könnt ihr nichts tun!', speech by Wilhelm II in Doorn, 18 May 1930, in BAMA, N 239/49, Fol. 70–6. Emphasis in original. (English translation from: John 15:5, King James Version).
56. Appeal (*Werberuf*) by the DAG, April 1926, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder 'Protokolle'.
57. Family Newsletter of the Bülow Family Association, 1934, in LHAM-AW, Rep. E v. Bülow, Nr. 52, Fol. 52–60; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 392–404.
58. Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 255–98.
59. Kershaw, *Hubris*, 294.
60. Franz Pfeffer von Salomon, internal memorandum, 20 February 1929, quoted in Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 523. Fraschka, *Franz Pfeffer von Salomon*.
61. Arthur Mahraun, *Das Jungdeutsche Manifest*. For Mahraun (1890–1950), see: Mohler, *Konservative Revolution*, 453f.
62. Reulecke, '"Wir reiten die Sehnsucht tot"'; Reulecke, 'Männerbund versus Familie'; Kater, 'Bürgerliche Jugendbewegung', 127–74.
63. Schmid, *Aufstand der Jugend*. For Schmid (b. 1899), the charismatic founder and 'Führer' of the elitist 'Grey Corps', see: Mohler, *Konservative Revolution*, 477f., and Sombart, *Jugend*, 161–5.
64. Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 177 (see section entitled *Der bürgerliche 'Stil')*.
65. Schwarz, *Der konservative Anarchist*.
66. Jünger, *Die Staub-Dämonen*, 358.
67. Sombart, *Jugend*, 160–9; Sombart, 'Die deutschen', in Sombart, *Wilhelm II.*, 70–5, 161–93, and Radkau, *Zeitalter*, 295–309, 389–94. Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution*, 25–48; cf. Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus*, 21–95, and Breuer, *Ordnungen der Ungleichheit*, 251–5.
68. Sombart, *Jugend*, 164, cf. Kater, 'Bürgerliche Jugendbewegung', 136–55.
69. Reulecke, '"Wir reiten die Sehnsucht tot"', 156–73, quotations 157, 164; Reulecke, 'Männerbund versus Familie'; Sombart, *Die deutschen Männer*.
70. Schluchter, *Die Entzauberung der Welt*.
71. Quoted in Vollmer, *Doppelleben*, 122.
72. Brändeli, '... die Männer sollten schöner geputzt sein als die Weiber', in Kühne (ed.), *Männergeschichte*, 101–18.
73. For the famous photograph of the Kaiser and his sons (1 January 1913), see: Sombart, *Wilhelm II.*, 118.
74. Paul, *Aufstand der Bilder*, 117–52.
75. Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat*.
76. Hübinger, 'Von Bildungsbürgern und Übermenschen', 402–10; Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914*, *passim*; also Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, *passim*.
77. Mohler, 'Der fachistische Stil'; Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 535–95.

78. Erich Berger, 'Wir Jungen', in *Der SA-Mann* 27 July 1929, quoted in Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 545.
79. Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 551.
80. For an empirically rigorous description of this opposition, see: Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 544–69. For a more detailed analysis of these images of manliness and camaraderie in National Socialist propaganda, cf. Paul, *Aufstand der Bilder*, 239–42.
81. Ernst Röhm, *Völkischer Beobachter*, 19 August 1932, quoted in Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 556.
82. Magnus von Levetzow to Prince Donnersmarck, October 1931, quoted in Granier, *Levetzow*, 309. For Ewald von Kleist-Schmenzin's near-identical verdict, see Scheurig, *Kleist-Schmenzin*, 68.
83. Manfred von Killinger, in *Der SA-Mann* 2 February 1932. For the connection between anti-Semitic and anti-middle-class attitudes within the SA, see: Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 531–44.
84. Manuscript of Kerckeringk's speech about the 'Führer problem' (*Führergedanke*), *c.*1932: WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 811.
85. Levetzow's appeal, *Völkischer Beobachter*, 3 April 1932, reproduced in Granier, *Levetzow*, 335.
86. Kerckerinck to Oswald Spengler regarding the *Bauernvereine* (Farmers' Associations), 24 September 1923, in WAAM, Nl. Kerckerinck, Nr. 143.
87. Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 171; Selchow, *Hundert Tage*, 75.
88. According to Brüning, Hindenburg made this statement to Schleicher on 28 January 1933, quoted in Winkler, *Weimar*, 586.
89. Klemperer, *LTI*. See particularly the introductory section about 'heroism' (*Heroismus*), 9–18.
90. Klemperer, *Tagebücher 1933–1934*, 132.
91. Klemperer, *LTI*, 90.
92. Klemperer, *LTI*, 308f.; Goebbels, *Kampf um Berlin*, 15–33.
93. For Otto Bismarck, see the curriculum vitae from 28 June 1938 in AOBS, I, vol. 25a; see also his letter of 28 January 1933 in AOBS, I, vol. 9. For his younger brother, see BAB (BDC), Gottfried Graf von Bismarck-Schönhausen, 29 March 1901.
94. Ewald von Kleist, 'Adel und Preußentum', in *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 23 (1926), 383.
95. Aly/Heim, *Architects of Annihilation*, 260–61; Frijtag Drabbe Kunzel, '"Germanje"', 246.
96. Hereditary Grand Duke Nikolaus von Oldenburg to Himmler, 2 June 1941, and Himmler's (positive) response, in BAB (BDC), Nikolaus Erbgroßherzog von Oldenburg, 10 August 1897. For further examples of enquiries about obtaining estates in the conquered lands, see: Baron Erasmus von Malsen-Ponickau, 16 June 1941, to the *Reichsstatthalter* (Reich Governor) in Posen; Prince Adolf zu Bentheim-Tecklenburg-Rheda, letter of 1939, in BAB (BDC).

97. 'Der Legendenschatz des Deutschen Ordens', in WJOBB 52/1890, 309–12; Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*; O'Sullivan, *Between Africa and Poland*.
98. Ungern-Sternberg, *Kampf und Heimkehr*, 34.
99. Letter from the wife of Heinrich von Bismarck to her husband 'on the battlefield', 18 November 1939, in BAB (BDC), PA: Heinrich von Bismarck, 22 October 1905; also Bismarck's letter of 10.2.1943.
100. Alvensleben to Himmler, 11 September 1940, in BAB (BDC), PA: Ludolf von Alvensleben, 9 August 1899.
101. Himmler to Alvensleben, 23 September 1940, in BAB (BDC), PA: Ludolf von Alvensleben, 9 August 1899.
102. Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries*, 13–35, 156–82.
103. Begging letter in BAB (BDC), PA: Paul von Bülow, 23 February 1892.
104. Hauptmann und Kompanie-Chef I. Frhr. von Wechmar, 'Deutscher Jungadel—wo bist Du?', in DAB 11 January 1936, 67f.
105. Bundesarchiv, Zentralnachweisstelle Kornelimünster, *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten und Vorschriften*, Heft 12 (1974); Funck, 'Schock'.
106. Wegner, *Hitlers politische Soldaten*, 295–17.
107. Höhne, *Der Orden*, 127. Cf. *Dienstaltersliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP. SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer—SS-Standartenführer. Stand vom 20.4.1942, Publiziert vom SS-Personalhauptamt*, Berlin 1942.
108. Wegner, *Hitlers politische Soldaten*, 224f. Wegner states that, in 1944, the proportion of aristocrats who held different ranks ranged between 2.2 per cent (aristocrats who held the rank of SS-Major) and 12.5 per cent (nobles who held the rank of SS-Lieutenant General).
109. BAB (BDC), PA: Kurt Frhr. von Löffelholz-Colberg, 27 September 1874.
110. Correspondence with Heinrich Himmler, 1940, in BAB (BDC), PA: Ludolf von Alvensleben, 9 August 1899.
111. BAB (BDC), PA: Marie Adelheid Prinzessin Reuß zur Lippe, 30 August 1895 (including an undated curriculum vitae).
112. BAB (BDC), PA: Ernst Erbprinz zur Lippe, b. 12 June 1902 (handwritten curriculum vitae from 1939).
113. BAB (BDC), PA: Christoph Prinz von Hessen, 14 May 1901; Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*.
114. BAB (BDC), PA: August Wilhelm von Preußen, 29 January 1887 (including a curriculum vitae and details of his career in the SA and the NSDAP, 12 April 1942).
115. Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*; Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*; Urbach, 'Flirting with Hitler'; Machtan, *Der Kaisersohn*; Büschel, *Hitlers adliger Diplomat*.
116. Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*, 97–135.
117. Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*, 99, 111.
118. Paul Bang, April 1930, quoted in Gutsche, *Ein Kaiser im Exil*, 126.
119. Pomp, 'Brandenburgischer Landadel', 213–16, and Berghahn, *Stahlhelm*, 195–219; Stribrny, 'Versuch einer Kandidatur', 199–210; Pyta, *Hindenburg*, 673–78;

Machtan, *Der Kaisersohn*, 238–43; Jonas, *Der Kronprinz Wilhelm*, 224–31; Granier, *Levetzow*, 173–5.

120. 'Aufruf des Kronprinzen', *Schlesische Zeitung*, 3 April 1932.
121. Photo of the Crown Prince shaking hands with Hermann Göring in front of Berlin Cathedral, 5 February 1933, in Bundesarchiv, Bildarchiv, Image 102–14, 283. The Crown Prince is also shown appearing at this event in a propaganda film entitled *Deutschland erwacht* (1933).
122. Sauer, 'Goebbels "Rabauken" ', 107–64; Reichardt, *Kampfbünde*, 494–7.
123. Malinowski, 'Ent-Schädigungen'; Stribrny, 'Versuch einer Kandidatur'; Scheel, *Der Tag von Potsdam*; Kopke/Tress (eds), *Der Tag von Potsdam*.
124. Bundesarchiv, Bildarchiv, Image 102–02315 and Image 102–14,437.
125. 'Aufmarsch am Stahlhelm-Tag zu Hannover', 24 September 1933, in Bundesarchiv, Bildarchiv, Image 102–03043.
126. Wilhelm von Preußen to Geraldine Farrar, in GStA Berlin Dahlem, Rep. 100A, Nr. 388/2, reproduced in e.g. Machtan, *Der Kaisersohn*, 291–2; cf. article entitled 'Eine Mahnung des Kronprinzen', in *Der Tag*, 29 March 1933.
127. *Berlingske illustreret Tidende*, 22 April 1934, in GStA PK, BPH, BS 287.
128. Telegrams to Hitler, 7 May 1940, 25 June 1940, 20 September 1940. Cf. BAB, R43/4063; Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*, 169, 426; and the more moderate interpretation in Jonas, *Der Kronprinz Wilhelm*, 264–7.
129. Cf. the telephone conversation between Philipp von Hessen and Adolf Hitler, 11 March 1938, in Michaelis/Schraepler (eds), *Ursachen und Folgen*, vol. 11, 654f.
130. BAB (BDC), PA: Philipp Prinz von Hessen, 6 November 1896. For his son's similar recollections, see: Hessen, *Der kristallene Lüster*. For a detailed account, see: Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*.
131. BAB (BDC), Slg. Schumacher, Nr. 400. GGT, Fü 1942, 47ff.
132. BAB (BDC), PA: Wilhelm Prinz von Hessen, b. 1 March 1905; Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*, 136–75.
133. BAB (BDC), PA: Josias Erbprinz zu Waldeck-Pyrmont, 13 May 1896; Schmeling, *Josias Erbprinz zu Waldeck-Pyrmont*.
134. Malsen-Ponickau to Himmler, 28 April 1932, BAB, NS 19/1720.
135. BAB (BDC), PA: Friedrich Franz Erbgroßherzog von Mecklenburg, 22 April 1910.
136. Prince Bernhard von Sachsen-Meiningen, 7 November 1931, see: 'an die NSDAP' and other documents in BAB (BDC), PA: Bernhard Prinz von Sachsen-Meinigen, 30 June 1901.
137. For two typical examples, see: BAB (BDC), PA: Gottfried Graf von Bismarck-Schönhausen, 29 March 1901, and ibid., Carl Friedrich Graf von Pückler-Burghauss, 7 October 1886. Further examples in 'Sample Malinowski/Reichardt'.
138. Stackelberg, *Verwehte Blätter*, 324.
139. Cf. the example of Count Guidotto von Henckel, the Prince von Donnersmarck (1888–1959), Granier, *Levetzow*, *passim*.

