Political leadership in Germany between 1921 and 1945:
Linking charisma and totalitarianism

by

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Preface

There are many people I would like to thank for their help and support in the writing of this dissertation. First among these is my promoter and study leader, Theo Bekker. His creative guidance contributed more to this study than he would realise.

My parents also deserve special mention, for without their love and support I would not have had the hope to push through when the load felt heavy.

To my friends and colleagues for their care and encouragement, my many thanks.

Most importantly, I thank my Lord for His grace and strength. Like the composer J.S Bach did on all the works that flowed from his pen, I would like to add the letters *S.D.G.* to this work of mine.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

Events surrounding Nazi Germany have for long captured the attention of both the academic world and the broad public. The popular appeal of the topic is apparent in the great amount of literature constantly being produced on the topic. If one limits oneself to a survey of purely academic literature, ignoring the repetitive and populist works often encountered on this subject, it will be clear that the phenomenon of fascism has long fascinated and intrigued social scientists and historians alike. Countless books, articles and commentaries have been written over the years by many different scholars whose main aim was to try to understand and clarify the events that shook Europe after the First World War. Unfortunately the resultant body of knowledge surrounding these events, has become known for its lack of precision, ambiguity and even uncertainty. This is especially true of the concept 'fascism'. Today, there exists not only widely divergent interpretations of fascism, but also a situation where controversy is sure to surround almost any statement on the subject. The divergence of interpretations and opinions put forward concerning Nazi Germany, and especially the leadership and person of Adolf Hitler, clearly illustrates this point. Many contradictory views have been raised about the leadership of Hitler, some portraying him as an all-powerful mad man, intoxicating the German masses with his mystical powers, while other saw him as a mere captive of impersonal social and historical forces that swept him and the German people into the cataclysmic events of World War II.

This chapter has the purpose of introducing this study as an attempt at clarifying some of the ambiguity surrounding leadership in the Third Reich. Firstly, some comments will be made regarding the title of this study. Secondly, consideration will be given to the underlying questions that gave rise to the study in the first place, as well as to the goals of this study. The focus of this section of the chapter will be clarifying the problem under discussion. The third aspect to be discussed is the approaches as well as the methods to be followed in this study, after which the basic chapter allocation and some important concepts relevant to the study will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the sources used in the study.

1.2 Title discussion

The title of this dissertation is: *Political leadership in Germany between 1921 and 1945: Linking charisma and totalitarianism*. This title places the study within the field of political studies and political science. It will specifically focus on how a charismatic relationship between the leader and his followers was combined with a totalitarian style of leadership to create the unique political leadership present in Germany during the Nazi era. This study focuses its main attention on Adolf Hitler since the charismatic and totalitarian style of leadership under consideration found its main expression in his day to day leadership of the German people and state. The whole political leadership environment will also be investigated in its collective dimension and application within this timeframe, but the specific focus will be on studying the leadership of Hitler during his time as leader of the Nazi Party and later also as leader of Germany itself. This explains the dates chosen as part of the title. Hitler assumed the chairmanship of the Nazi Party on the 29th of July 1921 and he remained leader (or *Führer*) until his suicide in the Berlin bunker on 30 April 1945. Flowing from the study of the personal leadership role of Hitler is an analysis of the interaction between the *Führer* and the broader political leadership in Germany during this time.

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A final aspect of importance regarding the title is the use of the concept 'political leadership'. The nature of the discussion on leadership throughout the whole of this study must be seen within the political context of leadership. 'Political leadership' is used in the title to clearly indicate that the dissertation focuses on the political aspects of leadership, and thus the political leaders of the German state, and not on 'leadership' in its broadest and most general societal application. The leading of the German government and people as a political phenomenon is thus taken as one of the primary points of departure for this dissertation.

1.3 Problem discussion

The tumultuous events that shook Europe between 1933 with the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and 1945 with the occupation and division of Germany by the allied powers, has bewildered and even confused the modern world. It is difficult for the modern mind to fully comprehend the reasons and motivations behind the overt aggression of the German nation towards its neighbours, resulting in a war of annihilation that cost millions of lives, not even to mention the abject horror of an Auschwitz or Treblinka. Though this study in no way tries to clarify the whole of this experience, it will aim at illuminating some of the issues related to these momentous events. In particular it will address the following basic questions that focus on the role of the Nazi leadership, especially that of Adolf Hitler, in the shaping of the above mentioned events.

The first question concerns the German people. How were they persuaded to willingly and faithfully follow a leader of the calibre of Adolf Hitler with an almost blinding irrationality into an abyss of destruction? How did he legitimise his claim to authority? Was there some need amongst the average German that Hitler was able and willing to address while other forms of leadership could not? All these and related questions indicate that the relationship between the *Führer* and the people will need specific attention.

A second line of questioning to be considered concerns Hitler's governance of the German state. To an outside observer it might have appeared almost impossible for the Nazi political system to function at all. Internal rivalries, bloody conflicts, suspicion and insufficient or even total lack of communication between various departments and different sections of government should have pointed to an ineffective government without a stable organisational footing to stand on; but that was not the case. The Nazi system proved to be highly effective in organising, structuring and mobilising the entire German population and industrial might towards its goals. At the centre of the answer to this paradoxical situation stands the leader. The leader appears to have been the mysterious entity that held together this disparate system as a functioning unit. How did he manage to achieve this?

The above mentioned two questions raise the needs for a detailed analysis of two concepts closely related to Hitler's leadership namely the 'Hitler Myth' and the 'Führer Prinzip'. It will be necessary to clearly indicate what each of these concepts entailed, and how these two ideas, when joined together in a symbiotic relationship, created the impetus behind the whole of the system. It will also be necessary to gauge why they exacted such a wide popular appeal.

In light of these stated questions, the main goals of the research need to be identified. The point of departure must be a clear and penetrating definition of the concept 'Fascism' as well as an understanding of how fascism as an ideology served the Nazi leadership. Those sections of the ideas and principle underlining fascism that focuses on the role and function of leadership must be identified and assessed. The uniqueness of National Socialism in relation to other manifestations of fascism also needs to be clarified.

As far as leadership is concerned, a clear understanding of the concept is essential. From a general understanding of leadership we would then need to narrow the focus to a specific comprehension of the nature and actual functioning of political

leadership in totalitarian systems such as Nazi Germany. The nature and function of the political leadership within the Third Reich would thus have to be identified and explained as well as the relationship between the leader and the rest of the political elite. These issues can all be tied together in an analysis of the so-called 'Führer prinzip' that served as an expression to explain the leadership style of Hitler.

A further research goal as far as political leadership is concerned, is trying to identify the basis of authority that was used to legitimise the Nazi regime, and particularly the rule of Adolf Hitler. Hitler's relationship with the German people needs be analysed, and an attempt must be made to gauge the popular appeal he had. What were the reasons for the approval given by the great majority of Germans to the Nazi regime? In addressing this issue the origins, development and impact of the 'Hitler myth' will have to receive thorough attention.

1.4 Approaches and methods

This dissertation is basically aimed at evaluating the leadership of Adolf Hitler during his tenure as leader of the Nazi Party, which includes him as leader of Germany. No use will be made of polls or other such empirical research tools. The study will mainly be analytical, thematic, and evaluative in nature, and will include a survey and interpretation of available empirical, historical and interpretive literature, as this will facilitate the identification of the fundamental elements of the success of Hilter's leadership style. The one exception to this is chapter five which is more descriptive and chronological in approach. The reason for this is that it will facilitate the study of the growth and influence of the 'Hitler myth'; this being one of the most important reasons for the large-scale acceptance and attachment the German people felt towards Hitler, thus making it of great importance for this study.

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1.5 Chapter allocation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter namely: *Introductory orientation* focuses on a problem discussion as well as the approaches used in the rest of the dissertation. A brief outline of the composition of the dissertation is also provided. Finally, a discussion of the literature used throughout the study is also included.

The second chapter entitled: *Fascism: Interpretations and definition* aims at providing a strong theoretical basis for the interpretation and use of the concept Fascism in the rest of the study. Attention will be paid to the inflation and resultant misuse of the concept as well as to the diverse range of interpretations given to it. It is not within the scope of this study to resolve the debate surrounding the concept 'fascism'. What it will strive for is to formulate an ideal type of the fascist minimum that will be useful and applicable to the rest of the study. The second part of the chapter will thus attempt to define Fascism as a generic political ideology resting on a mythic core based on a palingenetic or revivalist form of populist ultra-nationalism, while also considering the structural weaknesses implied by such a definition. The third part of the chapter will attempt to identify the most prominent characteristics of Fascism as a political ideology so as to facilitate the analysis of leadership within a fascist setting. Finally the uniqueness of Nazism within the context of generic Fascism is considered, for as the differences between the Hitler regime and the Mussolini regime clearly illustrated, each nation followed its own *Sonderweg* or unique path of development.

The third chapter: *Totalitarian and charismatic political leadership* serves as the second major theoretical chapter of this study. If focuses on leadership, especially political leadership. As we are dealing here with a very complex and sophisticated concept that almost seems to defy exact definition, numerous definitions put forward by prominent scholars are referred to, and categorised to arrive at a best possible understanding thereof, that will serve as a basis for the

further analysis of the concept for the rest of the study. A distinction will then be made between democratic and autocratic leadership with the rule of Hitler an example of the last. Since we are dealing with a specific form of authoritarianism in Nazi Germany, namely totalitarianism, we further refine the analysis of leadership specifically to that of political leadership as it manifests in totalitarian systems. Finally attention is paid to the different grounds on which the validity of legitimate claims to authority can be based in a political system. Three different bases for legitimacy of authority will be identified, with charismatic grounds especially applicable to the case of the Third Reich. Detailed attention will thus be paid to charismatic leadership and the style of leadership that accompanies it, as well as the indicators that can point us to the presence of charismatic perceptions in a society towards its leadership or leader.

In chapter four, entitled: *Hitler and the people: Charismatic leadership in Nazi Germany*, the understanding gleaned from chapter three's discussion on charismatic leadership is applied to the case of Adolf Hitler as leader of Germany from 1933 to 1945. Attention is also given to his leadership in the Nazi Party even before he assumed the position of leader of Germany itself. The prominence of the idea of heroic leadership in the nationalist Right in Germany long before the rise of Hitler is discussed, along with the way Hitler exploited this idea as he assumed the role of the saviour-leader of the German nation. The growth of the 'Hitler myth' is then dealt with in a descriptive and chronological fashion to show the rise and pre-eminence of the charismatic basis of authority in the Nazi movement and later in the whole of Germany. The importance of the German people's perceptions of Hitler is then evaluated within this context. Finally, the focus is placed on Hitler's own views regarding the masses, especially his thoughts on how to influence and control them.

Chapter five deals with Hitler's leadership of the Nazi state, and focuses not on how he legitimised his authority towards the German people (this was dealt with in chapter four), but on how he actually led, directed and managed the state. The

chapter is entitled *Hitler as the leader of the Nazi state*. The chapter starts with identifying the different historical perspective on Hitler's leadership and identifies the two main approaches as being the intentionalist approach and the structuralist approach. With this as backdrop the following aspects are considered: The organisation of Germany under Nazi control, the tension between the Nazi party and the Nazi state, the structure of the Nazi movement, and the *Führer prinzip*. Finally we return to consider the validity of the previously identified approaches within the light of the preceding analysis.

The final chapter is simply entitled *Summary*. This chapter will contain a summary of the conclusions reached during this study. The underlying questions asked at the outset of the study will each be dealt with in succession and addressed based on the analysis of the preceding chapters. The question will also be asked as the whether the research goals have been attained or not.

1.6 Important concepts

1.6.1 Ideology

Ideology is a concept that proves elusive to attempts at defining it comprehensively (see Baradat 1997: 6; Griffin 1991: 15; Sargent; 1999: 3-4; Vincent 1995: 1-16). We are dealing here with an ideal type that can easily be inflated or deflated to such an extent that it can become anything from an all-embracing worldview to a very specific and particular program of political action.

The concept had its origin in the works of Antoine Louis Destutt de Tracy (1754 - 1836) published not long after the French Revolution. He referred to ideology as the "science of ideas", that is to say the study of the process of the formation of ideas. Ideas, he stated, are the result of our interaction with the physical environment, and thus he views the empirical method as the only source of knowledge, giving ideologies a purely materialistic foundation. According to De

Tracy, the knowledge gain by this new science must be used for the improvement of society (Baradat 1997: 6). De Tracy's understanding of the nature of ideologies was however rejected by Marx and Engels.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels put forward a different understanding of the concept ideology. They argued that ideology is nothing but a fabrication used by the dominant group in society to justify their status as the ruling class of society. It will always just reflect the interests of the ruling class and therefore its interpretation of society can not be, and should not, be trusted for it is based on an incorrect understanding of the true nature of politics (Baradat 1997: 7).