140. Information from the curriculum vitae of Hans von Arnim, 16 June 1938, in BAB (BDC), PA: Hans von Arnim, 12 October 1889.
141. BAB (BDC), PA: Nikolaus Graf zu Dohna-Schlodien, 5 April 1879.
142. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 115, 145; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Erinnerungen*, 229.
143. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 110–16, 147.
144. D'Almeida, *High Society*; for the same phenomenon on an international level, see: Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*.
145. Müller, *Im Wandel einer Welt*, 299–301, and Turner, 'Emil Kirdorf', in Turner, *Faschismus und Kapitalismus*, 60–86, here 67; Fest, *Hitler 1889–1936*, 373f.
146. Kershaw (1998), *Hitler 1889–1936*, 236–43; Weidmüller, *Berliner Gesellschaft*, 190f.; Fest, *Hitler. Eine Biographie*, 199, 240, 323, 332, 353, 417; Turner, *Großunternehmer*, 76–80.
147. Ulrich von Hassell, entry of 10 October 1938, in Hassell, *Tagebücher*, 58.
148. Arnim, *Arnim-Boitzenburg*, 275f.
149. Jonas, *Der Kronprinz Wilhelm*, 211f.; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Erinnerungen*, 217–32.
150. Magnus von Levetzow to Prince von Donnersmarck, 28 August 1931, in Granier, *Levetzow*, 300.
151. Arnim, *Der grüne Baum*, 192–8.
152. Joseph Goebbels, entry of 20 February 1930, in Goebbels, *Tagebücher*.
153. Minutes of the meeting of 21 November 1931, in Granier, *Levetzow*, 293. Details of party joining dates according to BAB (BDC), Slg. Schumacher.
154. Weidmüller, *Berliner Gesellschaft*, 188f.; Preußen, *Hohenzollern*, 316f.; Reibnitz, *Gestalten rings um Hindenburg*, 63ff. ('epicentre') 181–4, 202ff.; Reibnitz, *Im Dreieck*, 201, ('introduced to Hitler's teachings') 74f.; Putlitz, *Unterwegs nach Deutschland*, 218; Tschirschky, *Erinnerungen eines Hochverräters*, 130f.
155. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 72f., 80f., 164.
156. Dirksen to Kurt von Schleicher, 28 September 1932: BAMA, N 42, Nr. 22, 190. For Hitler's face-to-face meeting with Oskar von Hindenburg in Ribbentrop's house, see: Winkler, *Weimar*, 580 and Turner, *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power*, 112–16; Pyta, *Hindenburg*, 769–806.
157. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, see particularly 137, 148, 194.
158. For her early activites, see the relevant series of articles in *Die Welt am Abend (Berlin)*, 29 January, 30 June, 1 July, 2 July, 4 July, and 15 July 1927; Gutsche, *Ein Kaiser im Exil*, 106–108; Preußen, *Hohenzollern*, 163–6.
159. Description of the meeting of 18 November 1931, reproduced in Granier, *Levetzow*, 312–17.
160. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 81f.
161. Fromm, *Als Hitler mir die Hand küßte*, 77f. Fromm's text describes a ball in Berlin that was organized by the 'Auslandsbund deutscher Frauen' (entry from 16 December 1932).
162. Arendt, *Elemente*, 195. (Quotation translated from the German edition of Arendt's work). Cf. Brelot, *Entre nationalisme*, 339–61.

163. Emil von Buch-Wendorf-Zapkendorf, 21 October 1933, to *Reichsstatthalter* (Reich Governor) Hildebrand, quoted in Niemann, *Mecklenburgischer Großgrundbesitz*, 276.
164. Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 410–13.
165. Bentheim to Löwenstein, 12 October and 2 December 1933, in BayHStA, GKE, Nr. 6; Bentheim's open letter to Hitler, 12 September 1933, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS'.
166. These five prominent National Socialists were Achim von Arnim-Cunersdorf, Georg von Detten, Dietrich von Jagow, Hans Wichard von Rochow, and the *Reichssportführer* Hans von Tschammer und Osten. All five were SA Führers. Detten and Tschammer both reached the rank of *Gruppenführer* (Group Leader) and Rochow was made an *Obergruppenführer* (Senior Group Leader).
167. Title of Chapter 12 in Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, see particularly 320–57.
168. Kleine, 'Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus', 117–39. Cf. DAB 7 July 1934, 505, and DAB July 1944, 50.
169. Aretin, *Krone*, 350.
170. Aretin, 'Adel', 556–60.
171. Meeting of the Lower Bavarian and the Upper Palatinate regional groups (*Bezirksgruppen*), 11 June 1939, in DAG, LAB, vol. 1, folder 'Hauptgeschäftsstelle 39/44'. The groups both paid homage to the 'Führer's mighty personality'. See also: Prince Öttingen to Prince Bentheim, 16 November 1936, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Aufrufe des Adelsmarschalls'.
172. Bentheim, 'An den reinblütigen deutschen Adel', in DAB, 14 September 1932.
173. Löwenstein, 20 November 1933, in *Mitteilungen der Genossenschaft katholischer Edelleute in Bayern und des Vereins katholischer Edelleute Südwestdeutschlands*, 3 December 1933, 1.
174. Minutes of the general assembly (*Generalversammlung*) in Frankfurt am Main, 17 June 1933, in LHAW-AW, Rep. H Stolberg, Kam. Ilsenburg, Y1, vol. 1, Fol. 278–85, and in FFAD, Kab. Sekr., Verein d. dt. Standesherren. Reports written to the Hereditary Prince zu Stolberg-Wernigerode regarding conferences held by the mediatized princes (*Standesherren*), 10 September 1935 and June 1937, in LHAM-AW, Rep H Stolberg, Kam. Ilsenburg, Y 28a, and ibid., Y1, vol. 1.
175. Eugen Graf von Quadt-Isny, 'Der Adel im 3. Reich'. Speech delivered to around 130 aristocrats in Munich on 12 April 1934. Text in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS'. Cf. Prince Öttingen's approving summary in DAAM, LAB, vol. 2, folder '33/34'.
176. BayHStA, GKE, vol. 6; *Kreuzzeitung*, 5 April 1933; Jones, 'Catholic Conservatives', 83, and Lob, *Albert Schmitt*, 190–4.
177. For Count von Thun, b. 1908, see: Lob, *Albert Schmitt*, 341. Thun was briefly arrested on 2 July 1934 and joined the NSDAP in 1937. See: BAB (BDC), Roderich Graf von Thun, 30 January 1908.
178. Count Thun's lecture to the general assembly (*Generalversammlung*) of the Rhenish-Westphalian Association of Catholic Nobles, 24 January 1934, in BayHStA, GKE, vol. 6, and in WAAM, Nl. Lüninck, Nr. 809.

179. Rohan, *Heimat Europa*, 182.
180. Falter, *Hitlers Wähler*, 13; Kater, *The Nazi Party*.
181. Preradovich, 'Regierende Fürsten', 28–30, quotation 30.
182. BAB (BDC), Slg. Schumacher, Nr. 400: 'Aufstellung derjenigen Parteigenossen, die Angehörige fürstlicher Häuser sind'. Probably produced in 1941. Reproduced in Petropoulos, *Royals and the Reich*, 380–9.
183. For the overall proportion of women in the NSDAP, cf. Falter, 'Die "Märzgefallenen"', 606f., and Falter, *Hitlers Wähler*, 136–46.
184. Bernhard Graf zu Solms-Laubach, 'Der Adel ist tot—es lebe der Adel', in Schaumburg-Lippe (ed.) *Wo war der Adel?*, 7.
185. Eugen Graf von Quadt-Isny, 'Der Adel im 3. Reich', text of a speech delivered in Munich on 12 April 1934, in DAAM, LAB, vol. 6, folder 'Adel und NS'.
186. Görlitz, *Junker*, 373f.
187. Heinemann, *Rebell*, 115–60.
188. Count Johann Albrecht von der Schulenburg, b. 1898, was an officer, a member of the Mecklenburg provincial legislature (*Landtag*), and a landowner who inherited his family's Tressow estate. He joined the NSDAP on 1 October 1931.
189. Count Adolf Heinrich von der Schulenburg, b. 1901, was married to (née) Baroness von Barnekow. He joined the NSDAP on 1 March 1931.
190. Letter from Schulenburg to Prince Oskar von Preußen, 20 September 1928, in Arnim, *Arnim-Boitzenburg*, 293.
191. Countess Freda-Marie von der Schulenburg, née Countess von Arnim (b. 1873).
192. Take, for example, Countess Angela von der Schulenburg, née Baroness von Schönberg (b. 1906).
193. For example, the younger sister of the retired General Schulenburg joined the party in May 1932.
194. Schulenburg, *Ich hab's gewagt*; Schulenburg, *Weibliche Kadetten*.
195. Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg to Ludwig Beck, 1 September 1928, in MHM, Beck, BBAV 7548.
196. Görlitz, *Junker*, 407.
197. Broszat, *Staat Hitlers*, 252–4; Falter, 'Die "Märzgefallenen"', 596f.; Benz/Graml/Weiß (eds), *Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus*, 358.
198. Westernhagen, *Von der Herrschaft zur Gefolgschaft*; Wedel-Parlow, *Ostelbischer Adel*; Ditfurth, *Der Baron, die Juden*.
199. Estimate made on the basis of: GHdA, GA IV (1962), 410–44 (Schulenburg), ibid., 166–85 (Dohna). All family members who were born in or before 1915 and were still alive in 1933 were taken into consideration. Following these criteria, it is possible to state that around ninety Schulenburgs and approximately sixty Dohnas joined the NSDAP (including an estimate of the number of women who married into the family).
200. A few examples: the Einems (25/0), the Hammersteins (14/0), the Hatzfelds (4/0), the Minnigerodes (10/0), the Leiningens (7/0), the Schönborns (5/0),

the Thun-Hohensteins (6/0), the Thurn und Taxis family (5/0), the Gersdorffs (10/1), the Fürstenbergs (21/3), the Gagern (10/1), and the Putlitzs (13/2).

201. For example, such East Prussian families as the Döhnhoffs (4/2) and the Lehndorffs (1/1) were only barely represented among the ranks of the Nazi party (although, admittedly, some of these families were very small). Families that do not appear in the NSDAP card indexes at all include the Arenbergs, the Barnekows, the Batockis, the Behrenbergs, the Burghaus family, the Caprivis, the Heydens, the Kagenecks, the Kardorffs, the Putbus family, and the Seeckts.
202. Falter, 'Die "Märzgefallenen" ', 595; Schiller; *Rittergut*, 238–40; Reif, *Adel im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 1–9; Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel*, 17–23.
203. In absolute figures: 528 (or 61.8 per cent) of the 854 nobles who signed up for the NSDAP by 1 May 1933 had already enrolled before 30 January 1933. Within the same group of 854 aristocrats, 326 (or 38.2 per cent) then numbered among the so-called *Märzgefallene* (opportunistic individuals who joined the party in March 1933). This latter group of 326 *Märzgefallene* represented 20.4 per cent of the total of 1,595 aristocrats who enlisted in the NSDAP by the end of the Second World War. For comparative figures, see: Falter, ' "Die Märzgefallenen" ', 601.
204. Only 22 of the 126 members of the Arnim, Bismarck, Bernstorff, Bülow, Goltz, Oertzen, Wedel, and Winterfeld families who joined the NSDAP before 1933 are described using the designation 'farmer' (*Landwirt*) or 'land/estate owner' (*Gutsbesitzer*).
205. Niemann, *Mecklenburgischer Großgrundbesitz*, 270–4.
206. Falter, 'Die "Märzgefallenen" ', 606.
207. For the overall proportion of women within the NSDAP, cf. Falter, 'Die "Märzgefallenen" ', 606f.
208. In addition to the autobiographies written by Hadeln, Dönhoff, Maltzan, Maria von Oertzen, Salburg, and Schulenburg, occasional indications are also provided by Scheck, 'German Conservatism', in *German History* 1/1997, 34–55, and by Bridenthal, 'Organized Rural Women', in Jones/Retallack (eds), *Reform*, 375–405.
209. Women who were 'led' into the party by their husbands are generally described with the designation 'wife' (*Ehefrau*) on their membership cards. The date on which these women joined the NSDAP is often identical to that of their spouses.
210. Förster, *Der Königin-Luise Mythos*, 269–85; Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation*, 157–83.
211. Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 11–45.
212. Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, 170–5.
213. Count Hermann zu Dohna (b. 10 October 1894) was the owner of an entailed estate. Later on, he also became the owner of the hereditary farm (*Erbhof*) surrounding Schloß Finckenstein (GGT, G 1942, 175; Görlitz, *Junker*, 374).
214. Finckenstein, *Nur die Störche*, 134, cf. 225–34.
215. BAB (BDC), SA records: Heinrich-Georg Graf Finck von Finckenstein, 22 November 1894; GGT, G 1942, 213; 'Sample Malinowski/Reichardt'.

216. Order from the *Oberpräsident* (Governor) to the *Landräte* (county commissioners), 9 August 1929; correspondence and reports by local police chiefs and department directors, 30 September 1931, 14 January 1932, and 31 January 1932, in Archiwum Pánstwowego w Opulu, Landratsamt Oppeln, vol. 79, Fol. 19, 554, 724, 738; BAB (BDC), SA-PA Wolfgang Graf Yorck von Wartenburg (1899–1944), Besitzer des Fideikommisses Schleibitz; GHdA, G 1965, 392 ff.
217. Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 294–98.
218. Schwerin, 'Dann sind's die besten Köpfe', 14–16.
219. Similarly, historians have only recently started showing an interest in the other, lesser-known family members of Count Helmuth James von Moltke (a famous and outstandingly impressive member of the German Resistance). See Wiaderny, *Hans Adolf von Moltke*.
220. Schwerin, 'Dann sind's die besten Köpfe', 19–44, 62–78; Brakelmann, *Peter Yorck von Wartenburg*, 228–44.
221. Hoffmann, *Stauffenberg*, 101, 111–25; Karlauf, *Stauffenberg*; Malinowski, *Heldentod*.
222. Möckelmann, *Hannah von Bredow*, 14–153.
223. Möckelmann, *Hannah von Bredow*, 88–115; Urbach, *Go-Betweens for Hitler*, 170, 173, 185–9.
224. Vollmer, *Doppelleben*, 137–8.
225. Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*, 73–4.
226. Malinowski, 'Hüter des Grals'.
227. Harpprecht, *Die Gräfin*, 154–5.
228. Harpprecht, *Die Gräfin*, 154, 224, 227, 233, 342–3.
229. Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*, 331–75. Dönhoff presented her readers with a noble version of the typical narrative that was told within German families after 1945, i.e. 'Grandpa was not a Nazi', see: Welzer, 'Opa war kein Nazi'.
230. Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*, 358.
231. Correspondence between Dönhoff and Wehler, in Hofmann, *Marion Döhnhoff*, 370–1, which also includes Wehler's answer. Even twenty-five years after it was written, there is little that can be added to Wehler's biting, sovereign response.
232. Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*, 422.
233. Harpprecht, *Die Gräfin*, 155–6.
234. Schwarzer, *Marion Dönhoff*, 81–116, 131–52; Harpprecht, *Die Gräfin*, 156; Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*, 415–38.
235. Fürstenberg's letter of 19 November 1920 in FFAD, Hofverw. Fü.Hs., vol. bb II/4 (with additional documents).
236. Letter including Fürstenberg's approx. ten-page description of the event, 27 November 1933, in FFAD, Hofverw., Fürstl.Hs., vol. bb II/5. Cf. Ilsemann, *Kaiser*, vol. 2, 274f.
237. Letters of 17 January 1933 and 20 April 1933 (to his son's private tutor), in FFAD, Hofverw., Fürstl.Hs., vol. bb II/5.
238. Leopold Frhr. von Vietinghoff-Scheel, in DAB, 15 February 1921, 37.