Roger Eatwell (Eatwell et al. 1993: 7) in his attempt to comprehensively define ideology, states that an ideology must posses a certain minimum set of attributes; in particular an ideology has an overt or implicit set of normative and empirical views about: (i) human nature, (ii) the process of history, and (iii) the socio-political structure of society. Based on these attribute he continues to define ideologies as follow:

> A political ideology is a relatively coherent set of empirical and normative beliefs and thought, focusing on the problems of human nature, the process of history, and socio-political arrangements. It is usually related to a programme of more specific immediate and short-run concerns. Depending on its relation to the dominant value structure, an ideology can act as either a stabilizing or a radical force.... Political ideologies are essentially the product of collective thought. They are 'ideal types', not to be confused with specific movements, parties or regimes which may bear their name (Eatwell et al. 1993: 9-10).

This definition forms the basis of understanding about ideology used in this study. On the other hand the interpretation of 'ideology' as supplied by Roger Griffin

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(1993: 15-19), will also be highly beneficial especially in the discussion of fascism as an ideology. Since a detail analysis of ideology in its generic form is not the focus of this study, the points raised will be dealt with in a very cursory fashion. Griffin identifies the following ten essential elements to an ideology:

a) *Ideology embraces any expression of human thought,* whether verbal, symbolic or behavioural when considered in terms of its role in legitimating or challenging any economic, social, political and cultural order.

b) *Ideology can assume a reactionary, progressive or revolutionary aspect,* according to whether it acts as (a) a conformist, conservative, hegemonic force, (b) an idealistic, reforming, but 'systemic' force or (c) a utopian, subversive, 'extra-systemic' one. In al three cases it should be remembered that along-side an ideology's positive ideals it will always reject those with which it conflicts. Therefore all ideologies will have an 'anti-' dimension.

c) *The utopia of an ideology can never be fully realised in practice.* There will always exist a disparity between the 'ideal' postulated by the ideology and the 'reality' it first of all opposes and that which it wants to embed as the basis of a new regime.

d) *Ideologies are lived out as truths,* being perceived as ideologies only when observed with a sense of critical detachment from the outside. To the person standing 'within' such an ideology it forms a prominent part of their world-view and is associated with common sense, reason, conviction and self-evident facts. Therefore, ideologies involve both the spoken and unspoken assumptions that ensure that all behaviour and actions 'make sense' to their carrier on a subjective basis.

e) *An ideology is intrinsically irrational,* for even if it is equated with reason and is articulated by some of its protagonists or reconstructed by those studying it

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with a high degree of theoretical coherence, it owes its power to inspire action and provide a sense of reality to the fact that it is rooted in pre-verbal, subconscious feelings and affective drives (cf. Rossi-Landi, 1990).

f) *There are many levels of commitment to an ideology,* ranging from high intensity involvement of the leadership, activists and ideologues of a movement, to the more passive or pragmatic supporters at the periphery with no deep or lasting involvement in the movement. The contents of an ideology will become more articulated and sophisticated towards a movement's activist core and more simplistic and propagandistic towards the periphery.

g) *Commitment to an ideology is largely determined by self-interest.* This statement should not be seen as only referring to narrow materialist egotism and certain issues of survival, but also to the complex psychological needs and irrational drives that may find expression in forms of 'selfless' idealism and the desire for 'self-transcendence'. Thus individuals tend towards a particular ideology on the basis of a largely subliminal 'elective affinity' with it (Weber 1948: 284-285), both material and psychologically.

h) *Ideologies are not homogeneous at a lived level,* for each individual will conceptualise and rationalise the ideology in a unique way and emphasise different aspect of this whole body of ideas which they perceive as having a personal elective affinity with them.

i) *Ideologies are not located in individuals as such,* and can never be fully conceptualises and contextualised by any one ideologue. Ideologies exist in their entirety only at a collective 'transpersonal' level. It is on this level that they act as structural forces in influencing peoples lives and shaping historical events on a level with social, economic and political structures and in interaction with them. It is for this reason that an ideology's impact on history can never be explain in terms of ideas alone, but only as an integral aspect of

the specific historical context in which the exist.

j) *Ideologies can be defined ideal-typically in terms of a core of values and perceptions of history*

When applying this typology of ideology to fascism it becomes clear that it anticipates the existence of heterogeneity between the different examples thereof, and even within the same movement, as well as allowing for a considerable amount of diversification and complexity as far as its sociological base and the motivation of its supporters are concern. It will be indicated that this correlates directly with the factual situation that applied in Nazi Germany.

1.7 Literature study

This dissertation is based exclusively on information gained from the study of literary sources. The use of primary sources are limited to the published work of Hitler himself (*Mein Kampf*) as well as to collections of his speeches and those of some other prominent figures in the Nazi Party (for example the work of Baynes (1942)). These primary sources will however not be sufficient to address the topic of the study, thus extensive use will be made of secondary sources.

The secondary sources that will be used in this dissertation are important works on Fascism and Nazism as ideologies, political leadership in general but also those that specifically focus on totalitarian and charismatic leadership, the relationship between Hitler and the German people, as well as works on the functioning of the Nazi state. The nature of the questions under consideration in this study, as well as the approaches adopted for addressing these questions, guided the selection of sources and resulted in more weight being afforded to certain sources.

In chapter two the unique definition of fascism developed by Roger Griffin in his work *The nature of Fascism* (1993) and its application in the work *Fascism* (1995) will serve as a basis for the definition used in this study, since it can contribute so meaningfully to an understanding of the nature of the role and function of Hitler in the German society since it will provide a clear link between the core nature of Fascism (and thus by implication Nazism) and the role afforded to the leader of the movement or nation. The basic approach to the analysis of Nazism used throughout this study will thus relay heavily on the works of Griffin. His work will however be contrasted with, and supported by, other prominent works on the topic of fascism such as those of Payne, *Fascism: comparison and definition* (1980), Nolte, *Three faces of Fascism: Action Francaise, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (1965), and two works of Gregor *The ideology of Fascism: The rationale of totalitarianism* (1969) and *Theories of Fascism* (1974).

In the chapter on leadership as a political phenomenon a great number of works are used to address this concept in its broad application. Special mention, however, needs to be made of the work of Bass, *Stogdill's handbook on leadership* (1981). It is a very comprehensive work focused on the analysis of the fundamental nature of leadership. It compares all the different approaches to the study of leadership, and the various interpretations of leadership itself, thus making it a very useful resource for this study. In the section of the chapter dealing with totalitarian leadership the works of Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism* (1966) and *The origins of totalitarianism* (1973, 1986) dealing with totalitarianism are often referred to. These works represent a penetrating study of the inner workings of the Nazi leadership, full of insight, not repeated elsewhere, that contributes greatly to an understanding of the basic questions under discussion in this dissertation. In the portion of the chapter that focuses on charismatic leadership, the works of Max Weber on the classification of legitimate authority are used as a point of departure. The source of Willner, *The spellbinders: charismatic political leadership* (1984) also contributes significantly to this section.

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In recent years, the main contribution to the analysis of leadership in Nazi Germany, probably came from the works of Ian Kershaw. His works are of specific importance to this dissertation since he both addresses the relationship of Hitler with the German people in his work *The Hitler Myth. Image and reality in the Third Reich* (1989), and the functional nature of Hitler leadership of the Nazi state in *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and perspectives of interpretation* (1993). Another important work used in chapter 4 is that of Walter C. Langer, *The mind of Adolf Hitler* (1972) based on a psychological analysis he did of Hitler during World War II for the US military. Chapter 5, apart from the works of Kershaw, relies heavily on the works of Bracher, *The German dictatorship: The origins, structure and consequences of National Socialism* (1969), Broszats, *The Hitler state: The foundations and development of the internal structure of the Third Reich* (1981), Jäckel, *Hitler's 'weltanschauung'. A blueprint for power* (1984), and Toland, *Adolf Hitler* (1976) amongst others, all leading reference works on the topic of Hitler's leadership.

Chapter six, being the summary, will endeavour to draw together the various strands of the discussion, and will consequently make reference to most of the main sources used in the preceding chapters.

Finally, mention can be made of a number of related themes flowing from, but not fully addressed in, this dissertation that, however, deserve further study at a future time. These include the specific relation between civil society and the Nazi leadership, especially the roll and function of business and the churches as well as cultural and youth movements. Also of great interest will be an analysis of the way in which the general affinity with the idea of an 'heroic leader' so prevalent in 19th century Germany prepared the way, not just for the rise of a charismatic leader like Hitler, but can also account for the acceptance of his specific totalitarian style of leadership. The ambivalent relationship between the Nazi Party and the Nazi State also deserves further attention, especially the way in which this

paradoxical relationship was used by the Nazi leadership for the furthering of its goals.

CHAPTER 2

FASCISM:

INTERPRETATIONS AND DEFINITION

2.1 Introduction

Fascism is a concept that presents us with many difficulties as soon as we attempt to interpret and define it. Probably the only uncontroversial statement that can be made about fascism is that it was the name given to the political movement initiated and led by Mussolini in Italy between March 1919 and April 1945; and that fascism became the official ideological base of the dictatorial government headed by Mussolini in Italy between 1925 and 1943. The concept fascism is thus singularly linked with Italy and to use it outside an Italian context is to ascribe a generic status to the concept. Fascism with reference to its Italian manifestation (henceforth referred to as 'Fascism') should thus be seen as contextually and conceptually different from the generic interpretation thereof (referred to as 'fascism').

The generic nature ascribed to the concept fascism has led to an inflation in its use that unfortunately resulted in a vagueness of meaning surrounding it. In this chapter an attempt will be made to identify the various interpretations of fascism presented during the last seventy years, as well as to present a working definition of the concept that will bring clarity as to the true essence of fascism as a political ideology. This definition will serve as both the point of departure for the study of political leadership in the Third Reich, as well as a fundamental explanation for the specific type of leadership encountered there. The chapter will also identify the main characteristics of fascism and address the structural weaknesses of

fascism implied by the definition. Finally, the uniqueness of Nazi when compared to other manifestations of generic fascism will be discussed.

2.2 The inflation and diversification of the concept 'fascism'

The term fascism is derived from the Italian word *fascio*, meaning 'bundle' or 'union' (Payne 1980: 4), which had its origin in pre-Roman Etruscan Italy. It referred to a bundle of rods with a projecting axe that was used as a symbol of unity and authority (Robertson 1993: 183). Mussolini adopted this as the official symbol of the Italian Fascist movement. The generic nature of fascism started to unfold as early as 1923 when *The Contemporary Review* of the *Oxford English Dictionary* commented on the political situation in Weimar Germany by referring to 'Fascism in Germany' (Griffin 1993: 1). This initiated a process that Huizinga (1956: 295-296) described as 'inflation'. More and more phenomena and permutations were gradually included under the concept 'fascism' with the result that it started to lose its discriminating value. Fascism as a blanket term was born.

The process of inflation gained impetus when certain political movements, like *Faisceau* in France and the British Union of Fascists, started using the word as an honorific title to emphasis their positive view of the principles upon which Mussolini's government was based (see Valois 1926: 21-23, 25 and Thomson 1936: 47-48). But it was the opponents of fascism who were mainly responsible for its devaluation. Especially amongst left-wing groups and parties the word gained wide use as denoting any movement or government with anti-Marxist and anti-democratic goals (see Togliatti 1976: 3-5). The Spanish Civil War aided this view because it could easily have been interpreted as a conflict between fascism and democracy. This view was successfully exploited to recruit volunteers in the defence of the 'democratic' Spanish Republic. In the years following 1945, World War II and all its accompanying horrors has come to be seen as basically a struggle between 'fascist' and 'anti-fascist' forces. For the post-war generations the word 'fascist' has thus become emotionally charged and derogatory and

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stands to signify any movement, regime or action that is seen as oppressive, authoritarian or restrictive. It therefore comes as no surprise that Chinese students denounced the 'fascism' of the Chinese government when it resorted to high levels of oppression and brutality to suppress the student protests of 1989.