239. 'Die Pflicht des wahren Adels: Mit Hitler für das deutsche Volk. Ein Aufruf der nationalsozialistischen Adligen', in *Preußische Zeitung*, 24/25 September 1932, in BayHStA, PrASlg., Nr. 1158.
240. General a. D. von Metzsch, 'Adel und Nationalsozialismus', in DAB 1 January 1936, 1–3.
241. Frhr. von Eltz-Rübenach (Landesbauernführer Rheinland), 'Adel muß politisch sein—oder er wird nicht sein!', in Schaumburg-Lippe, *Wo war der Adel?*, 29.
242. Broszat, *Nationalsozialismus*, 12.
243. See: LHAM-AW, Rep. E v. Bülow, Nr. 52, see particularly Fol. 52–60.
244. After-dinner speech by the 'Family Führer' Friedrich von Bülow-Omechau at the Bülow family gathering (*Familientag*) on 8 July 1935. Quoted in the 'Bülowschen Familienblatt' (Bülow Family Newspaper) (January 1936), in LHAM-AW, Rep. E v. Bülow, Nr. 52, Fol. 66; Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 392–7.

CONCLUSION

1. Malinowski, 'Der braune Kronprinz'.
2. Jan Böhmermann, *Neo Magazin Royale*, ZDF, 14 November 2019. The four expert opinions [*Gutachten*] were made public on the website http://www.hohenzollern.lol.
3. Seliger, *Politische Anwälte?*.
4. Boveri, *Diplomat vor Gericht*, 40–1; Seliger, *Politische Anwälte?*, 131–44, 301–12; Pöppmann, 'Im Amt geblieben um Schlimmeres zu verhüten'; Conze, '"Es wurde ganz wacker Widerstand geleistet"'; Raulff, *Kreis ohne Meister*, 383–409; Conze et al., *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit*, 375–439; Priemel/Stiller (eds), *Reassessing*.
5. Jones/Beck, 'The Nazi Seizure of Power'; Mommsen, *Die vespielte Freiheit*, 593–715.
6. Wilhelm v. Preußen to Ferdinand von Bülow, 6 March 1933, in: Strenge, Ferdinand v. Bredow, 69.
7. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 1–15, 250–78.
8. Payne, *A History of Fascism*; Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*; Griffin, *Nature of Fascism*; Blinkhorn, *Fascists and Conservatives*.
9. Pöggeler, 'Den Führer führen', 27.
10. Gotto/Steber (eds), *Visions of Community*.
11. The view put forward in this book contrasts with the interpretation found in Menning, *Standesgemäße Ordnung*, 83–4, 107–8, 413–14.
12. Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, 143.
13. Fischer, *Bündnis der Eliten*.
14. Malinowski/Funck, 'Geschichte von oben'. Important examples dealing with the Bavarian nobility: Aretin, 'Der bayerische Adel'; Dohna, *Adel und Politik*.

15. Brakelman *Peter Yorck von Wartenburg*; Brackelmann, *Helmuth James von Moltke*; Vollmer, *Doppelleben*;Vollmer, *Stauffenbergs Gefährten*; Hofmann, *Marion Dönhoff*.
16. Orth, '"Der Amtssitz der Opposition"?'; Conze et al. (eds), *Das Amt und die Vergangenheit*; Schulte and Wala (eds), *Widerstand und Auswärtiges Amt*; Keyserlingk-Rehbein, *Nur eine 'ganz kleine Clique'?*.
17. Kondylis, *Konservativismus*, 80–110, 236–59.
18. Berthold, *Die 42 Attentate*; Hoffmann, *Die Sicherheit des Diktators*; Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat*.
19. Mommsen, *Alternative zu Hitler*, 7–8.
20. This tendency is still present, though in different degrees, in the more recent—and often impressive—biographies by Schwarzer, Hofmann, Harpprecht, Brakelmann, and Vollmer. For this tradition, see: Lehmann, '"Grafenerzählungen"'; Malinowski and Funck, *Masters of Memory*; Conze, *Aufstand des preußischen Adels*; Reif, *Die Junker*.
21. Meyer, *Befehl verweigert*; Frie, *Preußische Identitäten*, 355–61.

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67 170/301: Bayerische Königspartei 1920–1926
67 179/339: Organisation Consul
67 192/400: Orgesch
67 197/417: Juniklub
32/59; 90/16: Deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft
Correspondence between Count Dietlof von Arnim-Boitzenburg and Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg (120 letters, duplicates in the collection of the research project *Elitenwandel*, TU Berlin. Referenced in the footnotes as 'Correspondence between Arnim/Schulenburg').

DEUTSCHES ADELSARCHIV MARBURG

—Records of the DAG's regional branch in Bavaria
—Records of the DAG's regional branch in Saxony
—Selected genealogical tables from the 'EDDA' (4 vols: 1925/1929/1936/1942)

WESTFÄLISCHES ARCHIVAMT, MÜNSTER

(Vereinigte Westfälische Adelsarchive e.V.):
—Nachlass Franz Graf von Galen (1879–1961)
—Nachlass Engelbert Frhr. von Kerckerinck zur Borg (1872–1933)
—Nachlass Ferdinand Frhr. von Lüninck (1888–1944)
—Nachlass Alexander Frhr. von Elverfeldt (1869–1946)
—Westfälisches Adelsblatt

LANDESHAUPTARCHIV MAGDEBURG—AUßENSTELLE WERNIGERODE

—Rep H Neugattersleben (Familie von Alvensleben)
—Rep E v. Bülow (Familienverband)
—Rep H Karow (including the correspondence of Paul von Hindenburg)
—Rep H Ostrau (Hans Hasso von Veltheim-Ostrau, 1885–1956)
—Rep H St. Ulrich (including the Casino-Gesellschaft)
—Rep H Stolberg-Wernigerode (Archiv der Fürsten zu Stolberg-Wernigerode)

GEHEIMES STAATSARCHIV PREUßISCHER KULTURBESITZ BERLIN

Brandenburg-Preußisches Hauptarchiv (BPH):
—Rep. 53: Kaiser Wilhelm II.
—Rep. 54: Kronprinz Wilhelm von Preußen
—Rep. 333: Politisches Kolleg, Berlin

BUNDESARCHIV KOBLENZ

—R 118 (Politisches Kolleg/Hochschule für nationale Politik)
—N 1101 (Nachlass Franz Ritter von Epp)
—Kleine Erwerbungen, Nr. 240 (Hermine von Reuß)
—Kleine Erwerbungen, Nr. 402 (Deutscher Herrenklub)
—Kleine Erwerbungen, Nr. 732 (Reinhold Frhr. von Lüdinghausen-Wolff)
—Kleine Erwerbungen, Nr. 708 (Antonie Gräfin zu Eulenburg)
—N 1324 (Nachlass Martin Spahn)
—N 1424 (Nachlass Johann-Albrecht von Rantzau)

BUNDESARCHIV, ABTEILUNG BERLIN-LICHTERFELDE

—Schumacher Collection: List of all NSDAP members from the high nobility
—From the holdings of the former Berlin Document Center (BDC):
NSDAP local card indexes
NSDAP central card indexes
Personal records of around 300 noble members of the SA and the NSDAP

BUNDESARCHIV—MILITÄRARCHIV FREIBURG

—N 42 (Nachlass Kurt von Schleicher)
—N 58/1 (Nachlass Friedrich Graf von der Schulenburg)
—N 266 (Nachlass August von Cramon)
—N 280 (von Huelsen)
—N 324 (von Einem)

MILITÄRHISTORISCHES MUSEUM DRESDEN

—Nachlass Ludwig Beck
—Nachlass Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz

BAYERISCHES HAUPTSTAATSARCHIV MÜNCHEN

—Archive of the Genossenschaft katholischer Edelleute in Bavaria
—Nachlass Paul Nikolaus Cossmann
—Nachlass Heinrich Held
—Nachlaß Friedrich Karl Frhr. von Eberstein
—Nachlass Gustav Adolf Leinhaas
—Sammlung Varia Nr. 160 (Münchner Herrenklub)
—Presseausschnittssammlung, Nr. 1158

STAATSARCHIV AUGSBURG

—Collection of Ludwig Maria Graf Waldbott von Bassenheim (1876–1926), unsorted holdings
—Collection of Heinrich Graf Waldbott von Bassenheim (1882–1940), unsorted holdings

STAATSARCHIV WÜRZBURG

Gestapo records:

—Nr. 10,492 (Peter Graf Revertera)
—Nr. 6431 (Alois Fürst zu Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rosenberg)

STAATSARCHIV WERTHEIM, KLOSTER BRONNBACH

—Nachlass Alois Fürst zu Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rosenberg (1871–1952):
Lit D 662
Lit D 761 e
Lit D 762

HESSISCHES STAATSARCHIV DARMSTADT

—F 21 Grafschaft Erbach-Schönberg
—F 23 Herrschaft Schlitz (Archiv der Grafen von Schlitz gen. von Görtz)
—F 23 A, Nr. 1219/2 (Verein deutscher Standesherren)

ZENTRUM FÜR ANTISEMITISMUSFORSCHUNG (BERLIN)

—*Dienstaltersliste der Schutzstaffel der NSDAP. SS-Oberst-Gruppenführer—SS-Standartenführer. Stand vom 20.4.1942*, ed. SS-Personalhauptamt, Berlin, 1942.
—*Dokumentensammlung zu Erich v. d. Bach-Zelewski, zusammengestellt von Tuviah Friedmann*, Haifa, 1996.

NIEDERSÄCHSISCHES STAATSARCHIV IN BÜCKEBURG

—Familienarchiv der Freiherrn von Münchhausen

NORDRHEIN-WESTFÄLISCHES STAATSARCHIV DETMOLD

—D 72 Nachlass Karl Ludwig Freiherr von Biedenweg
—D 72 Nachlass Gerhard von Donop
—L 114 von Donop (Familienverband)

ARCHIV DER OTTO VON BISMARCK STIFTUNG (FRIEDRICHSRUH)

—Correspondence of Otto II Fürst von Bismarck 1918/19, 1932/33

ARCHIV DER FREIHERREN VON ARETIN (HAIDENBURG)

—Political and private correspondence of Erwein Frhr. von Aretin, including with Fürst Öttingen and the Bavarian Crown Prince (a folder of unsigned correspondence)

ARCHIV DER FREIHERRN HILLER VON GAERTRINGEN (GAERTRINGEN)

—Nachlass Kuno Graf von Westarp

FÜRSTLICH CASTELL'SCHES ARCHIV, CASTELL (FRANKEN)

HA.I.d.VI.—Fürst Friedrich Carl zu Castell-Castell (1864–1923)
HA.I.d.VIII.—Fürst Carl zu Castell-Castell (1897–1945)

FÜRST THURN UND TAXIS ZENTRALARCHIV, REGENSBURG

—Hofmarschallamt, including the following file numbers: 2924, 2970–2972, 3004, 3220, 3031, 3051, 3068, 3088, 3174, 3216, 3220, 3244, 3245, 3596, 3597, 3625, 3650–3652

ARCHIV DER FREIHERREN VON LERCHENFELD, HEINERSREUTH (FRANKEN):

—a variety of unsorted material, predominantly regarding the Bavarian regional branch of the DAG

ARCHIV DER GRAFEN SCHÖNBURG-GLAUCHAU, GLAUCHAU (SACHSEN)

—list of participants at the Wechselburg conference of the Catholic aristocratic associations in June 1926

VORPOMMERSCHES LANDESARCHIV GREIFSWALD

—Rep. 38d Karlburg (Bismarck-Bohlen)
—Rep. 38d Bahrenbusch (von Bonin)
—Rep. 42 Becker-Bartmannshagen (Rittergutsbesitzer Arthur Becker)

FÜRSTLICH ÖTTINGEN-WALLERSTEIN'SCHES ARCHIV DER FÜRSTEN ZU ÖTTINGEN-WALLERSTEIN (HARBURG)

—VIII, 19. 1b: Karl Friedrich Wolfgang Fürst zu Öttingen-Wallerstein (1877–1930)
—VIII, 19. 1c: Eugen Prinz/Fürst zu Öttingen-Wallerstein (1885–1969)
—VIII, 19. 1d: Karl Friedrich Fürst zu Öttingen-Wallerstein (1917–1991)

FÜRSTLICH FÜRSTENBERGISCHES ARCHIV, DONAUESCHINGEN

—Records regarding Maximilian Egon Fürst Fürstenberg (1863–1941)
Fürstliches Haus/Hofverwaltung/Kabinett-Sekretariat, etc.

ARCHIV DES VERBANDES DER BAYERISCHEN GRUNDBESITZER, MÜNCHEN

Various files containing correspondence by the association's leaders:
—Folder: 'Fideikommisse'
—Folder: 'Fideikommißauflösungsgesetzgebung 1917–1934'
—Folder: 'Protokolle'
—Folder: 'Mitteilungen 1918–1930'
—Folder: 'Bodenreform 1923–1932'

MECKLENBURGISCHES LANDESHAUPTARCHIV, SCHWERIN

—Bestand: Herrengesellschaft Mecklenburg (HGM), 10 vols
—Teilnachlass Kurt Frhr. v. Reibnitz
—Großherzogliches Kabinett III/Großherzogliches Sekretariat (GHK III)

PRIVATE ARCHIVE OF HENNING V. HOLTZENDORFF, HAMBURG

Records of Hanshenning v. Holtzendorff:
—'Biographische Aufzeichnungen' (untitled, composed 1968)
—'General von Schleicher, wie er in Wirklichkeit war' (composed 1973)
—'Die Politik des Generals von Schleicher gegenüber der NSDAP 1930–1933' (composed 1946)

PRIVATE ARCHIVE OF DR MED. JÜRGEN LÜBKER, BERLIN

—Maria von Schenck, *Die Schencken-Chronik. Ein Sippenschicksal aus der Altmark*, Berlin, 1936.

ARCHIWUM PÁNSTWOW WE WROCLAWIU (STAATSARCHIV BRESLAU)

Deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft, Landesabteilung Schlesien, vols 10–741 (genealogical material, genealogical tables of ancestors)

ARCHIWUM PÁNSTWOWEGO W OPULU

Landratsamt/Oberpräsidium Oppeln, vols 79, 999, 1009, 1039.

SAMPLE JAMIN

Detailed sample of biographical data regarding 72 noble SA leaders, private archive of Mathilde Jamin, Essen.

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Detailed sample of biographical data regarding approx. 120 noble SA and SS leaders, private archive of Stephan Malinowski (Berlin)/Sven Reichardt (Berlin).

PERIODICALS

—*Adels- und Salonblatt* (1892/93–1914/15)
—*Archiv für Sippenforschung*
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—*Deutsche Revue*
—*Deutsches Adelsblatt* (1883–1944)
—*Europäische Revue*
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—*Johanniter-Ordensblatt* (1908–1940)
—*Kalender der Deutschen Adelsgenossenschaft*
—*Mitteilungen der Genossenschaft katholischer Edelleute Bayerns*
—*Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung*
—*Politik und Gesellschaft*
—*Preußische Jahrbücher*
—*Querschnitt*
—*Völkischer Beobachter*
—*Vossische Zeitung*
—*Weiße Blätter. Monatsschrift für Geschichte, Tradition und Staat*
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Names Index

Adorno, Theodor W. 137
Alvensleben family 314
Alvensleben, Hans Bodo, Count von 180–4, 188–9, 195, 204–5
Alvensleben, Ludolf, Count von 290, 292–3
Alvensleben, Werner, Count von 16, 184
Arco-Valley, Anton, Count von 103–4
Arco-Zinnenberg, Maria Gabrielle, Countess von 103
Arendt, Hannah 3, 99, 244, 273, 306, 337
Aretin, Erwein, Baron von 56–7, 58, 59, 61, 163, 210, 307–8
Aretin family 237, 316
Aretin, Karl, Baron von 170–1
Arnim-Boitzenburg, Dietlof, Count von 79–80, 82, 87, 102, 268–71, 274
Arnim-Burow, Oskar von 303
Arnim, Clara von 89
Arnim-Cunersdorf, Achim von 217, 245, 311
Arnim, Dankwart, Count von 15, 18, 21, 26–7, 28, 30
Arnim, Detlev von 217
Arnim family 314
Arnim, Hans-Arno von 238
Arnim, Hans von 301
Aufseß, Eckart, Baron von 243
Auwi *see* Preußen, August Wilhelm, Prince von

Baden, Max, Prince von 73, 250, 251
Baden-Powell, Robert 282
Ballestrem, Nikolaus, Count von 185
Ballin, Albert 119
Bang, Paul 295
Bassewitz family 314
Batocki, Adolf von 179
Baudissin, Klaus, Count von 241
Bayern, Rupprecht, Bavarian Crown Prince von 86, 155–6
Bebel, August 62
Bechstein family 269, 303
Bechstein, Helene 303
Bentheim family 316
Bentheim-Tecklenburg-Rheda, Adolf, Prince zu 157, 171–4, 176–7, 214, 221, 301, 306–8
Berchem, Otto, Baron von 276
Berg-Markienen, Friedrich von 55, 59, 117, 155, 161, 176–7, 185, 214, 274, 280
Bernstorff family 314
Bernstorff-Stintenberg, Albrecht, Count von 247
Bernstorff-Wedendorf, Andreas, Count von 87, 104, 109–10, 271
Best, Werner 203, 299
Bethmann-Hollweg, Theobald von 41
Binzer, Manfred von 218
Bismarck family 172, 314, 322, 329
Bismarck, Gottfried, Count von 288, 322
Bismarck, Hannah, Countess von 322
Bismarck, Heinrich, Prince von 290
Bismarck, Otto, Prince von 39, 43, 61, 87, 135, 226, 288, 322, 332
Bismarck, Philippa, Countess von 322
Bloch, Ernst 228
Bloch, Marc 279
Bodelschwingh, Herr von 161
Boehm, Max Hildebert 137, 183
Bogen, Walter von 147–8, 153–4, 168–9, 173–4, 176, 188, 243, 275
Borries family 314
Bose, Herbert von 258
Bothmer family 314

Brandenstein, Baron von 237
Braun, Magnus, Baron von 32–3, 286–7
Braunschweig, Ernst August von, Duke of Brunswick 302
Bredow family 314
Bredow, Ferdinand von 259
Breuer, Stefan 9, 133
Brockdorff-Rantzau, Ulrich, Count von 247
Broszat, Martin 327–8
Bruck, Friedrich Carl vom *see* Vom Bruck, Friedrich Carl
Bruckmann, Elsa 302–3
Bruckmann, Hugo 303
Brückner, Helmuth 237
Bülow, Bernhard, Prince von 83–4
Bülow, Bernhard Wilhelm von 247
Bülow family 16–17, 19, 53, 290–1, 314, 328
Bülow, Frau von 158
Bülow, Friedrich von 328
Bussche-Streithorst, Axel von dem 339

Carlyle, Thomas 131
Castell-Castell, Friedrich Carl Prince zu 69
Castell family 118
Césaire, Aimé 99
Christian X, King of Denmark 85
Clark, Christopher 330
Claß, Heinrich 102, 165
Conze, Eckart 96, 109
Corswant-Cuntzow, Walter von 220
Coudenhove-Kalergi, Richard, Count von 139
Cramon, August von 215, 216
Cuno, Wilhelm 197, 219

Dahrendorf, Ralf 3, 232, 324
Darré, Richard Walther 85, 147–8, 219, 221–2, 223–30, 237, 238–9, 277, 293, 321, 326
Dewitz, Fräulein von 157
Dietrich, Josef ('Sepp') 299
Dinter, Artur 162
Dirksen family 205, 303–5
Dirksen, Herbert von 303
Dirksen, Viktoria Auguste von 205, 303–4
Dirksen, Willibald von 303
Dohna family 314, 315
Dohna-Finckenstein, Hermann, Count zu 226, 320
Dohna, Heinrich, Count zu 180
Dohna-Schlobitten, Alexander, Prince von 63, 225–6, 277, 319
Dommes, Wilhelm von 214
Dönhoff, Bogislav, Count von 324
Dönhoff, Marion, Countess 27, 63, 253–4, 283, 323–5
Donnersmarck *see* Henckel-Donnersmarck, Guidotto, Prince von
Donop, Gerhard von 91
Drechsel, Karl August, Count von 145–6, 170, 308
Droste family 316
Duisberg, Carl 192
Duisberg, Hildegard 192
Dürckheim-Jassen, Count 116
Dürckheim, Kuno, Count von 230–1, 308–9

Ebert, Friedrich 92, 119
Ehrhardt, Hermann 78
Einem family 314
Einstein, Albert 250
Eisner, Kurt 97, 103
Elser, Georg 210
Eltz-Rübenach, Kuno, Baron von 160
Elverfeldt-Canstein, Alexander, Baron 272
Enzensberger, Hans-Magnus 254, 256
Epp, Franz Ritter von 197, 199
Erzberger, Matthias 54, 104
Escherich, Georg 185, 191–2
Eulenburg family 314
Eulenburg-Hertefeld, Friedrich Wend, Prince zu 268–9
Eulenburg-Hertefeld, Philipp Friedrich Alexander, Prince 103

Fahrner, Rudolf 8
Falter, Jürgen 317
Fanon, Frantz 99
Feder, Gottfried 200
Finckenstein, Heinrich-Georg Finck, Count von 320
Finckenstein, Ottfried, Count von 16, 49, 320
Finckenstein-Schönberg, Count von 320

Finck von Finckenstein, Heinrich-Georg, Count 320
Finck von Finckenstein, Konrad, Count 236
Fraenkel, Ernst 334
Franckenstein family 316
Frederick I, Holy Roman Emperor 297
Frederick the Great 18, 43, 118, 143, 296, 341
Frederick William I of Prussia 296
Fromm, Bella 216, 242, 305–6
Fromm, Fritz 1–2
Fugger, Prince 299
Funck, Marcus 97
Fürstenberg family 250, 316
Fürstenberg, Max Egon, Prince von 94, 325–6

Galen, Clemens August, Count von 44–5, 184
Galen, Franz, Count von 56, 184, 231
Galen, Friedrich, Count von 58
Gebsattel, Franz, Baron von 308
Gehlen, Arnold 51, 145
George, Stefan 2, 43, 141–2, 192, 252, 281–2
Gerlach, Hellmuth von 63, 247, 249
Gerlach, Ludwig von 64
Gersdorff, Rudolf-Christoph, Baron von 26, 339
Gersdorff, Wolfgang, Baron von 224
Gleichen, Heinrich, Baron von 141, 178, 180, 181, 182–3, 184, 186, 189, 195, 198, 199–200
Gleichen-Uslar, Kurd, Baron von 276
Goebbels, Joseph 194, 210, 233, 238, 245, 273, 287, 302, 304
Goebbels, Magdalena 305–6
Golßenau, Arnold Vieth von 108, 252–3
Goltz family 314
Goltz, Rüdiger, Count von der 146–7, 215–16, 219, 303
Göring family 305
Göring, Hermann 40, 213, 296, 302–3, 304, 319, 322
Görlitz, Walter 314
Graefe, Albrecht von 54
Gröber, Conrad (Archbishop of Freiburg) 326
Groener, Wilhelm 73–4, 77, 104
Günther, Hans F. K. 136, 149, 222–3, 227, 293, 326
Guttenberg, Elisabeth, Baroness von 90
Guttenberg, Enoch, Baron von 271–2
Guttenberg, Karl Ludwig, Baron von 220

Hadeln, Charlotte von 54
Haeften, Werner von 1, 322, 341
Hagen, W. von 57, 67
Hahn, Kurt 251
Halbwachs, Maurice 11
Hammerstein-Equord, Franz, Baron von 255–6
Hammerstein-Equord, Helga, Baroness von 254–5
Hammerstein-Equord, Kunrat, Baron von 255
Hammerstein-Equord, Kurt, Baron von 254–6, 270
Hammerstein-Equord, Ludwig, Baron von 255
Hammerstein-Equord, Maria Therese, Baroness von 255
Hammerstein-Equord, Marie Luise, Baroness von 254–5
Hannover, Alexandra, Princess von 299
Hannover, Ernst August, Prince von 302
Hannover family 295
Hansemann, David 248
Hardenberg, Carl-Hans, Count von 312
Hardenberg family 314
Hassell, Ulrich von 261
Haubach, Theodor 252
Heidegger, Martin 30, 333
Heine, Heinrich 15
Helldorf, Wolf Heinrich, Count von 241, 276, 304, 306
Henckel-Donnersmarck, Guidotto, Prince von 239, 305
Henneke, Werner 137
Hertzberg-Lottin, Ernst von 165
Hertzberg-Lottin, Gerzlaff von 102–3, 161, 165
Hertzberg-Lottin, Rüdiger von 165
Hessen, Christoph, Prince von 293–4
Hessen family 295, 298, 310–11, 332
Hessen, Friedrich Karl, Prince von 298
Hessen, Philipp, Prince von 298
Hessen, Wilhelm, Prince von 298
Heuss, Theodor 260