This process of inflation and devaluation goes even a step further in the colloquial use of the term. Words like 'fashion fascism' and 'health fascists' are easily bantered about in the media and on the streets today where the interpretation of the term is very loosely applied to any form of action that might be viewed as conservative and restrictive in any sense. This process of inflation has invested even academic circles where it has suffered from an unacceptable loss of precision and certitude. Ambiguity can easily surround a concept like 'ecofascists' as used by Pepper (1985) in his work on the modern environmental movement. This problem clearly shows that interpretation of the concept 'fascism' is so 'up in the air' that it is more often than not misused, and is thus busy losing it's discriminating and evaluative value. Part of the problem is the diverse nature of the interpretations that serious students of the subject have come up with in trying to explain this novel form of radicalism that emerged in Europe after World War I. There seems to be a lack of consensus surrounding even the most fundamental aspects of this new phenomenon. According to Payne (1980: 178-190) these diverse interpretations can be divided into twelve categories:

a) *Fascism as a violent, dictatorial agent of bourgeois capitalism*

According to this interpretation fascism is seen mainly as an 'agent' of 'capitalism', 'big business', 'financial capital', the 'bourgeoisie' or any combination thereof. This Marxist interpretation (or the work of Marxist theoreticians) is probably the oldest view of fascism for it was formulated to some extent even before the Fascist movement in Italy was formally organised. This view, which held strong currency in most communist states, was still prevalent in the late 1980's. According to this interpretation no distinction is

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made between fascist groups and right-wing authoritarian movements for fascism is seen as a mere cover for the privileged classes and its interests.

b) *Fascism as a twentieth-century form of 'Bonapartism'*

It soon became apparent to certain theoreticians (including some Marxists) that the 'agent' theory, whereby fascist movements acted on behalf of certain vested interests, (such as big business) was inadequate and incorrect. Out of this grouping a pattern of thought emerged whereby fascism was equated with a contemporary manifestation of 'Bonapartism' which refers to an opportunistic and populist alliance between part of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat manifesting in strong leadership and conservative nationalism (Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics 1996: 41-42). It implies an autonomous form of authoritarian government free from domination by one specific class.

c) *Fascism as the expression of a unique radicalism of the middle class*

Certain observers (for example De Felice et al. (1976)) have suggested that fascism serves as a vehicle for certain sectors of the middle class, rather than for capitalism. These sectors of the middle class are those who have been previously denied status amongst the national elite. They aim at forming a new national system that will give them a more prominent role. This approach is limited for it fails to explain the number of non-middle class supporters of fascist movements.

d) *Fascism as the consequence of unique national histories*

A whole number of writers (for example Mack Smith (1959) and McGovern (1941)) have tried to portray Fascism and Nazism as unique Italian and German phenomena, that is rooted in their particular cultural and social values and institutions imbedded in their own national histories. Though this line of

thinking cannot be totally disregarded, it has been discredited mainly because of the reductionistic analyses employed by the proponents thereof.

e) *Fascism as the product of a cultural or moral breakdown*

Cultural fragmentation and moral relativism in Europe have been blamed as the driving forces behind fascism by certain figures like Benedetto Croce and Friedrich Meinecke. They stated that World War I and its aftermath produced intense economic dislocation, social conflict and cultural anomie, which resulted in a spiritual collapse that stimulated the formation of various forms of radical nationalism. Gregor (1969) counters this view of nihilistic collapse and stated that fascism was rather the result of certain specific new cultural, political and sociological ideas developed in Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

f) *Fascism as a unique metapolitical phenomenon*

Ernst Nolte (1965) follows a unique approach in his study of fascism and the manifestations thereof. He views fascism mainly as a metapolitical phenomenon, that is, the product of certain political, cultural and ideological aspirations arising out of liberal democracy and aiming to establish a radical *new order*, with new values and doctrines of its own - thus a search for a new kind of revolution of the right. Other writers who support this view to a certain extent are Weber (1964) and Mosse (1979). This interpretation will find further reverberations in the definitional approach followed for this particular study.

g) *Fascism as the result of extreme neurotic or pathological psychological impulses*

This approach that relied more on intuition than empirical proof found a lot a favour just after World War II. Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941, 1965)

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placed a lot of emphasis on aspects such as feelings of isolation, impotence, anomie and frustration. Wilhelm Reich followed an extreme Freudian approach in his work *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1946) which relied on a psychosexual explanation. Theodor Adorno et al. in the work *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), focused on the expression of certain 'authoritarian personality' traits like a tendency towards rigidity, repression and dictatorship. The weakness of this approach lies in the unverifiable and speculative nature thereof.

h) *Fascism as the product of the rise of the amorphous masses*

Another view of fascism considers it the product of certain qualitative change in European society. The traditional class structure gave way to large, undifferentiated and atomised populations - the so-called 'masses' of the urban, industrial society. When first formulated by José Ortega y Gasset (1961), this view carried strong currency amongst a lot of prominent thinkers for example Hannah Arendt (1975) and William Kornhauser (1959). This approach focuses on aspects such as the irrational, anti-intellectual and visceral nature of the fascist appeal to the 'mass man'. The drawback of this interpretation is that it underplays the extent to which the practical ideological content appealed to the 'masses' and how certain tangible interests were addressed in the programmes and practices of fascist movements.

i) *Fascism as a typical manifestation of twentieth-century totalitarianism*

At the close of World War II, when the threat of Hitlerism was being replaced by the dark shape of Stalinism, an interesting view of fascism came forth. A few political theorists stated that fascism (and more specifically National Socialism) should not be viewed as a unique genus of political thought and action, but that it should be seen rather, as just one typical manifestation of a much broader and more sinister general phenomenon of twentieth-century totalitarianism.

Therefore, this totalitarian trend would continue long after fascism as a specific manifestation ceased to exist.

j) *Fascism as resistance to modernisation*

Some western scholars have in recent years started to interpret fascism as an expression of resistance to 'modernisation'. Turner (1975: 131-132) and Vincent (1995), for example, view fascism as opposed to certain central features of western liberal society such as urbanisation, industrialisation, liberal education, rationalist materialism, individualism, social differentiation and pluralist autonomy. Because of this they see fascism as inherently opposed to modernisation itself.

k) *Fascism as the consequence of a certain stage of socio-economic growth or phase in the development sequence*

During the 1960's a new approach emerged that focused on the developmental stage of a state. This approach was strongly influenced by ideas about structural and political imperatives of economic modernisation and the experiences of newly emerging 'Third World' states. Payne (1980: 188-189) comments on this interpretation as follows:

> The stages of growth concept holds that the process of modernization and industrialization has frequently tended to produce severe internal conflict as the balance of power shifts between or threatens various social and economic groups. Those who lean towards this approach differ from Marxists in not reducing the conflict to a capital versus labor struggle but defining it more broadly in terms of a large range of social/structural forces and national interests.

Prominent exponents of this view on fascism are amongst others Organski (1968) and Gregor (1974).

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I) *The denial that any such general phenomenon as generic fascism can be defined*

Finally reference can be made of a school of thought that states that to afford fascism generic status is a projection of the imagination and that the various so-called fascist movements are too dissimilar to form a distinct category. This point of view soon however became discredited and resulted in the fact that even some of the supporters of this idea (for example Bracher and De Felice) had to admit that a 'fascist minimum', composed of certain common characteristics of supposedly fascist movements, could be constructed.

This diversification of interpretations surrounding the study of 'fascism' necessitates that, any attempt at definition of the concept, should start with the fundamental aspects thereof and build on from there. One of the first issues to be addressed in this regard is the question surrounding the generic nature of fascism. It was already stated that 'fascism' acquires a generic status when it is used outside of an Italian context. This generic nature, one must admit, can be pushed too far when all manifestations of fascism are seen as possessing an absolute common identity and no allowens is made, or theoretical room created, for obvious and distinct differences. The views of some of the top Fascists and Nazis clearly demonstrate this point. They realised that they had a lot in common and seemed to represent a new departure compared with previous political groups, but they were uncertain just how far any mutual identity extended, and they remained conscious of major, some thought distinctive, differences between themselves (Payne 1980: 195). At this point it should be made clear that the approach of this study in this regard is that a definitive genus of 'fascism' can be identified, while making adequate allowance for manifestational differences resulting from certain national and environmental peculiarities. Fascism will be discussed within this context, providing us with the foundation we need for an evaluation of Nazism.

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Now that the basic conceptual approach to be followed in this study as regards fascism has been determined, we are able to move over to the process of identifying a methodological approach that can serve as a vehicle towards a better understanding and analysis of fascism, as well as aiding in the explanation of the fundamental nature and different manifestations thereof.

2.3 Fascism as an ideal type

As soon as a generic nature is awarded to a concept that is used in the investigation of processes and events concerning human beings (as was just accorded to 'fascism'), it can easily result in a maze of conflicting definitional pathways, each following a specific set of criteria which is usually awarded absolute status. This process has been aptly demonstrated as applicable to the study of 'generic fascism'. In an attempt to clarify this interesting development Max Weber coined the term 'ideal type'. He stated that the inflation and diversification of social scientific terms must be seen in the light of the fact that they are 'ideal types'. The basic premise of Weber's thoughts on this subject is that the human mind needs a filter capable of sorting through and editing the infinite amount of phenomena that constitutes experiential reality, before it can draw meaning and value from it (Burger 1976: 80). One only needs to think of the absolute impossibility of giving a complete account of every action and word of the millions of people involved in a specific historical event (for example the democratic transition in South Africa) and their every interaction with one another, not even to mention the impact of structural forces on everyone of them (for example socio-economic, political or cultural). Individual historical events, like the South African democratic transition, always consist on closer inspection of countless interacting personal and extra-personal systems of 'facts'. In order for the human mind to 'get a hold' on such a vast amount of data it structures this data through various thought processes into a single conceptual entity which man is able to lend verbal expression to. This enables them not only to structure this data into a meaningful conceptual framework, but also to birth within them an

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insight into the complex ordering principles at work amongst all the disparate data. Terms such as 'democratisation in South Africa' or 'the French Revolution' thus stands as code words for a large body of events (involving millions of people plus a large amount of impersonal influences), which have been reduced to a manageable size, thus making them useful for the purpose of investigation. Once we reduce the phenomena to only 'revolution' or 'democratisation' *in general* we can start focusing on aspects like underlying commonalties or other shared characteristics that can make it useful in a study of a recurring type of phenomenon or 'genus'. This 'type' is 'ideal' because it does not exist in reality but is only an abstraction in an intellectual world stripped of the heterogeneity, and to a certain extent even complexity, of the real world. Weber implied this in the following definition:

> An ideal type is formed by the one-sided exaggeration (*Steigerung*) of one or several viewpoints and by the combination of a great many single phenomena (*Einzelerscheinungen*) existing diffusely and discretely, more or less present and occasionally absent, which are compatible with those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints, into an internally consistent thought-picture (*Gedankenbild*). In its conceptual purity this thought-picture cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality, it is a utopia. (Burger 1976: 127-128)

The ideal type thus provides the researcher with conceptual control over certain aspects of the external reality that is being researched. This control is achieved by the way in which language is used and through the intellect and imagination of the social scientist. This image that is created remains an 'utopia', but it is an 'utopia' not based on fantasy but inferred from reality.

It is only through this ideal typical view of reality that a constant pattern or genus of reality can be studied. A genus will thus always represent a situation where certain patterns of behaviour are grouped together on an abstract level. This abstraction involves a process of censure and elimination of certain facets of

reality that is viewed as unnecessary and cumbersome, and would make the concept unmanageable.

Griffin (1993: 11) makes it clear that no definition of any generic term can be true in the descriptive sense, but only *useful*. If a term is thus applied consciously as an ideal type, it allows valuable research to be carried out into certain issues on which sound empirical methods can be used. It therefore becomes clear that ideal types are misused if they are treated as definitive categories. This brings us back to the question of diversification in the definition of 'fascism'. If we approach generic fascism from the 'ideal type' school of thought it will soon become apparent that no amount of effort or research will ever result in complete consensus amongst researchers as to the 'true' definition of such a term; it will only tend to make the lack of consensus even more acute because as new historical perspectives emerge with the unfolding of modern events, as new paradigms come to be used by social scientists and as researchers make advances and creative leaps in their investigations of fascism in its different manifestations, so the term fascism will be turn into quite a number of new ideal types.

A study such as this one can thus never hope to resolve the debate surrounding fascism. What it can strive for is to formulate an ideal type of the fascist minimum that will be useful and applicable for this study. It will thus be strived for to identify a common core of fascist phenomena that can be treated as a definitional minimum of fascism, while still allowing for the uniqueness of the different permutations thereof.

2.4 Fascism as a political ideology

The basic starting point for the construction of an ideal type of fascism is that fascism is broadly comparable with concepts such as 'liberalism', 'socialism' or 'conservatism' (not that their various manifestations are by any manner of means

the same). Fascism will thus be approached as a political force definable ideal-typically in terms of its generic ideological core.

When attempting to formulate a working definition of fascism within the context of political ideologies for use in the rest of this study, it is necessary to first discursively elucidate a few central ideas surrounding ideologies and to clarify a number of concepts before we can distil it all into a concise and useful definition. To start with it is important to elaborate on the notion that generic fascism possesses a homogeneous ideological or mythical core.

2.4.1 The mythic core of political ideologies

The core of an ideology embodies the fundamental political myth which mobilises its activists and supporters. The term 'political myth' in this context does not refer merely to certain historical myths exported to legitimate policies (such as the pre-history Germanic myths propagated by the Nazis), but it points to the irrational source of all ideologies, irrespective of their apparent rationality or theoretic viability. Political ideas do not emerge as the result of a didactic process based on pure reason. What matters more is the underlying emotions, "...the music, to which ideas are a mere libretto, often of very inferior quality" (Soucy 1979: 268). The notion that irrational forces lie at the core of ideologies is not a new one and has been taken up by such prominent thinkers as Pareto and George Sorel (1961). It was Sorel who concluded that what gives any religious or political creed its power to inspire revolutionary transformations in history is its core myths, namely those simple visionary principles,

> which enclose with them all the strongest inclinations of a people, of a party or a class, inclinations which recur to the mind with the insistence of instincts in all the circumstances of life; and which give an aspect of complete reality to the hopes of immediate action in which ...men can reform their desires, passions and mental activity. (Sorel 1961: 125)

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Examples that can be referred to in this regard are the belief in the imminent return of Christ which sustained Christians throughout the early history of the Church and the many different utopias which inspired the French revolutionaries of 1789.

The term 'mythic' as it will be used in this study does *not* refer to the imaginary or fictitious, but points to the inspirational, revolutionary power which an ideology can exert quite apart from its apparent rationality or practicality.

Once the underlying driving force of fascism is seen in terms of its 'mythic core', its ceases to be the concern of only the intellectual historian or political scientist. It immediately raises social anthropological issues about the central role of belief systems and their corresponding symbolic manifestations in rationalising ephemeral collective movements of extreme violence, including those bent on the over through of the existing social order, which is viewed as being in crisis, and establishing a new order to replace it (Griffin 1993: 28). It is this revolutionary aspect of myth, and the central role its plays in the dynamism of fascism, which will form the nucleus of the definition of fascism for this study.

2.4.2 *The secular orientation of political ideologies*

Up to this point fascism has constantly been referred to as a *political* ideology (with the corresponding reference to *political* myth). When it is then accepted that the mythic dimension plays an important role as the transforming power of *every* ideology, whether the society within which it operates is a traditional one or a modern one, it becomes important to differentiate between political ideologies and religious ideologies.

Whereas a religious ideology affirms the primacy of the metaphysical over the secular, a political ideology on the other hand does not depend on a tradition of revelation, but derives its legitimisation from a world-view in which the

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maintenance or transformation of a society is dependant on human decision and actions operation only in the physical realm. In other words its does not allow for the possibility that a superhuman power can intervene in human endeavour, or that a metaphysical ordering structure can in any way replace human initiated ordering principles (Eatwell et al. 1993: 6). Certainly there has been no shortage of political movements which tried to legitimate themselves by seeking to identify with the moral convictions held by believers of a certain faith. The central role of Judaism in Zionism and of Anglicanism for the Ulster Loyalists stand as a case in point. It can therefore be suggested that a concept such as 'religious politics' might be a useful sub-category of political ideology. 'Religious politics' point to situations where religious ideas are used without the sanction of the leaders of the faith and where the focus is on the political rather than the spiritual with the aim of enhancing a human agency and not a divinely ordained principle (Eatwell et al. 1993: 9) Thus policies and actions of the human agency are rationalised by means of religious terms; an action which is viewed as unacceptable by the established orthodoxy of the faith.

2.4.3 Fascism as a political ideology or a political religion

The reasoning behind the need to distinguish between political and religious ideologies is that fascism has been equated with religion by various thinkers. A scholar like Voegelin sees especially Nazism as an outstanding example of a 'political religion'. He views Nazism as closely related to concepts such as 'millenarianism' or 'chiliasm' whereby the Biblical vision of a new order (the millennium) is applied to the era of Nazi rule (think but of Hitler's statement that the established new order, that is the Third Reich, will last for a thousand years) (Voegelin 1952: 113). Voegelin (1952: 120) also refers to a process of the 'immanentization of the *eschaton*' through which the Biblical revelations of the last days (or *eschaton*) are made applicable to the Third Reich by human agencies. They view these 'last days' as resulting in the Third Reich; the product not of the direct intervention of God into human life, but as the end-product of human

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endeavour. At various times fascism have also been equated with concepts such as 'shamanism' and other forms of paganism (in Germany's case especially certain interpretations of prehistoric Germanic mysticism). While it cannot be denied that certain aspects of paganism held strong appeal for some Nazi leaders, especially Hitler and Himmler (see Langer 1972: 159-165), and might have served as a personal force of inspiration, it is difficult to see this as the inspirational core of generic fascism as an ideology.

In certain circumstances it might be possible to ascribe a form of 'religious politics' to some of fascism's manifestations (for example the *Ossewa Brandwag* in South Africa), but this (in the strict taxonomic sense we have established) is rather difficult in the case of Nazism. Though the Nazis made use of certain of Christianity's language, symbolism and practices (like a nazified version of the Lord's Prayer), the ideological mainstream of Nazism was intensely anti-Christian. They thus never tried to legitimise themselves by using Christianity as a rationalising 'stop-gap' for their world-view. Indeed, they viewed the churches as a potential threat (Schoenbaum 1966: 296) and treated it as such through the detention of a large number of prominent church leader who refused to bring their views (and teaching) in line with the Nazi-party. This can also be seen in the fact that many of the official rituals and symbolism of the party alluded to specifically pagan (and hence anti-Christian) myths.

In conclusion it can therefore be stated that, although the 'religious' connotations to political speculation within fascism cannot be discounted (especially in Nazism), its influence on the mainstream thereof has been greatly exaggerated in the past.

2.4.4 The mythic core of generic fascism

By defining fascism as a political ideology we resist the temptation to treat it as a modern form of millenarianism or a revivalist cult, and locate it firmly among the

political forces which constitute a modern secularising society. It has also been clearly established that it will display considerable heterogeneity and complexity and that its homogeneity resides only in its mythic core and then only ideal-typically (Griffin 1993: 32).

If we want to understand the contents of fascism's mythic core it is important that specific attention is paid to two further aspects namely the ideas of '*palingenesis*' and '*populist ultra-nationalism*'.

2.5   Fascism as a palingenetic form of populist, elite driven, anti-liberal nationalism

2.5.1 The palingenetic myth

The palingenetic myth refers to the myth of renewal or rebirth. Although the name might appear rather obscure it denotes a facet of human experience not uncommon to the average person. The term 'palingenesis' is derived from the words *palin* (meaning 'anew' or 'again') and *genesis* ('creation' or 'birth'). It therefore refers to a new start or a regeneration after a period of decline or corruption. This idea of a new beginning is prevalent in both the sphere of secular realities and the non-secular sphere (Griffin 1993: 32-33).

Palingenesis finds strong expression in religion where for example the principle of the 'new birth' or being 'born again' stands central to the Christian faith. The same also applies to the millenarian concept in which a historic break point is expected that will result in a new beginning harbouring in a totally new dispensation on earth. The palingenetic myth also became a well-established mind construct in secularising societies, especially from the mid-nineteenth century on when certain groupings became convinced that the 'decadence' gripping society was not inexorable, but that it could be reversed as for example in Dostoyevsky's vision of Russia becoming a Third Rome (see Dostoyevsky 1993: 420). The theme of

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regeneration can also be found in fields as diverse as economics (for example Roosevelt's 'New Deal') and literature (with DH Lawrence's obsession with regeneration which resulted in his adoption of the phoenix as his personal symbol). The Renaissance was also driven by the palingenetic myth surrounding its vision of the West's cultural history, as testified by the term itself (see Allen 1957: 78-79). It is however the power of this myth in terms of political ideologies which concerns us most. There are moments in history, when an older order seems headed for destruction, that create the ideal climate for the hope to be offered up that a 'new era' is about to be born. Reference can be made to *perestroika*, which conjured up mythic visions of Russia's transformation into a liberal and capitalistic democracy and George Bush's dream of a 'New World Order' breaking forth after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

The expression 'palingenetic myth' thus comes to denote the vision of a revolutionary new order that supplies the affective power of all ideologies (Griffin 1993: 35). If this is applied to a political ideology, the ideology will focus on a new society inaugurated by human action and not through a divine plan. At the heart of the palingenetic political myth lies the belief that contemporaries are all living through, or about to live through certain decisive changes or a historical breakpoint that will result in the current 'depravity' and 'decadence' giving way to a 'new order'. This new order will be created within secular and linear historical time (Baradat 1997: 9). It is therefore not referring to any movement that wants to restore former 'historic glory' or re-establishing a previous system of order in their society, for this would undermine the principle of the 'new beginning'. The focus is always on the future and not on the past, although history might serve as a source of inspiration (for example, Mussolini wanting to regain the glory of the Roman Empire).

Palingenesis will thus be used in a non-restorationist sense as referring to a *'new birth' occurring after a period of perceived decadence* (Griffin 1993: 36). To make

palingenesis applicable to fascism it is necessary to see it in relation with the next term namely 'populist ultra-nationalism'.

2.5.2 Populist elite driven, anti-liberal nationalism

Nationalism, is probably one of the most pervasive forces of modern history and is therefore one of the most studied political forces of our time. It refers to the political belief that some group of people represents a natural community which should live under one political system, while being independent of others (Robertson 1993: 333). In a strict taxonomic sense nationalism has come to be identified with as vast rang of ideologies and movements which resulted in the creation of a plethora of sub-categories such as 'tribal', 'liberal', 'Third World' and 'Islamic'. One of the main reasons for this diversification is the diverse interpretations that can be put forth of the concept 'nation'. Furthermore connotations to the term 'nationalism' vary according to distinct historical and political circumstances that relates to the situation under scrutiny. The result is that the exact syntactic meaning of the concept will differ as we look in turn at for example 'Afrikaner nationalism', 'Palestinian nationalism' and 'African nationalism'.

For the purposes of this study a more specialised sub-category namely 'populist ultra-nationalism' will be identified (Griffin 1993: 36-37). 'Populist' will be used as referring to political forces depending on mass support as the basis of its legitimacy, while allowance is still made for the fact that the movement might be led by a small elite (Eley 1990: 281). This elitist form of populism must be distinguished from the pseudo-populism of many dictatorial regimes which impose mass-mobilising programmes of social engineering from above. 'Ultra-nationalism' refers to forms of nationalism that reject any institution or ordering principle flowing from the tradition of the Enlightenment and the accompanying rise of humanism. This view is mainly expressed in the rejection of liberal representative government institutions.

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When combined into a single concept 'populist ultra-nationalism' acquires a significance that will make it very useful in this study of fascism. It precludes the nationalism of dynastic rulers and imperial forces before the advent of politics inspired by the masses and democratic forces (through the reference to *populist* nationalism), as well as the liberal nationalism that usually replaces a dynastic ruler or colonial power with a representative democracy (through the reference to *ultra*-nationalism). In other words, populist ultra-nationalism rejects both absolutism and pluralist representative government. If one applies this to Max Weber's classification system of the legitimate bases of authority (see chapter 3), it becomes clear that it denies traditionalist as well rational/legalistic ideas as the basis for the ordering of the nation and therefore favours mainly 'charismatic' forms of politics whereby the cohesion and the dynamics of the movement depends almost exclusively on the capacity of *the leader* to inspire loyalty and action. This sub-category of nationalism tends to be associated with an organic view of society or in other words with the nation as "a 'higher' racial, historical, spiritual or organic reality which embraces all the members of the community who belong to it." (Griffin 1993: 37) This community is viewed by its protagonists as a natural order that can be disrupted by the unpatriotic mentality encouraged by liberal individualism, internationalist socialism or any other 'force' unleashed by modern society for example the decline of moral values, consumerism, feminism and cosmopolitanism.

This short exposition should already have made it apparent that populist ultra-nationalism plays a prominent determining role in generic fascism. It provides us with the necessary conceptual delimitation to move over to the process of formulating a 'fascist minimum'.

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2.5.3 The 'fascist minimum': palingenetic populist ultra-nationalism

When the two distinct concepts palingenesis and populist ultra-nationalism is combined into one unique construct namely palingenetic populist ultra-nationalism, they complement and delimit one-another to such an extent that it becomes a relatively precise concept. It points to a genus of political energy whose mobilising vision is one of the national community rising phoenix-like after a period of encroaching decadence which all but destroyed it.

If this vision is seen as the embodiment of the mythic core of fascism, it can be treated as the fascist minimum we have thus far been trying to identify. Although it is the result of a process of idealising abstraction, it fits in precisely with our conception of the ideal type.

Thus far we have identify the following components for our definition of generic fascism:

- ♦ fascism is a genus of political ideology;
- ♦ it therefore contains a 'mythic core' as the inspirational power of the ideology; and
- ♦ the key component of this core is palingenetic populist ultra-nationalism.

These aspects can all now be condensed into a concise definition of fascism namely:

Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.

This view of generic fascism is seen by Roger Griffin as the basis for a discursive characterisation of the nature of fascism. He expounds this view as follow:

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> The fascist mentality is characterized by the sense of living through an imminent turning-point in contemporary history, when the dominance of the allegedly bankrupt or degenerate forces of conservatism, individualistic liberalism and materialist socialism is finally to give way to a new era in which vitalistic nationalism will triumph. To combat these rival political ideologies .... [they see] violence as both necessary and healthy. Though they may well make some concessions to parliamentary democracy in order to gain power .... [they view it as an] anathema to their concept of national unity, which implies in practice the maximum totalitarian control over all areas of social, economic, political and cultural life (Griffin 1993: 26; 44-45).

If this view is held then violence in the fascist context is never seen as an end in itself by the activists, but can always be related to the regenerative process by which society is to be purged of all manifestations and sources of decadence. The movement might where possible draw on traditions that they see as having remained uncontaminated, but the cohesion of the new national community is assured by *new* institutions, organisations and practises all based on a *new* political heroic ethos and flowing out of the *new* leadership (see Mitchell 1983: 180-182). This is perceived as the only way to equip its members to thrive in the modern age. As a result of the divergent historical situations and cultural traditions within which fascists find themselves, there is considerable variation in how they conceive to revitalise the nation and they resultant scale of violence and destruction to be used. For some the viability of fascism as an ideology is associated with biological conceptions of racial purity, while others strive only for cultural homogeneity; some use aggressive policies of expansion while for others regeneration does not necessitate the violent subjugation of other nations or the persecution of certain ethnic minorities.