Heydt, August, Baron von der 304
Himmler, Heinrich 1–2, 130, 205, 226, 228, 230, 281, 289–90, 297, 299, 319, 320–1
Hindenburg, Oskar von 55, 305
Hindenburg, Paul von 4, 40, 49, 74–5, 76, 104, 154, 171–2, 176, 189, 191, 193–4, 201, 212, 233, 246, 258, 270–1, 287, 296, 304, 325
Hirschfeld, Oltwig von 104
Hitler, Adolf *see* Subject Index
Hoffmann, Heinrich 90
Hohenlohe, Alexander, Prince von 49
Hohenlohe family 250, 311
Hohenlohe-Oehringen, Margarethe, Princess zu 78
Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, Maria, Princess zu 156
Hohenzollern family 61, 78–9, 86, 158, 167, 211–12, 213–14, 217, 275, 295, 297, 304, 329–31
Hohenzollern-Namedy, Albrecht, Prince von 185
Hohenzollern princes 337
Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Prince von 185
Holstein princess 294
Holtzendorff, Arndt von 118–19
Houwald, Albrecht, Baron von 154, 165–6, 167, 168–9, 170–1, 175, 230, 239
Hoyningen-Huene family 314
Hugenberg, Alfred 178, 192, 193, 268, 269, 285, 295
Huhn, Gustav 188
Hutier, Oskar von 201

Jaspers, Karl 333
Johst, Hanns 40
Jordans, Carl von 205
Jung, Edgar Julius 12–13, 22–3, 92, 131–2, 137–9, 258, 261–2
Jünger, Ernst 30, 80, 131, 136, 137, 282

Kageneck, Hans, Count von 258
Kaiser *see* Wilhelm II, German Emperor (1859–1941)
Kaiserin *see* Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg, Auguste Viktoria
Kanitz, Count 65
Kantzow, Carin von 303
Kapp, Wolfgang 28, 98, 105, 123, 202, 253
Karlauf, Thomas 322
Kerckerinck-Borg, Engelbert, Baron von 143, 278, 285–6
Keßler, Harry, Count von 247–8
Ketteler, Wilhelm, Baron von 258
Keyserling, Hermann, Count 139, 187, 192
Killinger, Manfred von 105, 277, 285
Kirdorf, Emil 302
Kleist, Ewald Heinrich von 339
Kleist family 314
Kleist, Leopold von 214, 303, 304
Kleist-Schmenzin, Ewald von 24–5, 40–1, 59, 64, 82, 210, 220, 233, 288–9, 312
Klemperer, Victor 287
Knobelsdorff, Manfred von 228, 321
Koch, Karl 242
Kohl, Helmut 261
Kohlrausch, Martin 83
Korff, Ferdinande, Countess von 183
Kriegsheim, Arno von 180
Krockow, Christian, Count von 64
Krupp, Barbara 190
Krupp family 26, 47
Krupp, Friedrich Alfred 118, 190
Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, Gustav 118
Kube, Wilhelm 237

Laffert, Karl August von 304
Lagarde, Paul de 135, 136
La Rosée, Count 126–7
Leers, Johann von 216–17
Lehndorff, Heinrich, Count von 323
Lehndorff, Karin, Countess von 323
Lenin, Vladimir 69
Leonrod family 316
Leonrod, Wilhelm, Baron von 152, 308
Levetzow, Magnus von 79, 213–14, 219, 234, 285–6, 303, 305
Leyen, Prince von der 170
Ley, Robert 261
Liebknecht, Karl 202
Lippe, Christian, Prince zur 319
Lippe, Ernst, Hereditary Prince zur 293

Lippe family 295, 310–11
Lippe, Marie Adelheid Reuß, Princess zur 293, 304
Lippe, Rudolf, Prince zur 293
Löffelholz-Colberg, Kurt, Baron von 292
Louis XVI 75
Löwenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg, Hubertus, Prince zu 251–2
Löwenstein-Wertheim-Freudenberg, Karl, Prince zu 201, 302
Löwenstein-Wertheim-Rosenberg, Alois, Prince zu 18–19, 44, 61, 115–16, 127, 173, 226, 308
Ludendorff, Erich 234
Lüninck, Ferdinand, Baron von 32, 176, 181, 188
Lüttwitz, Maria, Baroness von 254
Lüttwitz, Walther, Baron von 97, 98, 123
Luxemburg, Rosa 39, 104, 202

Mackensen, August von 201
Mafalda, Princess of Savoy 298
Mahraun, Arthur 281
Maikowski, Hans 296
Maistre, Joseph de 93
Malachowski, Frau von 158
Mallinckrodt family 316
Malsen-Ponickau, Erasmus, Baron von 239
Maltzahn family 314
Maltzan, Ago, Baron von 246–7
Maltzan, Maria, Countess von 253–4
Mann, Thomas 61, 70
Marwitz, Bernhard von der 39–40
Marwitz, Bodo von der 111, 158, 174–5
Marwitz, Friedrich August Ludwig von der 22
Marwitz, Heinrich von der 174
Marwitz, Johann Friedrich Adolf von der 341–2
Massow, Ewald von 201, 203
Massow family 314
Mayer, Ernst 139–40
Mecklenburg, Adolf Friedrich, Duke von 195–6, 198
Mecklenburg family 101–2, 295
Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Friedrich Franz, Grand Duke von 95–6, 157–8, 188, 237, 271, 299
Medem, Walther Eberhard, Baron von 304
Meinecke, Friedrich 81
Michaelis, Georg 77–8
Michels, Robert 137
Mirbach, Wilhelm, Count von 89
Moellendorff, Wichard von 118–19
Moeller van den Bruck, Arthur 45, 52, 102, 134, 135–6, 137, 178, 183, 278
Mohler, Armin 9, 132
Moltke, Helmuth, Count von (der 'Ältere') 41
Moltke, Helmuth James 263, 339
Müller, Ernst 223
Münchhausen, Börries, Baron von 148–9, 150, 227
Musil, Robert 34
Mussolini, Benito 66, 68, 87, 204, 278, 298

Neipperg family 316
Neumann, Franz 225
Neurath, Konstantin von 246
Niemann, Mario 317–18
Niemöller, Martin 255–6
Nietzsche, Friedrich 31, 284

Oertzen family 314
Oertzen, Frau von (née Hackwitz) 158
Oertzen-Roggow, Wilhelm von 195–201, 219
Oldenburg, Altburg Marie Matilda Olga, Duchess von 299
Oldenburg-Januschau, Agnes von (née Countess von Kanitz) 233
Oldenburg-Januschau, Elard von 26, 28, 40, 62, 66–7, 91–2, 233
Oldenburg, Nikolaus, Hereditary Grand Duke von 289
Oppen, Rudolf von 63
Oppen-Tornow, Wilhelm von 79, 97
Ortega y Gasset, José 30–1
Osten family 314
Öttingen-Spielberg, Otto II Joseph, Prince von 170
Öttingen-Wallerstein, Eugen, Prince zu 156–7, 177, 185, 221, 243
Oyenhausen, Adolf von 320

Paasche, Joachim 255
Pabst, Waldemar 202–3
Pacelli, Eugenio, Cardinal 326
Papen, Franz von 4, 16, 25, 97, 138, 171, 177, 188, 189–90, 191, 193–5, 197, 205, 207, 246, 257–8, 288, 306, 309, 336
Pesl, Ludwig 221
Petropoulos, Jonathan 293
Pfeffer von Salomon, Franz 281
Pfundtner, Hans 203
Pleß, Duke of 122
Plessen, Hans Balduin von 240
Podbielski, Viktor von 62
Preußen, Alexander, Prince von 304
Preußen, August Wilhelm, Prince von 194, 212, 236, 241, 294–5, 304, 306
Preußen, George Friedrich, Prince von 329
Preußen, Marianne, Princess von 298
Preußen, Oskar, Prince von 180, 313
Preußen, Waldemar, Prince von 157
Preußen, Wilhelm, Crown Prince von 50, 52, 74, 78–9, 82–3, 87, 92, 94–5, 104, 167, 204–5, 212–13, 214, 274–5, 295–7, 302, 303, 304, 330–2
Proust, Marcel 26
Putbus, Prince 164
Puttkamer family 314
Pyta, Wolfram 330

Quadt, Eugen, Count von 308–9, 311

Ramin, Jürgen von 161
Rantzau, Johann-Albrecht von 29, 45, 48, 108, 251
Rathenau, Walther 119, 183
Rechberg, Arnold 180
Redwitz, Alfons, Baron von 221
Reibnitz, Kurt, Baron von 48, 154, 179, 248–9, 250
Reichardt, Sven 242–3, 244, 284
Reif, Heinz 8
Reitzenstein, Wilhelm, Baron von 45
Renn, Ludwig *see* Golßenau, Arnold Vieth von
Reusch, Paul 206
Reuß, Hermine Princess von 211–12, 305
Reventlow, Ernst, Count zu 84, 86–7, 194
Rheinbaben, Rochus von 250–1
Richthofen, Bernhard, Baron von 37
Rilke, Rainer Maria 39–40, 192
Rohan, Karl Anton, Prince von 31–2, 95, 139
Röhm, Ernst 258, 284–5, 297, 325–6
Roon family 314
Rosenberg, Arthur 70
Rürup, Reinhard 93–4
Russell, Bertrand 250

Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha, Carl Eduard, Duke von 104, 201–2, 203, 301
Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha family 295, 310–11
Sachsen, Heinrich, Prince von 92
Sachsen-Meiningen, Bernhard, Prince von 300
Sachsen-Meiningen family 310
Salburg, Edith, Countess von 54–5
Salm-Horstmar, Otto II, Prince zu 87, 201
Salomon, Ernst von 100–1
Sartre, Jean-Paul 99, 273–4
Savigny, Friedrich-Carl von 258
Sayn-Wittgenstein, Otto, Prince zu 239
Schacht, Hjalmar 197, 204, 303
Schack family 314
Schaumburg-Lippe family 295, 310–11
Schaumburg-Lippe, Friedrich Christian, Prince von 194, 238, 241, 245, 327
Schlabrendorff, Fabian von 78, 339
Schleicher, Elisabeth von 259
Schleicher, Kurt von 104, 184, 219, 246, 259, 271, 287, 306, 331
Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg, Auguste Viktoria 77, 212
Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, Viktoria Adelheid, Princess von 202
Schlieffen, Alfred von 41
Schlieffen family 314
'Schmidt family' *see* Hohenzollern family
Schmitt, Carl 267, 272
Schoenaich, Paul, Baron von 250
Scholem, Gerhard 255

Scholem, Gershom 255
Schotte, Walter 178, 181
Schröder, Kurt, Baron von 191
Schulenburg family 312–15, 321
Schulenburg, Freda-Marie von der (née Countess von Arnim) 313
Schulenburg, Friedrich, Count von der 73–5, 83, 86, 87, 102, 211, 249, 269–71, 275, 276–7, 313
Schulenburg, Fritz-Dietlof, Count von der 67, 96–7, 261–2, 263, 312–13, 339
Schulenburg, Tisa, Countess von der 27, 49, 89–90, 97, 101–2, 253, 313
Schulenburg, Wolf Werner, Count von der 312–13
Schweinitz family 314
Schwerin, Detlef, Count von 321
Schwerin family 314
Schwerin von Schwanefeld, Ulrich, Count von 263, 312
Seckendorff family 316
Selchow, Bogislaw von 66
Shaw, George Bernard 2
Simmel, Georg 20–1, 22, 61–2
Singer, Bryan 1, 340
Solms-Laubach, Bernhard, Count zu 245, 311
Solms-Laubach, Georg Friedrich, Count zu 203
Sombart, Nicolaus 283
Sophie, Princess of Greece 293
Spahn, Martin 178, 186
Spann, Othmar 197
Spengler, Oswald 135, 136, 137, 143, 179, 192, 197, 227, 286
Spenkuch, Hartwin 60
Stackelberg, Camilla von 101
Stadtler, Eduard 178, 183
Stahlberg, Alexander 78–9
Stauffenberg, Berthold, Count von 8, 142, 339
Stauffenberg, Claus, Count von 1–2, 8, 41, 142, 233, 257, 263, 312, 322, 339, 340–2
Stauffenberg-Greifenstein, Schenk, Count von 172
Stegmann, Dr von 143–4
Stein, Baron von 60
Steinbömer, Gustav 140–1
Steiner, Rudolf 192
Sternberger, Dolf 324
Stolberg-Roßla, Christoph Martin, Prince zu 185
Stolberg-Wernigerode, Christian Ernst, Prince zu 18, 94, 126
Stolberg-Wernigerode, Otto, Count zu 36
Strasser, Gregor 51–2, 218, 281, 303
Strasser, Otto 218, 303
Streicher, Julius 239
Stresemann, Gustav 250
Stülpnagel family 314
Stülpnagel, Joachim von 77

Taube, Otto, Baron von 59–60
Thadden, Frau von 49
Thadden-Trieglaff, Reinold von 112
Thadden-Vahnerow, Reinold von 59
Thüngen family 316
Thun und Hohenstein, Roderich, Count von 309
Thurn und Taxis, Albert, Hereditary Prince von 126, 243–4
Thurn und Taxis family 295
Thurn und Taxis, Gustav Franz Maria, Prince von 90
Tiele-Winckler, Baroness 305
Tomasi di Lampedusa, Giuseppe, Prince 9, 336
Tresckow family 314
Tresckow, Henning von 263, 266, 312, 339
Troeltsch, Ernst 70
Trotha, Lothar von 98
Trotta-Treyden, Dr von 115
Trott zu Solz, Adam von 263
Truchseß family 316
Tschammer-Osten, Hans von 292–3
Tschirschky, Fritz Günther von 92, 258

Uechtritz, Oldwig von 24
Uexküll, Jakob, Baron von 103
Urbach, Karina 202, 240, 295

Veltheim-Ostrau, Hans-Hasso von 91, 192–3
Victoria, Princess Royal (Empress Frederick) 54, 87
Victor II, Duke of Ratibor, Prince of Corvey 157, 302