The viability of fascism as a political force is also addressed by the definition we identified, for this definition points us directly to some of the most prominent structural weaknesses of fascism as an enduring political force.

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2.6 Structural weakness implied by the definition of fascism

The definition of fascism that was just identified focuses on the positive aspects of the ideology (it emphasises what fascism stands for and not what it is against). It might therefore be argued that it is not sufficiently focused on the realities within which the ideology has to operate and that it detracts attention from the concrete events that constitute the real 'nature of fascism'(such as the horrors promulgated by some of the fascist movements). This is not an absolute case, for although the definition focused on a positivist view of fascism it does not preclude indications of the inherent weakness of fascism as an ideology.

2.6.1 The long-term viability of fascism

The identified definition of fascism places a lot of emphasis on the palingenetic dimension of fascism. It was also stated that all ideologies operating within a revolutionary mould will have this affiliation with the palingenetic myth. Fascism however differs from ideologies like liberalism, socialism and conservatism in that it places this revolutionary process in the centre of the mythic core of the ideology without presenting a well thought out picture of the 'new order' that will be brought about by the revolution. The palingenetic myth plays an important role in the explanation of the initial appeal of fascism, for although the policies proposed might carry contradictory implications and the goals held forth be very vague, it does not diminish their attraction because it is precisely their mythic power that matters not their feasibility. It is the underlying ethos that inspires and not the rationality of the movements' principles (Adorno et al. 1950: 975-976).

This utopian appeal of fascism however can be constricting to fascism as a viable political force. The core myth of fascism, because of its vague nature, will always sprout a whole range of different interpretations and nuances amongst the supporters thereof. It becomes almost inevitable that a whole lot of faction and competing currents will exist amongst the fascist backers in a state. It is only

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under the guidance of an effective leader (by implication charismatic) and effective leadership tactics that the different currents will be held together as a coherent movement. If this leader is then able to exploit certain specific environmental conditions (such as frustration amongst the population), it is not inconceivable that this movement might attain mass-following. A second inherent problem is that fascism can only manifest itself as a political force if a climate of national crisis prevails. Fascism as a populist movement depends on mass appeal. This can only be generated if an aggregate of political, economic, social and psychological factors distil into a situation that is viewed by the public as being a threat to their way of life. This threat can then be construed into a 'crisis' that can be exploited to stir up the people and to inspire them to place their hope in the 'new dawn' or palingenesis held forth by the fascists. Fascism's 'revolutionary' mythic core will not carry enough weight in society if a situation of harmony and social equilibrium exist. Its greatest enemy is the normality of a quiet and peaceful society. The only way it can therefore maintain its forward momentum is to continually precipitate events in the hope of establishing a permanent revolution or continuing palingenesis (Griffin 1993: 39-40). For the Nazi-party it proved no problem as long as the process of dismantling the 'old' and instituting the 'new Germany' lasted. As this action drew to a close the Nazis started pursuing imperialistic expansion against new-found enemies abroad and initiated as series of military campaigns which resulted in World War II; all in an effort to maintain the climate of 'permanent revolution'. In the long run it is clearly impossible and impractical to maintain this pace. This inherent restlessness in fascism thus holds in it at the same time the essence of its vitality but also the seed of its ultimate demise. Eugene Weber (1964: 78) implied this when he made the following statement:

> Without precise objectives the fascist must move forward all the time; but just because precise objectives are lacking he can never stop, and every goal attained is but a stage on the continuous treadmill of the future he claims to construct, of the national destiny he claims to fulfil.

The problems of long-term viability that flows from fascism's connection to the palingenetic myth are compounded when the ultra-nationalist component of the mythic core is taken into account.

2.6.2 Fascism as an elitist movement

Although fascism as an ideology awards a prominent role to populist ultra-nationalism and by implication to the creation of a new national community it does not mean that fascism is democratic in any substantive sense. Fascism does not operate on the basis of a spontaneous mass movement, but points rather to a well lead and mobilised mass movement. It is lead by an elite which sees itself as the only body able to identify and interpret the 'true' needs and aspirations of the people. It therefore perceives its role as co-ordinating and directing the process of the transformation of society. This cannot be left to the people because they are still to strongly under the corrupting and evil influence of various debilitating forces. A fascist movement might strive for mass appeal, but this movement should in their view always be under the direct control of the elite for only they posses the true insight and will-power to bring forth the yet to be realised national community. Even the seizure of power is seen as only a small step forward in this process. Only then can a substantive program of re-education, propaganda and social control be launched. This all should be seen in the light of the fact that fascism is elitist in its most basic view of society (Baradat 1997: 274; see also Vincent 1995: 157).

At no point in the fascist program for the future is there a time when power will be directed from the people to the leadership. It will always remain the elite ruling and directing the people even if the hypothetical 'future' is reached (a 'future that will in any case remain only a hypothetical abstraction). Power is to be placed in the hands of those who have risen 'naturally' through various organisations that stand to represent the totality of the nation's energy (that is the fascist movement or party). This 'naturally' selected leader (pointing to a specific interpretation and

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allegiance to social Darwinism) or elite will be the absolute embodiment of the general will of the public (Griffin 1993: 41). In this idealised version of direct democracy the leader will stand as sole representative of the interests and destiny of the people to whom he claims to be linked by a metaphysical bond of a common nationhood.

Fascism therefore confronts the researcher with a paradox. While it is populist in intent, rhetoric and its vision of the future, it remains elitist in practice. These structural weaknesses did not however prevent the actualisation of the fascist idea in practice. The various movements that thus grew out of the fascist idea had certain characteristics in common.

2.7 Main characteristics of fascism

To further facilitate an analysis of specific aspects of fascism, certain prominent characteristics thereof should be identified. The definition that was put forth focuses on the core aspects of fascism as a generic political ideology. Flowing out of this definition is certain prominent characteristics that might not necessarily be at the core of the ideology, but is a direct consequence thereof. These characteristics dominate the real-time manifestation of fascism (sometimes to such an extent that it makes the mythic core seem almost peripheral), and thus carries weight in any study of a specific aspect relating to fascism.

2.7.1 Anti-rationalism

Fascism rejects the rational tradition stemming from the ancient Greeks. They stand against the celebration of reason as in the Enlightenment, and the humanist and positivist tendencies in society. Fascism is not so much irrational as it is anti-rational. It stresses instead the irrational, the sentimental, and the uncontrollable elements in man (Ebenstein 1980: 120). They celebrate the capacity to be inspired to heroic action and self-sacrifice through the power of belief (Nietzsche's

'will to power'), myth, symbols, and ideas such as the nation, the leader, identity, or the regeneration of history (Griffin 1995: 6). It should be noted that this anti-rationalism did not prevent fascist from producing highly articulate ideological writings, displaying great theoretical erudition and even drawing selectively from Western philosophical tradition.

2.7.2 Anti-liberalism

As was shown, the basis of fascism is a call for the regeneration of the national community threatened by definite enemies and forces that strives to undermine and corrupt this community. Amongst these enemies they place liberalism in all its aspects: pluralism, tolerance, individualism, gradualism, pacifism, parliamentary democracy, the separation of powers, the doctrine of 'natural rights', egalitarianism, theories of progress, the open society, cosmopolitanism, the one-world idea, to name but a few (Griffin 1995: 4). Fascists, like Edgar Jung (1995: 107-108), state that any rights that the individual might posses are granted by the state and may be removed by the state. They also view the private interests of the individual as subordinate to the general interests of the collective. Insofar as representative institutions, political parties and other facets of parliamentary democracy are concerned (which represent the will of individuals), it should be discarded and replaced with institutions that represent the general will of the nation. The properly constituted state thus becomes a proponent of the general will of the nation (Ingersoll et al. 1991: 238). An important proviso is to be made here. Though fascists aim at the destruction of parliamentary democracy, they may well choose to operate tactically as democratic, electoral parties for the purpose of gaining power. Indeed, they may go to considerable lengths to disguise their hostility towards liberalism through the use of euphemisms and lies, reserving their aims of destruction of the 'system' for the initiated.

2.7.3 Anti-conservatism

The centrality to fascism of a palingenetic myth of the nations renewal within a new order implies a rejection of conservative politics (for example, an absolutist system in which sovereignty is vested in a hereditary monarchy), as well as authoritarian conservative solutions to the current crisis which imply a restoration of law and order that does not involve social renewal. Thus, fascism looks forward to a 'new birth' that might draw inspiration from the past, but does not seek to turn the clock back (Griffin 1995: 4-5). This might be obscured by the fact that, to gain power during the inter-war period fascism was forced to ally itself with certain conservative forces (such as the army and reactionary bourgeois) against common enemies and for common priorities (such as law and order and the family) (Payne 1980: 7).

2.7.4 Anti-bolshevism

If the centrality of the nation-state to the fascist world-view is taken into account, it leads us to another basic fascist value namely anti-bolshevism. To the Marxist, nationalism is but another capitalist trick to keep the proletariat from forming the international community. For the fascist, communism is one of the main sources of disunity in the state for it focuses on the class struggle within society and therefore divides the people. Fascist also view communism as dangerously wrong because of the fact that Marxism sees the nation-state as but a passing phenomenon on the path to a world society. All this resulted in an anti-bolshevism that became so vehement as to award it the status of a basic characteristic of fascism (Ingersoll et al. 1991: 239; Payne 1980: 7).

2.7.5 Elitism

Elitism, as was already noted, is an inherent trait of fascism. Fascists are directly opposed to the 'democratic fallacy' that people can govern themselves. The belief

is held that only a small minority of the population, or a specific leader alone, is capable of understanding the true desires and needs of the society as a whole (Ebenstein 1980: 123). This idea harps back to Plato's 'philosopher kings' and to the more modern interpretations of people like Nietzsche (especially in his work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1884)*) (Heywood 1992: 177). Although fascism is non-democratic it does not mean that it lacks popular support. As was already stressed, fascism places a high premium on populism and will therefore strive for mass-momentum. Since fascism rejects both the traditional politics of the *ancien regime* and the legal-rational politics of liberalism and socialism, it tends to be predisposed to act as a charismatic form of politics in which a leader with a charismatic base of authority plays the central role (Griffin 1995: 5)(see chapter 3). Out of this flows aspects such as the leader cult or 'Hitler myth' and the *Führer Prinzip*.

2.7.6 Totalitarianism

Implicit in fascism's mythic core is the drive towards totalitarianism. Far from being driven by nihilism or barbarism, the convinced fascist is a utopian, conceiving the homogeneous, perfectly co-ordinated national community as the total solution to the problems of modern society. Yet any attempt to eradicate all decadence necessarily leads to the creation of a highly centralised 'total' State with draconian powers to carry out a comprehensive scheme of social engineering. This will involve massive exercises in regimenting peoples lives, and the creation of an elaborate machinery for manufacturing consensus through propaganda and indoctrination combined with repression and terror directed against alleged enemies of the new order. Mussolini coined the phrase 'totalitarianism' as descriptive of this system (Baradat 1994: 248). The actual scale of destruction and atrocities that result would vary according to how the ideal national community was conceived, the degree of public co-operation and the crucial areas of State power (for example the Army) that it could be counted on (Griffin 1995: 6-7).

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2.7.7 Racism

Fascism not only accepts as fact a basic inequality between humans, but they view inequality as an ideal. Fascism rejects the three roots of equality in Western civilisation namely the Jewish idea of one God that led to the idea of one mankind, because all are created by God, the Christian notion of the inalienability and indestructibility of the human soul that led to the ideal of basic human *moral* equality, and the Greek-Stoic concept of reason that views the reason as the only true human bond that all men have in common (Ebenstein 1980: 122). Thus, in the fascist mould male are superior to female, and the elite superior to the masses. In the same way the 'elite nation' is superior to others and is entitled to rule them. The focus in this regard was (especially in Germany) not necessarily on a cultural entity, but rather on biological and genetic differences amongst human beings. The assumption in Nazi Germany was that racial divisions were in some way more politically significant than for example class division or social standing, and that the superior race should step in to its natural position of domination over those inferior races (Heywood 1992: 184-185). The ultra-nationalist core of generic fascism provides a very fertile ground for racist theories, but it does not necessarily involve biological or Social Darwinian concepts of race leading to eugenics, euthanasia or genocide. Fascism is also not necessarily anti-Semitic or anti-black or anti-Roma, but if a fear or hatred of those who are felt to be 'different' already exist in the particular political culture of the nation where fascism arises (as it did in Germany after World War I), it is very likely that this fear and hatred will be incorporated into its myth of national decadence and hence into policies for creating a new order (Griffin 1995: 7).

2.7.8 Militarism and a tendency to violence

The fascist stresses violence in all human relations, within and between nations. They see politics as characterised by a friend-enemy relation. Politics is thus

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underpinned by the existence of an enemy and is directed toward his total annihilation. It applies to domestic as well as foreign enemies (Ebenstein 1980: 122). This world-view serves to make militarism one of fascism's most prominent tools. War is glorified and portrayed as a means towards asserting the national will. War is on the other hand also seen as an end in itself. It is seen as a spiritually creative and positive feature of life. Peace is not a positive condition but rather an interlude between national struggles for dominance. The mere fact that the fight for regeneration is placed in the centre of the mythic core of fascism ensures that struggle and the 'will to power' will be enshrined. War alone is seen as bringing up to its highest all human energy and putting the stamp of nobility upon the people who have the courage to meet it. Terms such as *struggle, conflict, fight, discipline, courage, obedience, the holiness of heroism* were common place in inter-war fascist movements (Baradat 1997: 253-254), and were also lived out in the symbolism employed and in the pomp and circumstance the surrounded the leaders of the movements.

2.7.9 *Imperialism*

The fascist view on the inequality of nations and the glorification of conflict leads to another prominent feature of fascism namely the imperialistic drive thereof. It is viewed as in the natural order of things for nations to continually compete with one another for dominance until the strongest national will rules supreme. Hitler was convinced that since the German *volk* possessed the purist blood they were destined to, and had the right to, impose their will on the lesser nations (or races). Imperialism thus became a strong driving force in both Fascism and Nazism. Mussolini stated that the natural regulator in human relations is the Nietzschian concept of 'will to power', and that the highest form of human power is Empire (Baradat 1994: 253). This imperialist drive of both Hitler and Mussolini had as its most direct consequence the outbreak of the Second World War.

2.7.10 Fascist socialism/corporatism

Fascism axiomatically rejects internationalism and materialism as expounded by Marxism, but it may well present the rejuvenation of the national community as transcending and overcoming class conflict, destroying traditional hierarchy, eradicating parasitism, rewarding all productive members of the new nation, and harnessing the energy of capitalism and technology in a new order in which they cease to be exploitative and enslaving. Indeed, during the inter-war years when the Bolsheviks believed that they had the key to next stage of human development, many fascists countered them by stating that their solution to the crisis of humanity embodied the only true socialism. This solution usually entails a commitment to corporist economics, national syndicalism and a high degree of state planning. Mussolini took the theories of George Sorel regarding syndicalism and stood it on its head. Instead of the people controlling government through syndicates (mainly trade unions), the government would control people through trade unions. The corporate state was thus to be based on the foundation of worker and owner syndicates (Baradat 1994: 251). The idea is relatively simple. Liberal capitalism produces class conflict and controlled competition in the economy because it over stresses individualism. On the other hand Marxism supports class struggle between the workers and owners. Corporativism is thus aimed at removing all conflict from the economic sector. To achieve this the state will set up various corporations representing the different sections of the economy which each contains representatives from both workers and management. These corporations will make decisions concerning wages and production figures for that entire specific industry. All this will of course be under the watchful and guiding eye of the party and the state (Ingersoll et al. 1991: 241). It must be stated however that corporatism is not necessarily synonymous with fascism (it was also employed in non-fascist states) and that fascism is not synonymous with corporatism (Nazi Germany for example did not restructure its economy according to corporatist principles).

2.7.11 Heterogeneity of fascism's social support

One of the prominent sociological implications of our ideal type of fascism is that it has no specific class basis in its support. There is nothing in principle that precludes an unemployed or employed member of the working class or an aristocrat, a city dweller or a peasant, a graduate, or somebody 'intellectually challenged' from being susceptible to the palingenetic myth of fascism. Nor is the fascist mentality, which places a lot of stress on heroism, militarism and thus male chauvinism exclusively the domain of the young and the male, for as history has proven that females are as attracted to the fascist myth as males. The fact that Fascism and Nazism were over represented in terms of middle class support is a mere reflection of specific socio-political conditions which resulted in them being more susceptible to a palingenetic form of ultra-nationalism rather than a palingenetic form of Marxism or liberalism (Griffin 1995: 7).

2.7.12 Fascist eclecticism

A very important aspect of our ideal type of fascism, is that fascism pre-exists any particular externalisation in terms of specifically articulated or applied thought. Each fascism will be made in the image of a particular national culture and will therefore differ (even considerably) from fascism in another state. Even within the same movement or party, influential thinkers will inevitably represent a wide range of ideas and theories, some quite incompatible with each other *except at the level of a shared mythic core of palingenetic ultra-nationalism.* Fascism thus brings heterogeneous currents of ideas into a loose alliance united only by the common struggle for a new order (Griffin 1995: 8). This eclectic character of fascism ensured that the materialisation of fascism in different states each had a nature and uniqueness of its own. The surface manifestation is unique, but the core is the same.

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These prominent characteristics of fascism flows from the ideological core and forms the basis of the different manifestations of the ideology. Nazism clearly illustrate all of these characteristics, despite the fact that it stands as a unique expression of fascism.

2.8 The uniqueness of Nazism

The mere mention of fascism immediately brings to mind the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler. Like any permutation of fascism, Nazism was necessarily unique, for each nation will follow its own *Sonderweg*, or special path of development, and in so doing generate a unique cultural tradition on which ultra-nationalism can draw. The uniqueness of Nazism can be illustrated by pointing out the main differences between the Hitler and Mussolini regimes. A partial list as identified by Payne (1980: 101-102) would be as follows:

(a) The basis of the Nazi view on nationalism was to be found in *race*, while the Fascists viewed it more in political and cultural terms. Thus the Hitler regime tended towards revolutionary exclusivity, while Fascism was more syncretic in nature. Mussolini wanted to incorporate certain aspects of liberalism, socialism and conservatism in his doctrine while Hitler rejected all rival doctrines. The Nazi 'new man' would be a *biological* as well as cultural product, whereas the Fascist 'new man' would be the product of intensified Fascist education in the schools (see also Sargent 1999: 194-195; Vincent 1995: 158-162).

(b) Extrapolating onwards from National Socialism's fixation on race one finds that *anti-Semitism* in the most extreme form was central to the Nazi world-view (see Baradat 1997: 269-271; Vincent 1995: 159). (The horrific and demonic result of this perversion before and during the Second World War presents us with one of the darkest chapters in human history, one we can never forget nor ignore. It confronts the researcher with the almost impossible task of not only trying to explain why people can conceptualise and plan such events, but then

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actually systematically set out to accomplish it after they thoroughly justified it to themselves.) By contrast Fascism was racist only in the conventional sense for the time. Mussolini only turned his rhetoric and state apparatus against the Jews at the end of his reign, and then only to please Hitler and not some basic principle of Fascism.

(c) Hitler's *foreign policy* ultimately transcended traditional German expansionist and imperialistic aims, attempting a revolutionary racial restructuring of Europe (Baradat 1997: 277-278). Mussolini on the other hand, aimed at colonial expansion (within what he saw as Italy's sphere of influence) and the exploitation of limited conflict within the Mediterranean area (see Spielvogel 1992: 208, 214).

(d) The Nazi-party played a much more important role than the PNF (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*) of Mussolini. Though the Hitler regime was never formally turned into a party-state, a duality existed in Germany between the state and the party which tended to favour the *party*. In Italy, the PNF enjoyed only a very limited autonomy and was largely transformed into a sub-category of the state bureaucracy (Sargent 1999: 191-193).

(e) In Germany there developed an especially lucid form of a *leadership cult* surrounding Adolf Hitler as the *Führer*, the 'artist genius'. The resultant *Führer prinzip* as basis for the *Führerstaat* played a very dominant role in Nazism and it is hard to imagine it without this hero worship of Hitler (which found expression in the 'Hitler myth'). Because of this fact we are confronted with a dictatorship of one-man rule whose inherent dynamism is very complex and heterogeneous (during the rest of this study we will focus on this challenging issue) (see also Spielvogel 1992: 130-134). The Mussolini regime on the other hand remained to a large extent a state based on semipluralism and formal law. This placed severe limitations on the regime's revolutionary potential and on the Duce's leadership role itself. Although Mussolini formulated the

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principle of totalitarianism he could never actualise it to the extent that Hitler could. It was this feature which made it possible for the Duce's enemies within the state to over-through him (Vincent 1995: 165).

In light of the ideal type it should be clear that the Third Reich was not a cynical experiment to try and bring about the perfect form of totalitarianism in terms of state control, but rather a broad-fronted crusade against 'decadence'. Its vision was to regenerate every aspect of society, even if they only succeeded in partially destroying the old system and producing horrendous travesties to replace it. The idea of a fusion between palingenesis and destruction is not uncommon (for example the regime of Pol Pot), but rarely has the need to destroy been made so central to the theory by which a political system legitimates itself as it was in Nazi thought. The driving force behind Nazism's radical destructiveness was not an extreme form of nihilism or cultural despair, but rather a manically optimistic form of ultra-nationalism which embraced particularly virulent varieties of biological racism and imperialism as well as a broad spectrum of other components ranging from ruralism and occultism to technocratic and scientific fantasies (Griffin 1993: 110-111). These utopian dreams of Nazism would have been relegated to a highly marginalised position (as was the case with most other fascist movements) had it not been for a coming together of a specific set of circumstances and events, and the successful exploitation thereof by the Nazi leadership.

The end of the Third Reich was heralded in, not as a result of a disillusionment amongst the leaders, but only because it was overwhelmed by the sheer size and resources of the war-machine arrayed against it by the Allied forces. Even the destruction of Berlin and death itself could not shake the Nazi faithful (as personified by Hitler himself) from the manic power of the movements palingenetic myth.

2.9 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to identify a *useful* ideal type of fascism that can serve as a definitional base and contextualisation for the rest of the study. The various interpretations surrounding fascism in modern academic circles necessitated this process, for without a clear-cut stand on the nature of fascism the theoretical and functional base of this study would have rested on a foundation of sand. The aim was to convince those who still see fascism as a bewildering conundrum, that a distinctive ideology, one unleashing considerable affective energy in those who accepts its internal logic, underlies what could easily be seen as fanatical ravings or cynical propaganda.

The ideal type that was identified makes it clear that fascism is definitely a genus of political ideology; one with a very distinctive and unique mythic core. At the centre of this mythic core stands the need to regenerate society and the burning desire to transform it into a national community based on a populist form of ultra-nationalism. Populist, yet elite driven, anti-liberal nationalism by its very nature precludes a traditional or rational/legalist approach to authority, resulting in a very unique and central role being allocated to the leadership of this new national community. As a result of wide variations in the historic and cultural context within which this fascist ideal is to be realised, there are considerable variations in how the various fascist movements have instituted their revived nation. As was pointed out, the Nazis associated this new nation with biological concepts of racial purity while others aimed only at achieving cultural homogeneity. It also resulted in divergent approaches to such subjects as imperialism, party control, economics and leadership. It is this vital aspect of leadership, and more specifically the Nazi version of leadership, that will now be focused on in more detail.

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CHAPTER 3

TOTALITARIAN AND CHARISMATIC POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

3.1 Introduction

Adolf Hitler, as leader of the Nazi Party, totally dominated political life in the German Third Reich. His leadership stands at the core of this study. An analysis of his role and function must, firstly be based on a thorough understanding of the concepts 'leadership' and 'leader' in general. Special attention must also be given to the specific type of leadership that manifested itself in Germany under Hitler's rule. Two aspects need to be mentioned in this regard: a) a totalitarian form of leadership as a sub-category to authoritarian leadership; and b) charismatic leadership as a basis for authority. Taken together these two aspects will provide a clear understanding of the unique type of leadership that manifested itself in Germany between 1927 and 1945 under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. This chapter will therefore first focus on leadership in general, after which totalitarian and charismatic leadership will be discussed from a theoretical perspective. This chapter will thus provide us with a theoretical understanding of leadership that can serve as a basis for a detailed analysis of the role and function of leadership in the Third Reich.

3.2 Leadership as a historical and universal phenomena

The study of leadership has its roots in the twilight of history. In fact the oldest documented record we have of human history is a discourse concerning a leader by the name of Sargon I of ancient Sumeria (Roberts 1987: 73). This discourse on leadership continued right through the classic era. In fact the topic abounded in the literature of the day. Plato, Caesar and Plutarch all addressed leadership as an issue requiring thorough study and understanding.

The Greek perception of leadership, as expounded in Homer's *Iliad,* already points to a divergence in leadership types. This divergence is personified in a number of the characters portrayed in the *Iliad*: Agamemnon represented justice and judgement; Nestor, wisdom and counsel; Odysseus, shrewdness and cunning; and Achilles, valour and action (Bass 1981: 5). All these qualities were admired by the Greeks in their leaders. (The fact that shrewdness and cunning do not carry so much weight today points to the fact that acceptable leadership practices will differ with time and place.) Ancient Chinese writings also contained a lot of references to leadership and advice on effective leadership. So too did the ancient Egyptians posses their own specific views on leadership. They especially admired the qualities of authority, discrimination and just behaviour in their monarch, the pharaoh (Frankfort et al. 1949). After the general intellectual slump of the Dark Ages the interest in leadership revived during the Renaissance, where a work such as *The Prince* of Machiavelli stands out as an important contribution to the study and analysis of leaders and their behaviour. (*The Prince* is still widely used in some circles as a guide to effective leadership.)