Viereck, Georg Sylvester 167–8
Vietinghoff family 314
Vietinghoff, Leopold, Baron von 161, 166
Vietinghoff-Scheel, Charlotte, Baroness von 228
Vögler, Albert 197
Vom Bruck, Friedrich Carl 197, 200

Wala, Michael 249
Waldeck-Pyrmont family 295
Waldeck-Pyrmont, Josias, Hereditary Prince zu 226, 298–9
Wangenheim family 314
Warburg family 119
Weber, Max 121, 130, 135, 145, 283
Wedel, Erhard, Count von 274
Wedel family 314
Wehler, Hans-Ulrich 324
Westarp, Haila, Countess von 90
Westarp, Kuno, Count von 75–7, 83–4
Wied, Viktor, Prince zu 304
Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Ulrich von 43
Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Wichard, Count von 303
Wilhelm I, German Emperor (1797–1888) 41, 55
Wilhelm II, German Emperor (1859–1941) 7, 12, 26, 28, 30, 31, 43–4, 70–89, 106, 108, 132, 135, 144, 158, 167–8, 204, 212–16, 223, 224, 235, 249–50, 268, 280, 284, 296, 298, 302, 304, 305, 325, 332
Wilmowsky, Tilo, Baron von 118–19, 190–1
Winterfeldt family 314
Winterfeldt, Joachim von 17, 37
Winterfeldt, Paul von 37
Witzleben, Erwin von 339
Wolzogen, Ernst von 42–3
Wrangel family 314

Yorck von Wartenburg, Paul, Count 321–2
Yorck von Wartenburg, Peter, Count 41, 263, 321, 339
Yorck von Wartenburg, Wolfgang, Count 320

Zeddelmann, Walter von 144
Zedlitz family 314
Zedlitz-Trützschler, Robert, Count von 249
Zitzewitz family 314
Zuckmayer, Carl 260

Subject Index

Adeligkeit see nobleness (*Adeligkeit*)
Adelsblatt (DAG periodical)
  advertisements portraying tensions between ideals and economic reality 117–18
  anti-Semitic writings 161–2
  article belittling aristocracy 327
  article calling for racial purity 148–50
  articles sparking debate on 'new nobility' 144, 147–8
  attack on 239
  careers during difficult times articles 114–15
  columnist attending unifying event 304
  cultivating anti-middle class position 145
  and cult of austerity 55
  on 'Führer' terminology 130
  'great' and 'lesser' Führers article 196–7
  lists of 'peers in business' 117
  on nobleman's vocation 57
  'old' versus 'new' nobility article 245
  predominant readership 52
  rallying cry text 143–4
  regional articles 152
  right-wing intellectuals writing for 181
  texts on self-destructive trajectory 146
  youth supplement 146, 159–60
Adelsmarschall (Marshall of the Nobility) 154–5, 173, 176, 185, 274
Adelsmatrikel (register of the nobility) 161, 164, 165–6
Adelsproletariat see proletarian aristocracy (*Adelsproletariat*)
affinities (Nazis and nobility)
  anti-Semitism 272–7
  careers and profiteers 14, 288–302
  common enemies 267–72
  Führertum 277–87
  melting pots and meltdowns 302–9
  misreadings 326–8
  nobles into Nazis 309–28
Agrarian Apparatus 223, 237, 277, 334
'agrarian bolshevism' 219
Agrarian League 180, 191
Agrarian Policy 218, 219–21
'agrarian spectacles' 196
ancient nobility (*Uradel*) 15–16, 103, 141, 151, 154–5, 182, 183
Anti-Bolshevik League 183
anti-intellectual sentiment 36, 40–5, 198
anti-middle-class sentiment 137, 282, 284–6
anti-republicanism 67, 106, 123, 133, 134, 153, 175–6, 206, 214, 250, 304, 318, 322, 330, 333
anti-Semitism
  as area of alliance 272–7, 337
  within DAG 151, 161–2, 173, 239, 274–5, 276, 307
  EDDA register 166–71, 175, 223, 230, 275, 327
  'gutter' (*Radauantisemitismus*) 161, 274, 276
  of nobility 9, 34, 56, 156, 160–77, 272–7
  'paranoid' 276
  publications 167, 239, 332
  within Ring Movement 193
aristocracy of accomplishment (*Leistungsadel*) 134
Artaman League 228
Aryan clauses 161–4, 171–5, 276, 307

Aryans
advertisement for 'Aryan house' 114
belief that Jews were consumed with hatred of 168
marital unions with Jews 149, 237
in metropolis 32
settlers 289
'warrior-peasants' 221
'asphalt culture' 31–2, 249, 267, 274, 281, 287
assassination attempt (20 July 1944) 1, 13–14, 255, 257, 260–6, 307, 312–14, 325, 339, 341
Association of Catholic Aristocrats (GKE) 153, 163, 170, 308
Association of Catholic Nobles (VKE) 56
Association of German Catholic Aristocrats 163, 170
Association of German Scholars and Artists 183
Association of Mediatized Princes 192
austerity 9–10, 11, 47–57, 59, 126

Bavarian Association for Entailed Landed Property 221
Black Corps, The (SS periodical) 237
breeding
biological determinist 227
'breeding wardens' (*Zuchtwarte*) 224, 230
'breeding yards' (*Hegehöfe)* 222, 224
discourse on 227–30, 327
'harmful' blood from one's lineage, idea of 166
racially pure nobility, dreams of 148–9
selective 227, 229, 327
view of family as machine for 223
Briefadel (noble status conferred by letters patent) 122, 123, 151–5
brutality
of fascism 204
in *Freikorps* units 74, 99, 100–1, 281–2
of National Socialists 215–16, 258–60, 285, 333
of nobility 98–106
praise of 57
of SA 14, 101, 242, 281–2, 285, 296

'Cabinet of Barons' 4, 194
careers
aristocratic networks facilitating 20, 31, 117
in armed forces, post-1918 124
business 118–19
commercial 115–16, 118
damaged 110–11
decline in prospects after amended Aryan clause 172
education and 35, 39, 40–1, 46
held by aristocratic members of NSDAP 317–18
impact of Treaty of Versailles 106–7
Nazis and nobility affinity 14, 288–302
traditional careers of nobility 26, 46, 107, 115
transition 121
unwanted 112–15
Casino Society (*Casino-Gesellschaft*) 181
castle captain (*Burghauptmann*) 228, 320–1
catastrophes, perceived 88–93
Catholic Centre Party 189
Catholic nobility
anti-intellectual tendencies 44
appeals for solidarity 152
of Bavaria 86, 153, 176, 332
calls to stand behind Hitler 309
Count forging personal ties with 184
and DAG 173, 176
and DHK 184–5, 190
divisions 153
important representative of 61
against joining NSDAP 226, 316
keeping distance from Nazis 6–7, 13
leading organizations 308–9
mastermind of extreme Catholic right 186
'moderate' anti-Semitic views 156, 163
against National Socialism 160, 236–7, 332
opposition to minor nobility's demands of 145–6
ostentatious decor in electoral palace 59
Protestant baron boasting personal ties to 183
raising barriers to rapprochement 325

relatively moderate political positions 156–7
in Resistance 339
seeing nobility as 'living culture' 45
southern *grands seigneurs* 60, 244
tendency to avoid *völkisch* thought 169–70
Central Association of German Conservatives 82, 274
Central Committee of Catholic Aristocratic Associations 308
Centre of the Ring (*Mittelstelle des Rings*) 181
Chamber of Agriculture 190
Chamber of Writers of the Reich (*Reichsschrifttumskammer*) 301
'character' 34–47, 53, 327, 328
colonialism 98–9, 222, 289, 334
Combat Leagues 66
Committee for Agricultural Technology 190
Compensation Act (*Ausgleichsleistungsgesetz*) 329–30
conflicts (Nazis and nobility)
landowners and settlers 217–31
mavericks 246–56
misreadings 326–8
presumptuousness 231–45
reactionaries 208–17
Resistance 7, 256–66
Conservative People's Party (KVP) 175
'conservative revolution' 9, 132, 258, 259
Corps Borussia Bonn 191
counter-revolution 93–106
crop failures 111–12

DAG *see* German Noble Society (DAG)
democracy
anonymous elections 279
aristocracy's beliefs about siding with Nazis 334
culture of discussion and compromise 14
DHK plan threatening 13, 193
elitist critique of 132
fascism 'eradicating' 204
mavericks supporting 246
minor nobility despising 274
Nazis despising 267
New Right's goal of vanquishing 131
nobles joining Resistance movement 264
parliamentary 106, 123, 193, 256
post-war nobility adapting to rules of 7, 57
post-war society caught between dictatorship and 336
Ring Movement's efforts to extinguish 177
symbolic monster used for supporters of 136
Der Spiegel (news magazine) 330
Der Stürmer (newspaper) 239
desertion by Wilhelm II 71–81
DHK *see* German Gentlemen's Club (DHK)
doom and transition, time of 106–28
Düsseldorf Industrial Club 180

Economic Association of Central Germany 190
EDDA (anti-Semitic register) 166–71, 175, 223, 230, 275, 327
education
DHK's activities 187–8
equine management 28
middle-class cult of 34–9, 41, 43, 46–7, 136, 139
Nazi contempt for 267
for new nobility 148, 150
nobility's views of 34–47, 274
political 24, 187
in rural ways 25–6
of women 113–14, 293
egalitarianism
faltering 232
lack of faith in principles of 8–9
national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) 2, 13, 335
Eigensinn (stubbornness, obstinacy, and intransigence) 240, 254, 255, 338
enemies in common 267–72
Erbhöfe (hereditary farms/entailed estates) 174, 225–6, 289, 299
Ethnic Germans 290

family
as aspect of nobleness 10
concept of 15–23

family (*cont.*)
connection with people from different eras 16–19
defining nobility as 8
excellence 20–3, 339–40
size and cohesion 19–20
family trees 11, 17, 18, 71, 167, 168, 172, 311, 327, 335
farmers 11, 62–3, 149–50, 184, 223, 225–6, 272, 289, 313, 317
farmers' leaders 190, 221, 225–6, 229, 238–9, 278, 286
Fememörder (far-right political assassins) 97
Freikorps
as anti-revolutionary volunteer corps 28
brutality of 74, 99, 100–1, 281–2
leaders 12, 28, 78, 100, 105, 301
nobility serving in 192, 202, 285, 292, 299, 320, 321
soldiers 97
French Revolution 8, 69, 90, 93, 129
Führerauslese (selection of leaders) 179
Führersammlung
DHK's aspiration to function as 186
DHK's commitment to 179–80, 187, 190, 194
Gäa's brand of 205–6
overestimation of capacity to put into practice 207
Ring Movement's efforts to establish 177, 179
as search for talented Führers 94
Führertum (leadership)
aim to establish updated 134–5
appearance as 'eternal and unchanging' 131
as aspect of noble cultural identity 57–68
constituents of new brand of 139
as form of leadership 11–12, 24–5, 196
for future German aristocracy 144
hereditary monarchy representing 215
Nazis and nobility affinity 277–87
and New Right 130, 133, 333
organizations for creation of modern 177–8, 179
rejection of traditional notions of 146–7
studies of 137
see also leadership
Führung (leadership)
lofty notion of leadership 178
as new leadership 138
as personal leadership 66
use of term 67
Führungsarbeit (work of a leader) 187

Gäa 192, 205–7, 308
German army (*Reichswehr*) 106, 123–4, 253, 254, 258–9, 270, 291, 296
German Association of Princely Houses 94, 163, 206, 308
German Communist Party (KPD) 202, 253, 255
German Conservative Party 75
German Democratic Party (DDP) 247, 250
German Gentlemen's Club (DHK)
ability to establish relationships across different frontiers 188–93
change of name 204–5
connections with DAG 181
differences with DAG 13, 178–82, 188, 193
educational activities 187–8
elitist ideology as unsuccessful in practice 194, 207
esoteric spirituality as alien to 187
good relationships with universities 187
horse metaphor 333–4
idea of creation of modern *Führertum* 66, 177
and Mecklenburg Gentlemen's Society 195–8
membership of 180–1, 185–7
and *Nationalklub* 201, 202
overarching aim 193
political disparity with National Socialists 194–5
political objectives 193–4
prestigious annual dinners 188–9
relationships with Bavarian nobility 184–5
shift into alliance with National Socialism 204–5
theoretical *Führersammlung* 179–80
two central figures of 182–4

German National People's Party (DNVP) 94, 175, 183, 190, 203, 268, 269, 275, 285, 301, 325
German Noble Society (DAG)
ability to continue activities in Third Reich 203
adaptation to National Socialist rule 307–8, 309
anti-Semitism 151, 161–2, 173, 239, 274–5, 276, 307
aspiring to racially pure nobility 148
balls organized by 85, 216
conforming with rules of Third Reich 309
connections with DHK 181
debates about restoration of monarchy 82
differences with DHK 13, 178–82, 188, 193
financial position 111–12, 126
high nobility's involvement in 151, 156–8
hostility to commerce 115–16
leaders striving to form alliance with 175
membership of 150–1, 155–6
mismatches existing in 176–7
network of contacts 117
obstacle hampering unifying efforts 158–9
pinnacle of aristocratic ingratiation 306–7
plan to unify nobility 151–3
presumptuousness 237
and property ownership 218, 221
racial purity 161–3, 166, 169–76, 223, 230, 231
racial-*völkisch* concept advocated by 65
representing less wealthy minor nobility 13, 52, 120, 158
responsibility for aggressive trajectory of leaders 153–4
speed at which opposition to Nazis broke down within Bavarian branch 307–8
tendency to exaggerate patches of symbolic common ground between aristocrats 160
youth appeal 159–60, 196
German Peace Society 250
German Protection and Defence League (DVSTB) 161, 165
German Revolution (1918)
background and context 12, 69–71
counter-revolution 93–106
desertion by Wilhelm II 71–81
doom and transition 106–28, 333
equine metaphor 286–7
lost kingdoms 81–8
perceived catastrophes 88–93
German University League 187
grands seigneurs
acting as unified group 125
avoidance of political attention 12, 94
Bavarian 156
as category of nobles 5
from Catholic south 60
economic and social capital 124
engagement in DAG 158
examples of rapprochement from 310
focus on defence of own interests 12
hereditary landholdings proposal 229
ideological shift 127
joining NSDAP 301
lavish annual allowances 126
luxurious lifestyles of 52
Prussian 59, 323
'Grey Corps' (*Graues Korps*) 283

Harzburg Front 176
Hegehöfe
as 'breeding yards' 222, 224
as hereditary landholdings 222, 229
heroic sacrifice, cult of 53–4, 81
Herrenklub *see* German Gentlemen's Club (DHK)
HGM *see* Mecklenburg Gentlemen's Society (HGM)
high nobility (*Hochadel*)
acting as unified group 125
alignment with National Socialists 6, 299, 310
anti-capitalist sentiment 126–7
belief about Bolshevists 89
broker between Nazis, old elites and 213
as category of nobles 5
connection to mediatized princes 125
degree of radicalization 127

high nobility (*cont.*)
Hitler forming links with 302–3
ideological paths 337
images of fairy tale existence 47
institution stripped of significance 308
involvement in DAG 151, 156–8
liberal views of south German 251
'moderate' anti-Semitic views 163
Nazi misgivings about 237
Nazi use of 240
organizations supported by 192, 195–6
resistance to new Republic 85
retreat from metropolis during social season 34
school as setting of rivalry with middle classes 39
sense of self-worth 61
stepping aside from political associations 94–5
support for National Socialism 202, 294, 297–8, 300, 310
support for NSDAP 293, 294–5, 298, 300, 310–11
support for right-wing radical terrorists 104
symbolic effort to tear down distinguishing features of 243–4
targeted by anti-Semitic publications 167
wish to gain holdings in 'Eastern lands' 289
Hitler, Adolf
aristocratic ingratiation 306–7, 309–10, 319–20, 325–6, 327
Beer Hall Putsch 66–7, 209
caricatures of 92–3
characteristics of noblemen attempting to overthrow 339
comment cutting aristocracy down to size 235
compatibility of nobility's views with 'myth' of 278
court photographer of 90
Crown Prince's letter of praise 104
Crown Prince's power-sharing suggestion 332
Crown Prince's rumoured attempt to hinder ascent of 330
on difficulty of finding suitable Führers 279
discussion with Papen 191
factors facilitating rise of 4, 71–2, 189, 240, 266
failed assassination attempt (20 July 1944) 1, 13–14, 255, 257, 260–6, 307, 312–14, 325, 339, 341
first political cabinet 4, 97, 331
forging personal links with nobility and elite 302–5
foundations of 'myth' 80–1
hare metaphor 287
hunt for *Lebensraum* 288
intervention in nobles' membership requests 241
on male archetype 42
on Marxism 269
military opposition to 254, 256
and monarchism 211, 214–17
negative assessments of 233–4
nobility becoming beneficiaries of 290–1
nobility's attempts to render Hitler 'presentable in polite company' 295
nobles turning against 257, 261–2
old elites' lack of ability to 'control' 207
portrayal of himself as lance-wielding white knight 281
prediction of rise of 103
promoting nationalist mind-set 271
on property ownership 199, 218–20, 221
publicity photographs 297, 302
racial ideology 175, 214, 276
refusal to deliver speech to HGM 197, 199–200
research gap 260
rumour concerning 237
speeches opposing high-born people 194
speech extolling Prussian traditions 296
suggestion of nobility 'hiring' 336
supporters of 167–8, 182, 202, 205, 212, 214, 226, 269–70, 286, 296, 297, 300, 305, 311, 319, 322–3
taking care with wording of speech 270
thoughts on future form of 'Germanic state' 211

u-turn on opinion of 268–9
viewing himself as mere 'herald' of future Führer 278
on weakening of German monarchs 84–5
would-be assassins of 8, 41, 142, 210, 324
horses
attitudes towards 26–8, 49
breeding 149, 227–8
metaphors 286–7, 333–4
use in parades 284
Horst-Wessel Lied (SA's anthem) 208–9, 232, 235
hunting 8, 26, 27, 29–31, 38, 116, 286–7

imagined communities 150–60
'imagined community' 7–8, 16, 152
inequality 8–9, 126, 134–5
intellectual aristocracy (*Geistesadel)* 133, 134, 139
intelligentsia *see* right-wing intelligentsia

June Club 178, 180, 186
Junker/Junkerism 36, 39, 42, 49, 60, 121, 184

Kampfzeit 240–1
Keppler Circle 191
'kinship guardians' (*Sippenwarte*) 275

land, connection to 23–7, 31–2, 148
land heritage law (*Reichserbhofgesetz*) 225
landowners
anti-intellectual stance 40–1
few in Nazi party's noble advance guard 317
Hitler's speech to 269
lobby group for 196, 197
membership of DAG 155
membership of DHK 186, 187, 190
membership of *Gäa* 206
membership of GSF 204
membership of NSDAP 318
Nazi–nobility conflicts 217–31, 237, 268
land ownership
defining nobility as 8
National Socialists asked to clarify matters of 219–20
National Socialists raising status of 288
perception as backbone of aristocratic power 23–5, 121
leadership
anti-democratic, new ideals of 132
aristocracy's truest and noblest purpose 57
aristocracy's vocation of 10, 124
aristocratic, as antithesis of Jewish spirit 274
brutal 105
connection to land as important resource of 25
DAG's positions of 158–9, 177
defining nobility as 8
on East Elbian estates 135
'fallen' minor nobility's claims of 120
'impossible' candidates for 87
longing for superior 141
narratives of 92, 96
National Socialism promises 334
noble Resistance members 265
and NSDAP 268
property as lifeblood of 56
of radical, right-wing paramilitary units 98
selective memory example 21
spiritual 140
traditional foundations replaced by genetic criteria 230
unchallenged aristocratic traditional 55
Upper Silesian aristocrats 320
see also *Führertum*
League for the Renewal of the Reich (Luther Bund) 190
legal dispute 229–331
'legend of the resistance' (*Widerstandslegende*) 262
legends 1, 2, 39, 72, 183, 256, 297, 340–1
Leopard, The 9, 336
Lingua Tertii Imperii (LTI) 287
lordly arrogance (*Standesdünkel*) 238
'lordly stories' (*Grafenerzählungen*) 92–3, 262, 340
lost kingdoms 81–8

'man of action' (*Tatmensch*) 136, 150
'March windfalls' (*Märzgefallene*) 317

Marxism, attitudes towards 39, 163, 199, 216, 220, 269, 270
mavericks 7, 13, 246–56
Mecklenburg Gentlemen's Society (HGM) 181, 195–201
Mein Kampf 42, 211, 220, 279, 300
melting pots and meltdowns 302–9
middle-class
  adopting elements of aristocratic style 136–7
  anti-middle-class sentiment 137, 282, 284–6
  claims to be form of aristocracy with ability to rule 135–6
  communicative bridges 23
  connections with nobility 134, 137–9, 141, 143, 150, 179, 180, 182–3, 185–7, 190, 192, 195–6, 206–7
  critics of nobility 36, 121, 135, 143, 144
  cult of education 34–9, 41, 43, 46–7, 136, 139
  cult of individual 17, 25
  DHK supporters 180, 186–7, 190
  displays of wealth 47–8
  Hitler forging links with 302–3
  Hitler portrayed as lower-middle-class 234
  hunting 29
  industrialists and commerce 49, 183, 196
  literary alternative to constraints of 142
  model for new elite 139
  Nazis expressing contempt for 267
  and New Right 9, 41, 94
  nobility's disdain of 10, 11, 40, 48, 49, 133, 141
  NSDAP members 232, 235
  presumptuousness 231
  representation of aristocracy 27
  SA's hatred of 284–5
  shared concerns with nobility 258
  view on familial and organizational ties 19
  views on nature 25, 27
  views on noble status 138
  visions of new nobility 130–1, 133, 138
  women 33
  'workaholic' stereotype 58
  youth 282–3
middle-classness (*Bürgerlichkeit*) 10
military symbolism 286
minor nobility (*Kleinadel*)
  adversities post-1918 109–10, 112, 125
  anti-intellectual sentiment 40, 42
  anti-materialist, anti-middle-class criticism typical among 285
  anti-Semitism rife among 274
  anti-urban attitude 32
  and aristocratic solidarity 20
  as category of nobles 5
  combative zeal 96
  communicative bridges 23
  cult of austerity 50, 51–3, 126
  DAG never controlled by 156
  DAG primarily representing 13, 55, 120, 158
  denunciation of 59–60
  distancing from civil society 35
  female members of 113
  Junkerish 60
  language used by 286, 287
  and leadership 120
  led towards fascism 68
  lessons from German Revolution 105
  mounting opposition to demands of 145–6
  and National Socialism 292, 300, 309
  praise of brutality 57
  Protestant 157
  Prussian 12, 36, 56, 58, 59, 81, 96, 110, 135, 154, 232, 244, 252
  radicalization 127, 150, 157, 175, 177, 207
  search for talented Führers 94
  seeing Darré's views as opportunity 229
  three forces of evil 56
  thwarted mission of recommending themselves to Nazis 224
  Treaty of Versailles 106
  triggering ideological shift 336–7
  two greatest areas of weakness 148
  typical member of NSDAP 319
  view of industrial sector 116
misalliance
  between Nazis and nobility 3, 5, 240–1, 266, 335
  terminology 2–3

misreadings between Nazis and nobility 326–8
monarchism
desertion of Wilhelm II 71–81
era of lost kingdoms 81–8
idea of restoring monarchy 331–2
impact of fall of 70
as obstacle between nobility and National Socialist movement 209–17, 332
multi-purpose Führers (*Mehrzweckführers*) 189–93
Münchener Neuesten Nachrichten (newspaper) 206
Munich Noble Youth 159, 163

National Clubs 195, 201–7
national community of Aryans 2, 13, 42, 81, 84, 138, 231, 235, 236, 237, 240, 244, 245, 335, 337
Nationalklub 181, 201–3, 301, 302
National Socialism
aims 13
different levels and chronologies of support 300–1, 316
Hitler's relationship with 325, 326
ideological codes for bridging gap between nobility and 319
misreading regarding 327–8
as movement with 'revolutionary' traits, theory 232–3
nobility's irreconcilability with 1–2, 92, 240, 254, 261, 334, 337
Prussian nobility's relationship with 268, 320
traversing obstacles between nobility and 266
see also National Socialist movement
National Socialist Drivers' Corps (NSKK) 238
National Socialist movement
anti-materialist rhetoric 51
anti-Semitism as building bridges between nobility and 272–7
articles aimed at youth regarding 160
careers and profiteers as building bridges between nobility and 288–302
common enemies as building bridges between nobility and 267–72
extent of nobility's collaboration with 309–28, 336
keeping distance from 156–7, 163, 175
leadership as building bridges between nobility and 277–87
mavericks as obstacle between nobility and 246–56
monarchism as obstacle between nobility and 209–17, 332
organizations shifting closer to 177, 203–4, 306–9
presumptuousness as obstacle between nobility and 231–45
property as obstacle between nobility and 217–22, 225–6, 235, 290
racial purity as obstacle between nobility and 222–5, 227–8, 229–31
resistance as obstacle between nobility and 256–66
social gatherings as building bridges between nobility and 302–6
supporters of 105, 109–10, 200–1, 202
nature
as aspect of nobleness 10
middle-class views of 25, 27, 30
nobility's views of 25–8, 30–1, 38, 283
portrayal of close relationship with 11
Nazi organizations *see* SA (*Sturmabteilung*); SS (*Schutzstaffel*)
Nazi Party *see* NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*)
Nazis
case for majority of nobility contributing to rise of 331–40
criticism of faith in 'democratic creation of elites' 138–9
definitions of nobility 241–2
DHK's attitude towards 182, 193, 194–5, 204
example of alliance with old elites 4
hostilities with 'Cabinet of Barons' 194
Junker schools 42
misalliance with nobility 3, 5, 240–1, 266, 335
opponents of 170, 198–9, 200, 205
radicalization leading to rise of 103
see also affinities (Nazis and nobility); conflicts (Nazis and nobility)