Leadership, it must be noted, is definitely not a phenomenon of the 'old world' that gradually spread to the entire globe. It is a universal human interaction characteristic. Citing various anthropological reports on primitive groups in Australia, Fiji, New Guinea, the Congo, and elsewhere, Smith and Krueger (1933) concluded that leadership occurs universally among all people regardless of culture, whether they are isolated Indian villagers, Eurasian steppe nomads, or Polynesian fishers. Parenthood creates the ready-made patterns for leadership to be carried over into broader society. Despite this long history of interest in the subject and the universal occurrence thereof, Burns (1978) still concludes that leadership is one of the most widely observed but least understood phenomena on earth.

3.3 The defining of leadership

Words such as head of state, military commander, princeps, proconsul, chief, and king are found in all societies to distinguish the ruler from the rest of the people. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1933) the word 'leader' appeared in the English language as early as 1300, but the concept 'leadership' only made its appearance in the early part of the nineteenth century in writings about the British Parliament. Since this time there has been many social scientists that have availed themselves to try and get to the bottom of this manifestation and its influence on society.

The process of trying to understand leadership has taken social scientists along a number of definitional pathways, with the result that a great number of definitions have been advanced for the concept 'leadership'. When approaching 'leadership' they are confronted by a concept that appears to have an apparent sophistication to it, but yet defies every effort to encapsulate the totality thereof. It must be understood that we ara dealing here once again with an ideal type (see Chapter 2) and that therefore no single definition will be able to enclose the full spectrum of understanding as regards to leadership. Notwithstanding, there are sufficient similarities between the various definitions that have been put forward (Bass 1981: 7-14), to permit a rough scheme of classification.

a) *Leadership as a focus of group processes*

Some of the oldest definitions of leadership fall into this category. These definitions saw the leader as a focus of group change, activity, and process. Cooley (1902: 8) maintained that "...the leader is always the nucleus of a tendency, and, on the other hand, all social movements, closely examined, will be found to consist of tendencies having such nuclei." Mumford (1906: 23) observed that "...leadership is the pre-eminence of one or a few individuals in a group in a process of control of societal phenomena." Blackmar (1911: 627) saw leadership as the

"...centralization of effort in one person as an expression of the power of all." Kerch and Crutchfield (1948: 36) stated that "...by virtue of his special position in the group he [the leader] serves as a primary agent for the determination of group structure, group atmosphere, group goals, group ideology, and group activities." The focus is on the leader and his/her role in the group.

The thought pattern behind the above mentioned definitions helped in focusing attention on the importance of group structure and group processes in the study of leadership. The down side is that several of the definitions appear to place the leader in a particularly fortuitous and somewhat helpless position in the momentum of the group. Currently, centrality of location is viewed as of consequence to control of communications and will therefore likely place a person in a position of leadership, but centrality does not imply leadership.

b) Leadership as personality and its effects

During the first half of this century the concept 'personality' was used by a number of leadership theorists to explain why some individuals appear to be better suited for leadership than others. Some equated leadership directly with strength of personality. A.O. Bowden (1926: 150) stated that "...the amount of personality attributed to an individual may not be unfairly estimated by the degree of influence he can exert upon others." According to L.L. Bernard (1926: 84-85), "Any person who is more than ordinarily efficient in carrying psychosocial stimuli to others and is thus effective in conditioning collective response may be called a leader." Bogardus (1934: 56) defines leadership as "...personality in action under group conditions...; it is also a social process involving a number of persons in mental contact in which one person assumes dominance over the others." According to these theorists, leadership is usually seen as a one way process. No consideration is made for a reciprocal and interactive nature to the leadership situation.

Personal qualities of a would-be leader determine his or her esteem in the eyes of potential followers. Some personality traits such as social boldness usually goes hand-in-hand with being esteemed and attaining leadership, but social boldness alone does not always define leadership. Personality definitely aids in the creation of a heroic social figure. This heroic figure can in times of extreme crisis be endowed with charisma by his followers if his leadership is aimed at addressing certain of their critical needs. The hero's personality can in such circumstances make possible enormous feats of leadership.

c) Leadership as the art of inducing compliance

Munson (1921: 53) defined leadership as "...the ability to handle men so as to achieve the most with the least friction and the greatest co-operation." B.V. Moore (1927: 127) state that leadership is "...the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect, loyalty, and co-operation. In the same vein Bundel (1930: 344) saw leadership as "...the art of inducing the others to do what one wants them to do." Bennis (1959: 261) defined leadership "...as process by which an agent enduces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner." Leadership is thus reduced to the skill in obtaining compliance from people.

The theorists that adhere to this understanding of leadership also tend to regard leadership as a one directional exertion of influence and as an instrument for moulding the people to the will of the leader. Little room is left for the recognition of the rights, desires and needs of the group members or for the traditions and norms that exist within the group. The views of these theorists were rejected by various other theorists who sought to remove any definitional justification for legitimising and authoritarian conception of leadership. Yet, regardless of these sentiments it cannot be denied that much of the leadership we see and

have seen is authoritarian, directive and even coercive. Its effects can be seen in public compliance that does not necessarily go hand in hand with private acceptance.

d) Leadership as the exercise of influence

Through the introduction of the concept 'influence' to the study of leadership a decided step was taken in the direction of generality and abstraction in the thinking surrounding leadership. Tead (1935: 11) defined leadership as "...the activity of influencing people to cooperate towards some goal which they come to find desirable." Haimann (1951: 41) suggested that "...direct leadership is an interaction process in which an individual, usually through the medium of speech, influences the behaviour of others toward a particular end." Hollander and Julian (1969: 390) stated that "...leadership in its broadest sense implies the presence of a particular influence relationship between two or more persons." According to Bass (1960: 58), an individual's "...effort to change the behaviour of others is *attempted* leadership. When the other members actually change, this creation of change in others is *successful* leadership. If the others are reinforced or rewarded for changing their behaviour, this evoked achievement is *effective* leadership." It is important to note that the influence concept allows for differences in the extent to which individuals' behaviour affects a group. It therefore implies a reciprocal relationship between leader and followers; not necessarily a relationship characterised by control or domination.

e) Leadership as act or behaviour

A new approach to leadership emerged when it was defined in terms of an act or specific behaviour. Shartle (1956: 11) viewed a leadership act as "...one which result in others acting or responding in a shared direction." Hemphill (1949: 225) stated that "...leadership may be

defined as the behaviour of an individual while he is involved in directing group activities." Fiedler (1967: 28-29) advanced the following definition for leadership: "By leadership we generally mean the particular acts in which a leader engages in the course of directing and co-ordinating the work of his group members. This may involve such acts a structuring the work relations, praising or criticising group members, and showing consideration for their welfare and feelings." All of these theorists believed that the behavioural aspects related to leading provided the core for the understanding of leadership.

f) Leadership as a form of persuasion

Several of the early theorists did not want to include any reference to coercion in their definitions of leadership, yet they could not deny that the leader played a very important role as a determining factor in the relationship between the leader and the followers. The use of the concept 'persuasion' seemed to meet both of their requirements. Schenk (1928:115) stated that "...leadership is the management of men by persuasion and inspiration rather than by the direct or implied threat of coercion." Koontz & O'Donnell (1955: 38) regarded leadership as "...the activity of persuading people to cooperate in the achievement of a common objective." As in the previous categories, persuasion does address a certain facet of leadership, but cannot be said to embody leadership as a whole. Currently, persuasion is seen by some as but one form of leadership (Bass & Barrett 1981: 13).

g) Leadership as a power relation

Janda (1960: 351) defined leadership "...as a particular type of power relationship characterised by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behaviour patterns for the former regarding his activity as a member of a particular group." According to Gerth and Mills (1953: 21), "...leadership, most broadly

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conceived, is a relation between leader and led in which the leader influences more than he is influenced: because of the leader, those who are led act or feel differently than they otherwise would. As a power relation, leadership my be known to both leader and led, or unknown to either or both." These theorists therefore regard power as a form of influence relation.

It is granted that some leaders, more than others, tend to transform any leadership opportunity into an overt power relationship. Some theorists tried to downplay the importance of power relations for ethical reasons, but when faced with the world as it is, and not as they would like it to be, they had to acknowledge the importance of power relations in understanding leadership.

h) Leadership as an instrument of goal achievement

There have been several theorists that have included the idea of goal achievement in their definitions of leadership. They point towards the instrumental value leadership has for accomplishment of group goals and the satisfaction of the needs within the group. Bellows (1959: 44) defined leadership as "...the process of arranging a situation so that various members of a group, including the leader, can achieve common goals with maximum economy and a minimum of time and work." They thus advance the idea that leadership may be measured in terms of its effects on group performance.

i) Leadership as an emerging effect of interaction

Several theorists have viewed leadership not as a cause of group interaction or an attempt at control of a group process, but rather as an effect thereof. Pigors (1935: 9) saw leadership as "...a process of mutual stimulation which, by the successful interplay of individual differences, controls human energy in the pursuit of a common cause." According to

Anderson (1940: 24), "…a true leader in the psychological sense is one who can make the most of individual differences, who can bring out the most differences in the group and therefore reveal to the group a sounder base for defining common purposes." These theorists were important because they called attention to the fact that emergent leadership grows out of the interaction process itself.

It can be observed that true leadership only exists when acknowledged and conferred by other members of the group. It can also be noted that an individual emerges as a leader as a result of interactions within the group that arouse expectations that he or she rather than someone else could serve the group more usefully in attaining its objectives.

j) Leadership as a differentiated role

According to role theory each member of society occupies a status position in the community as well as in various institutions and organisations. In each position the individual is expected to play a more or less well defined role. Based upon this, leadership can be regarded as an aspect of role differentiation. Jennings (1944: 432) stated that "…leadership thus appears as a manner of interaction involving behaviour by and toward the individual 'lifted' to a leader role by other individuals." For Gordon (1955: 37), leadership can be conceptualised as an interaction between a person and a group or, more accurately, between a person and the group members. Each participant in this interaction may be said to play a role, and in some ways these roles must be differentiated from each other. The basis for this differentiation is usually influence, that is, the leader influences and the others respond. Newcomb, Turner, and Converse (1965: 211-212) state that members of a group make different contributions to goal achievement. Insofar as any members' contributions are particularly indispensable, they may be regarded as leaderlike; and insofar as any member is recognised by others as a dependable source of such contributions, he

or she is leaderlike. To be so recognised is equivalent to having a role relationship to other members.

k) Leadership as the initiation of structure

There have been several commentators who viewed leadership not as the passive occupancy of a position or a specific role, but rather as a process of originating and maintaining a role structure. Gouldner (1950: 47) offered the view that there is a difference in effect between a stimulus of a follower and one from a leader. The difference lies in the probability that the stimulus will structure group behaviour. A leader's stimulus has a higher probability of structuring a group's behaviour because of a group-endowed belief that he or she has a legitimate source of stimuli. Stoghill (1959: 58) added to this when he defined leadership as "...the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction."

This group of theorists attempted to define leadership in terms of the variables giving rise to the differentiation and maintenance of role structures in groups. For this reason the definitions appear to have greater theoretic utility than those that are more concrete and descriptive: they lead to a consideration of the basic processes involved in the emergence of the leadership role.

A progression of thought is evident in the above mentioned definitions. The earliest ones tended to identify leadership as a focus of group process and movement. The next type of definition considered it as the art of inducing compliance. The most recent definitions tend to view leadership in terms of power differentials, role differentiation, and initiation of structure. However, a closer view of the dates will make it apparent that the different trends of thought were developing at the same time.

While taking cognisance of the developments in the definitional framework of leadership, the main aim of this chapter is not to provide a new definition of leadership, but rather to look at the style of leadership that was prevalent in the Third Reich. For this to be done on a sound academic footing it will be necessary to clarify the basic conception of leadership, in its broadest sense, that can then serve as a point of departure for an interpretation of the leadership style in Nazi Germany. Therefore, and in reference to all the above mentioned definitional categories, leadership, in a general political sense, will be defined very broadly as an interaction between members of a group. Leaders are agents of change within this group, whose actions effect other people more than other people's acts effect them (Gurnee 1936; LaPiere & Farnsworth 1936). Leadership occurs when one group member (the leader) modifies the motivation, behaviour or competencies of others in the group.

In essence there are only two ways of modifying a subordinate's behaviour (apart from using drugs or physical force). The leader must either change the subordinate's information, understanding and ability to cope with the task at hand, or the motivation of the subordinate to deal with the task must be altered. When the leader has more relevant knowledge than the followers, task-focused direction provides for the necessary transfer of information. Powerful leaders might be able to use this to arouse motivation. But in a situation where followers posses as much or even more information than the leader, and/or where power is more widely shared, motivation of followers is more likely to depend on involving them in decisions about handling the task and their concerns about it themselves (Bass 1981: 292). The resultant two basic clusters of leadership styles is usually termed 'autocratic leadership' and 'democratic leadership'.