Neuer Adel see new nobility/new aristocracy (*Neuer Adel)*
new nobility/new aristocracy (*Neuer Adel)*
Adelsblatt fuelling debate about 144, 147
aristocratic and middle-class thinkers on 134–42, 144, 150
attitude of self-denial triggered by 235
concept of 129–34, 144, 335
Darré's ideas of 223–5, 227–9
debates about creation of 132–3
description as 'thing of the future' 245
embellishing image of 143
Günther's ideas of 222–4
middle-class visions of 130–1, 133, 138
old aristocracy's interest in search for 137
prophet of 2
requirements for joining 138, 148–50
SS criteria for formation of 230–1, 241
New Right (*Neue Rechte*)
alliance with minor nobility 68
anti-intellectual sentiment 40–1, 43
breaking from pre-war conservatism 178
concept of future Führer 87
constituents 129–30
cult of austerity 51–2
heroic-vitalist style 287
hunting 31
meaning of 9
offering opportunity and threat to aristocracy 333
Political College transmitting ideas of 186
praise of brutality 57
Ring Circle as leading group of 140
search for ideal Führer 94, 129, 279
thought 130, 131–4, 135, 137–8, 258
new 'ruling class' (*Herrenschicht*) 139
Night of the Long Knives 7, 194, 257–60, 307
nobility
anti-Semitism 9, 34, 56, 156, 160–77, 272–7
austerity 9–10, 11, 47–57, 59, 126
brutality 98–106
case for majority contributing to rise of Nazi dictatorship 331–40
categorization 5–6
character 34–47, 53, 327, 328
in context of German Revolution 12, 69–71
counter-revolution 93–106
defining 7–8
in demand 134–42
doom and transition, time of 106–28, 333
education, attitude towards 9, 34–47
factors inducing disdain 11–12, 14, 45, 232
as gatekeepers of interpretation 23
guiding principle of bearing (*Haltung*) 2
imagined communities 150–60
leadership 8, 57–68
as masters of self-portrayal 1, 340
misalliance with Nazis 3, 5, 240–1, 266, 335
perceived catastrophes 88–93
reinvention context 12–13, 129–34
reorganization of power 177–207
republicans 246–56
research into history of post-war German 4–5
revaluation of 143–50
role in negative turning points in German history 3–4
rootedness 13, 23–34, 287
significance of Wilhelm's retreat 71–88
time, mastery of 15–23
warriorhood 11, 31, 40–1, 67, 100–1, 131, 236, 287, 327, 333
see also affinities (Nazis and nobility); conflicts (Nazis and nobility)
nobleness (*Adeligkeit*)
concept of 10–11
five aspects of 10
noble republicans 246–56
Nordic Ring 293
November Revolution 215
NSDAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*)
aristocracy's hereditary claims viewed as arrogance by 231
begging letter to 290–1

Brown House (Munich headquarters) 228
DAG leaders striving to form alliance with 175
demographic patterns of membership 315–19
difficulties ascertaining numbers of nobility joining 301–2
example illustrating barriers with nobility 243–4
keeping distance from 175, 193, 268
lower-middle-class members of 232, 235
movers to Resistance from 67, 97, 252, 321–3
nobility joining for financial reasons 292–4
nobility joining from position of economic stability 294
nobility neglecting to join 236–7
nobility receiving negative treatment 238–40, 241
nobility supporters of 84, 165, 184, 192–3, 195, 200–1, 202, 211, 236, 238–40, 243, 268, 269–70, 276, 288, 292–6, 299–300, 310–15, 320, 324
nobility urged to support 268–9, 286
Office for Family Affairs 275
Office of Foreign Affairs 334
officer's daughter as early supporter of 54
presence of nobility as mixed blessing for 240–1
princes and princesses joining 212, 226, 239, 293–4, 295–6, 298–301, 304, 310–11, 319, 326
salons open to 304–5
scepticism towards 199–200, 217–18, 219, 220–1, 269, 276–7
success in July elections 269
Twenty-Five Point Programme 211, 218

Oath (*Der Schwur*) 8, 233
'old fighters' (*Alte Kämpfer*) 220, 238, 299, 315, 316
old nobility
alliances 12
aristocratic National Socialists striving to hasten demise of 245
attempt to demonstrate enduring capabilities of 45
biological determinist breeding espoused by 227
commercial success stories as rare among 120
DAG members 155
death warrant 230–1
deemed as unfit to lead future Reich 224
displays of National Socialist sympathies 306
division with *Briefadel* 152
encounters with Nazis 303–4
GSF representation 203–4
heyday as largely over 132
infused with new significance 52
members of 'power elite' 124
middle-class criticisms 135
new aristocracy, concern over 222
new opportunities for 131
owners of profitable estates 122
as part of coming Führer elite 147, 148
portrayal of embodiment of ideal modern Führer 63
post-war consequences 3
rare republican from 248–9
reassessment of significance of 138
selective memory example 21
speeches hostile to 85
SS imagery appreciated by 321
vampire imagery 140
Ordensburg 16, 228, 320
Orgesch (right-wing paramilitary unit) 98, 190, 192

Pan-German League 102, 161, 165
PEN Centre literary organization 253
physical attributes 10, 39, 42, 45, 53, 125
Political College, Berlin 186
power reorganization 177–207
pragmatic republicans (*Vernunftsrepublikaner*) 333
presumptuousness 231–45
profiteers 4, 5, 137, 139, 288–302, 334–5
proletariat
children of agricultural 63
danger of alliance with intellectuals 42–3

proletariat (*cont.*)
National Socialists as 279–80
SA's habitus 14, 232
sociocultural gulf with nobility 243, 244–5
proletarian aristocracy (*Adelsproletariat*) 6, 59–60, 110–11, 112, 124
property
attempts to obtain clarity from Hitler on 199
as debating point in creation of new nobility 148, 150
distribution, post-1918 121–2
entailment of 24, 107, 127
ideological fusion with rulership and welfare 64
ironic remark concerning 18–19
as Nazi–nobility conflict 217–22, 225–6, 235, 290
nobility's hopes for 288, 289
regarded as lifeblood of aristocratic culture and leadership 56–7
purifying the blood *see* racial purity

racial purity 148–50, 160–77, 222–5, 227–8, 229–31
racial snooping (*Rassenschnüffelei*) 174
radicalization of nobility
affecting noble groups in different ways 120–1
exemplified by two societies 13
fascist 332–3
high nobility 127
leading to alliance with National Socialist regime 332, 335–6
minor nobility 109, 127, 150, 175, 177, 207
prophet of 103
social decline leading to political 3, 105–6
stemming from concept of racial purity 160–1, 165, 175
stemming from financial troubles 292
völkisch 153
reactionaries 28, 101, 132, 176, 208–17, 232–3, 236, 308
reactionary aristocrats 6, 209
reactionary ideology 93
reactionary nobility 311–12
Realpolitik 187, 198
Red Front 232, 253
Reich Main Security Office 203
Reichsbanner organization 251
Reichsnährstand 225, 239
Reichstag 62, 66, 75, 188, 214, 233, 270
Reichswehr see German army (*Reichswehr*)
'republican-monarchist half-light' 211
republicans
noble 246–56
'pragmatic' 247
Resistance
alleged links with 212
biographies and studies of 321–2, 324–5, 337–8, 338–40
exhibiting nobility's guiding principle 2
grey area with collaboration 7
manifesto intended for 8
manoeuvres doomed to failure 86
memorializing and honouring 312
nobility's involvement in 78–9, 142, 210, 255, 256–66, 312, 321–5, 337, 339–40, 342
from NSDAP to 67, 97, 252, 321–3
right-wing intelligentsia 12–13, 23, 32, 43, 45, 102, 134, 137, 140, 189, 197, 202, 258
Ring Movement
ambivalent attitudes towards Nazis 198–9
anti-Semitism within 193
aristocratic members 178
effective strategy of *Realpolitik* 187
efforts to establish *Führersammlung* 177, 179
followers 181
idea of restraining National Socialism 194–5
movement away from elitist conservatism of 204, 205
network of gentlemen's societies 181, 184, 195
sections shifting towards Right of political spectrum 203
sense of inflated self-confidence encapsulated in 207
text reflecting political direction of 258
tradition of top-quality training 186
rootedness 13, 23–34, 287

Ruhr Treasury (Ruhrlade) 180, 191
Rule of the Inferior, The 13, 92, 131–2, 137–8
ruling class (*Herrenschicht*)
  new 66, 139
  obsolescence of old 67
rural life
  anti-Semitic code in 273
  aristocrats involved in arming rural population 97–8
  as aspect of nobleness 10, 25–6, 31, 48, 51, 67
  leadership seen as service to rural population 64–5
  network of relationships as organic system 63–4
Russian Revolution 88

salons
  anachronistic counter-cultures staged in 85
  concept adopted by 66
  as Nazi–nobility affinity 295, 302–6, 309, 337
  'salon espionage' 305
SA Man (periodical) 194
SA (*Sturmabteilung*)
  Aryan purity rules 174
  battlesong 208–9, 232, 235
  brutality of 14, 101, 242, 281–2, 285, 296
  culture of drinking and brawling 244, 258
  degenerate image 285
  driving force behind National Socialism 244
  hatred of middle-class 284–5
  influence over members' lives 244–5
  Leaders' Reserve 201
  nobility helping to establish 98
  resentments against 'reactionaries' 232–3
  revolutionary ambitions 258–9
  Sturmführer (lowest-ranking SA officer) 245
  Sturmlokal (social spaces) 242–3
  youth in 281–2
Saxon Life Grenadier Regiment 252
Schulgemeinde Ellena 187–8
'secret Germany' 1–2, 281
Semi-Gotha 166–7, 173
Semi-Imperator 167, 173
settlers 222–5, 227–8, 229–31
'short knives' 256–66
Smoking Club 190–1
Social Democratic Party (SPD) 193–4, 248
social gatherings 85, 302–6
social inequality 8
Society for the Study of Fascism (GSF) 203–4
soil
  concept placed on ideological pedestal 288
  connection to 24, 32, 179, 281, 289–90
  'Germanizing' 270
  'native' 24, 26, 33, 169, 289
  Nazis extolling German 267
  'of private property' 218
  Third Reich as built on blood and 328
  use of imagery of 227
  worshipping rural 31
SS (*Schutzstaffel*)
  amassing stockpile of noble fantasies 282–3
  Count murdered by 247
  formation of new nobility 230–1
  gatherings in salons 302, 337
  influential intellectuals in 130
  intelligence service 236
  mutated form of nobility brought to life by 326
  nexus of power of 203
  noble thought veering closer to ideology of 229–30, 275
  opportunities for nobility opening up in 291, 292–3, 294, 299, 332, 334
  periodical founded by 237
  racial purity demanded of 171, 174
  symbolism 321
  training facilities 42, 228, 320
Stahlhelm (paramilitary organization) 98, 156, 184, 202, 213, 285, 300, 321, 326
Star of the Covenant 141–2
Süddeutsche Monatshefte (periodical) 58–9, 206
Supreme Army Command (OHL) 182–3

Third Reich
ambivalent role many plotters played within 265
aristocracy's attempt to gain favour with 92
aristocratic belief in own importance playing role in advent of 207
attempts to quantify number of aristocrats with positive attitudes towards 301–2
DAG's aspiration to be integrated into 307
Darré's rhetoric gaining little traction with 224–5
early anti-Semitic measures 332
example of nobility's eagerness to contribute to 231
go-between seeking to improve image of 202
incomplete history of nobility in 339
increasing aristocratic confidence of position within 225
language of 287
majority of nobility profiting from rise of 335
methods of aristocratic resistance to 257
new 'high society' 6, 306
New Right concepts associated with 134
organizations allowed to continue activities in 203
popularization of phrase 45, 52
presenting opportunities for advancement 291, 315, 322
text advocating new 'Führer elite' to steer 146
time
as aspect of nobleness 10
mastery of 15–23
transition and doom, time of 106–28
Treaty of Versailles 106–7, 121–4, 291
Trommler cigarettes 118
Trommler (herald) 278, 303

'uprootedness' 11, 274
Uradel see ancient nobility (*Uradel*)

'vagabond monarchism' 87–8, 209
Valkyrie (film) 1, 340
Völkischer Beobachter (newspaper) 241, 286
völkisch thought 25, 32, 34, 42, 54–5, 65, 67, 80, 84, 90, 114–15, 127, 130, 132, 140, 144, 146–9, 151, 153–4, 159, 160–74, 176, 182, 186, 224, 228–9, 230, 239, 274–6, 278, 282–3, 284, 325, 326
Volksgemeinschaft see national community of Aryans
Volksgenossen (*Volksgemeinschaft* members) 232, 235
Volksverbundenheit (close relationship with the people) 62–3
Vortrupp Schwarz-Rot-Gold (youth association) 251

warriorhood
concept of Führer 65, 67
DAG's youth appeal 159
Nazi 267, 279, 281, 284
nobility 11, 31, 40–1, 67, 100–1, 131, 236, 287, 327, 333
warrior-intellectuals (*Kampfdenker*) 135–7, 143, 202
'warrior-peasants' 221–2, 225, 229
Wehrmacht 257, 265–6, 288, 334, 337
Weimar Republic
archetypes of aristocrats with governmental roles during 246–8
career positions during 122–3, 291
incomplete history of nobility in 339
legal developments threatening aristocracy in early days of 164
monarchism during era of 85–6
New Right emerging during era of 133
nobility as significant players in 3–4
nobility opposing 261, 264
nobility siding with 250–1
powerful anti-Semitic codes reaching climax during 273
pre-eminent historian of 330
right-wing concerns arising during 206
settlement programmes drawn up during 219
tales of brutality accelerating in later years of 101

text encapsulating right-wing intelligentsia's view of 13
violent conflicts overshadowing history of 209
yearning for 'authentic aristocracy' during 130
women
in Berlin 33
career problems facing 113–14
during German Revolution 89–90
hunting 29
mavericks 253–5
NSDAP members 300, 311, 313, 314, 318–19
proletarian aristocracy 110–11
Working Group of Catholic Germans (AKD) 309

youth conferences 181, 196, 198
youth movements
German 281, 284
socialist 255
youth organizations 146, 159, 163, 181, 251, 282–3