3.4 Autocratic vs. democratic leadership

A specific duality between autocratic or authoritarian leadership and democratic leadership has been apparent throughout the history of ideas and more specifically in ideas relating to human interaction. How should

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humankind be led? How should mankind be guided towards ultimate 'good'? The duality is reflected in two basic streams of thought which is based on two opposing views of human nature. On the one hand there is the view that basic human nature is inherently corrupted to such an extent that it is in need of the controlling and directing influence of authority that will then serve as an agency of upliftment. On the other hand is the view that man is inherently good and that it must be given freedom in which to learn, to grow and to overcome. These two premises have resulted in what we can call two different styles or approaches to the fundamental driving forces behind leadership namely on the one side leader- or task-focused leadership and on the other side follower-focused leadership.

The primitive task-focused leader (for example the exploitative authoritarian) will make all the decisions for the group and is solely concerned with completing the task at hand, and not in the least for the needs of his subordinates. A more sophisticated task-focused leader always reserves final decision for himself or herself and is still more concerned with getting the job done than satisfying some need amongst their subordinates. On the other hand a follower-focused leader encourages contributions from his or her subordinates to the decision making process and will pay attention to their needs.

The authoritarian leader will dictate what is to be done and is usually unconcerned for the followers needs for autonomy and development. The democratic leader will share the decision making with the subordinates and is concerned about their needs to contribute to deciding what is to be done. The authoritarian leader will be personal in praise and will remain aloof from the rest of the group. The democratic leader will be more factual and rational, and de-emphasise social distance from the other members (Bass 1981:292-293).

A distinction can be made between democratic and authoritarian leadership based on the following four aspects (Bass 1981: 293):

- whether decision making was or was not shared by the leader;
- whether or not the followers was of primary concern to the leader;
- whether social distance was maintained; and
- whether punishment and coercion were used.

It is important to remember that combinations of the above mentioned is possible. We might find a benevolent autocrat that is dictatorial, yet is concerned about the needs of his or her subordinates.

When looking at the Third Reich we find that Hitler was the source of all important decisions and that he did not take kindly to any views opposing his, even if it came from his inner circle. There can also be no doubt as to the role played by coercion and punishment, as well as the use and threat of violence and terror by the leadership in Nazi Germany (see Curtis 1979: 38-39, 101; Spielvogel 1992: 102-107). Even these cursory observations will be enough to convince us that the leadership style prevalent in the Third Reich definitely falls more into the autocratic category than in the democratic. Therefore it will be appropriate for us to focus on the autocratic (non-democratic) style of leadership and leave behind democratic leadership as inappropriate for the specific study at hand.

3.5 Autocratic leadership

Autocratic leadership will most readily manifest in authoritarian governments. In fact the concept authoritarianism points to the reality that authority in a particular state is seen as seated in the hands of an individual or a small elite. A dictatorship will therefore be the usual manifestation of this style of leadership. According to MacIver (1947) and Bass (1960), the autocratic leader can depend either on his or her power to coerce or on the ability to persuade. They further make a distinction between what they call an 'able autocratic leader' and a 'powerful autocratic leader'. An able leader will successfully persuade others to follow him, because they expect that following the leader's suggestions will result in solving the problems the group faces. A

powerful leader will successfully coerce others to follow him because the power of the leader's position or the power of the leader as a person makes others expect that he will provide reward for compliance and will punish for non-compliance. The able leader will indirectly try to influence the behaviour of others, while the powerful leader will directly reinforce the behaviour of his subordinates. This distinction makes it apparent that a further refining of leadership types will be necessary in dealing with leadership in Nazi Germany. While discussion on authoritarian leadership in general is relevant for this study, it must be remembered that we are dealing with a particular form of authoritarianism, namely totalitarianism, when focusing on the Third Reich. A study of leadership in totalitarian Nazi Germany must therefore be based on an understanding of the concept 'totalitarianism'.

3.6 Totalitarianism

Authoritarianism and totalitarianism both fall into the category of non-democratic regimes. Both usually have a one-party system, both set limits on political activity, political discussion and political organisation, and neither type of government places as much value on the individual as democracies do. While there are quite obvious similarities between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, there are certain factors that make totalitarian regimes stand out as fundamentally distinct from other authoritarian regimes. Zeigler (1990: 217) summarised the essence of a totalitarian regime as follows:

- A single, official, revolutionary ideology (more a world view in the case of Nazi Germany - see chapter 2);
- A single, disciplined and centralised party (which has a definite influence on the leadership style in such a system);
- Terroristic police control;
- Party monopoly of the mass media;
- Party control of the armed forces;
- Central direction of the economy;
- Annihilation of all boundaries between public and private life.

Totalitarianism as an ideal type rests on two principles. Firstly the concept of totality: the government must have total control over all the actions and interactions in the society. Secondly, it rests on the principle of permanence in that the total control of the state will never wax nor wain. Nazi Germany can be seen as one of the foremost examples of totalitarianism, and therefore it is necessary for us to look at leadership in a totalitarian context if a viable discussion on the role and function of leadership in the Third Reich is to result from this study.

3.6.1 Totalitarian leadership

Robert C. Tucker (1965) states that there is a rising dissatisfaction with the concept totalitarianism among students of comparative politics because the concept seems to obstruct, rather than facilitate the integration of later developments in communist states as well as the new evidence emerging from especially the Hitler and Stalin eras. He states that instead of discarding the concept completely, a radical critique is necessary. One of the points he focuses his critique on is whether the theory is valid as a representation of the political reality in the two historical cases it was devised to explain, namely Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia. When we confront the theoretical model of totalitarianism with the more recent documentation as regards to the factual situation in both Germany and Russia of that time, it appears that the model was seriously deficient in its omission of the personal role of the leader from the dynamics of totalitarianism. It appears to have been obbblivious o the impact of the dictator, and more specifically the personality of the dictator, on the whole political system. In both Germany and Russia, the dictatorial personality exerted its impact originally in ideology and the internal life of the country, and later found a major field of expression in foreign relations as well. The internal impact was felt amongst others, in the form of terror, and the external, in a special sort of aggressiveness that may best be described as an externalisation of terror. It is this specific role of the dictator in the totalitarian state that needs our special attention.

Hannah Arendt, in her works on the subject of totalitarianism (1966, 1973), addresses this topic. She placed considerable focus on the characteristics and functions of the totalitarian leader, especially in reference to Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. For her it was quite apparent that, to understand the inner dynamics of a specific totalitarian movement, it is of great necessity to focus on the particular manifestation of leadership within that movement. She states that at the centre of the movement, as the motor that swings it into action, sits the leader. Not only is he the pinnacle of the elite of the movement, but he is also separated from the rest of the elite by an inner circle of 'the initiated' that spreads around him an aura of mystery that creates a halo of intangible preponderance (Arendt 1966: 71).

Unlike in democracies where the private lives of its leaders are often paraded in front of the public, the lives of leaders like Stalin and Hitler were shrouded in mystery, for the totalitarian view did not conform to the conviction that, 'Even the highest of us is only human.' As far as the personal skill of the leader is concerned it is important to note that the position of the leader within this inner circle depends not on his demagogic or bureaucratic-organisational qualities, but rather on his ability to handle inter-party struggles through intrigue and his skill in constantly changing personnel. He does not attain his position through the simple application of violence, as was the case amongst the early dictators of history, but rather devotes himself from an early stage of his career almost exclusively to matters of personnel, so that after a few years hardly any man of importance remains who does not owe his position to him (Arendt 1986: 211).

This particular set of personal abilities, though crucial for this first stage of a totalitarian leader's career, soon came to be eclipsed by an entirely new dynamism. Once the totalitarian movement has been built up, it functions according to the single principle that "the will of the leader is the law of the Party". The whole hierarchy of the Party has then been so established with the goal of speedily communication the will of the leader to the lower ranks. As soon as such a Party-dynamism has been established, the leader is securely

entrenched and irreplaceable, because without his commands the whole movement will lose its life blood, for in the absence of the leaders guiding decisions the whole complicated structure of the movement would be like an irrigation system without any water. The established structures of the movement are not necessarily stable; in fact it is usually swept by continual struggles, rivalries and even hatred amongst the inner circles of the Party. The impact of these struggles on the leader is surprisingly small. His position can remain secure against even chaotic palace revolutions not because of his superior gifts, but because of the inner circle's firm conviction that without him as their leader everything would be lost (Arendt 1986: 211-212).

The leader's position and relation to a hierarchical system needs to be clarified further. It is important to note that the so-called 'leadership principle'(*Führer prinzip* in German) is not an essentially totalitarian feature; it has borrowed certain of its characteristics from authoritarian and even military dictatorships. The important factor that makes the totalitarian application of the leadership principle distinct from other manifestations thereof, is the independence that the leader enjoys from the normal chain of command or party hierarchy. Any hierarchically organised chain of command means that the leader's power is dependent on the whole hierarchic system in which he operates. Every hierarchy, no matter how authoritarian in its direction, and every chain of command, no matter how dictatorial the content of its orders, tends to stabilise and would have restricted the total power of the leader of a totalitarian movement. Therefore, it is the will of the leader - and not his orders, a phrase that might imply a fixed and circumscribed authority - that becomes the supreme law in a totalitarian state (Arendt 1973: 364-365).

In reference to this supreme law -giving role, Arendt (1986: 212) views the task of the totalitarian dictator as two fold - to act as the magic defence of the movement against the outside world; and at the same time, to be the direct bridge by which the movement is connected with it. The leader represents the movement in a way that is totally different from all ordinary party leaders; he claims personal responsibility for every action, deed or misdeed committed by

any member or functionary in his/her official capacity. This total responsibility is the most important organisational aspect of the totalitarian leadership principle, according to which every functionary is not only appointed by the leader, but is also his walking embodiment. Every order is supposed to emanate from this one ever-present source. This absolute identification with the leader and his monopoly of responsibility for everything which is being done are the most obvious differences between a totalitarian leader and an ordinary authoritarian dictator. The authoritarian tyrant would never identify himself with his subordinates, especially not with their each and every act. He would rather maintain a distance between himself and his subordinates so that in the event of a popular backlash, a scapegoat can be made out of a subordinate. In the totalitarian mould, the leader cannot tolerate criticism of a subordinate, since they always act in his name. The result is that if he wants to correct his errors, he must liquidate those who carried out the orders; if he wants to blame his mistakes on others, he must kill them, for within such an organisational framework a mistake can only be fraud: the impersonation of the leader by an impostor. Therefore the leader bears total responsibility for everything done by the movement and has a total identification with every one of its functionaries. This results in a situation where no one is responsible for his or her own actions and neither can they explain the reason behind the actions, for the leader has an absolute monopoly on all explanation in the movement. This is well illustrated by the way Stalin denounced the Shostakovich opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and how this denunciation resulted in widespread criticism of the work by the establishment and critics even after it proved very successful amongst audiences and the very same critics alike (Volkov 1979: 82-87). This monopoly of reason and the central position of the leader results in the perception, especially with the leader himself, that he stands above reason and can direct reason.

It can easily appear as though the leader stands well removed from all the functional activities in the movement and that he is not in his position of leadership because of the movement, but the that movement is there because of his leadership. It is therefore quite natural, and history proved this, for

outsiders to set their hopes for the resolution of a crisis on a personal talk with the leader himself when this crisis involves a totalitarian movement or government. Reference can here be made of the personal visits of the British and French leaders to Hitler during the Sudeten crisis (Bullock 1986: 454-469). The real mystery of totalitarian leadership resides in an organisation that makes it possible for the leader to accept all responsibility for the monstrous deeds performed by the elite of the party or movement while at the same time being able to receive the sincere and innocent respectability of his followers. A key to this mystery lies in the structure of the movement that the leader directs.

The whole structure and organisation of the movement that can generate, organise and spread such falsehood needs to be taken into account. The first aspect of this structure that is striking is that it all once again depends upon the position of the leader. The whole propaganda machine surrounding the leader will assert that all his actions are scientifically based upon the laws of nature or economics of which he alone has a total understanding and that therefore he 'was always right and will always be right'. This is illustrated by the following statement in the *Schwäbisches Volksblatt* of 9 September 1939 (quoted in Kershaw 1989: 48):

> You don't get round to talking any longer out of pure wonder and amazement
> at everything our Hitler is doing....Since the man has taken history in his hands,
> things work.

A second aspect that needs to be taken into account concerning structure is that a definite organisational division can be made in the movement. Such a top-down division makes a distinction between (a) elite formations, (b) membership and (c) sympathisers (Arendt 1986: 214). Of these groups, the only that is expected to loyally and literally believe all the leader's words are the sympathisers whose confidence in him will surround the movement with an atmosphere of honesty and simple-mindedness and will thus help the leader to inspire confidence in the movement. The party membership on the other hand never necessarily believe public statements and are not always supposed to, but are complimented by propaganda which makes them believe that they

stand above those of non-totalitarian persuasion which they know only from the gullibility of sympathisers. The result of this system is what can be called a graduation of cynicism without which the lies of the leader would never work. It is expressed in a hierarchy of contempt which is as important as gullibility in resisting refution. The sympathisers in front organisations despise their fellow-citizens' lack of initiation, while the party members despise their fellow-travellers' gullibility and complete lack of radicalism, and the elite formations despise for similar reasons the members. Even within the party elite a similar hierarchy of contempt will accompany every new development and position. The importance of this system is to be found therein that the gullibility of sympathisers makes the lies credible to the outside world, while the graduated cynicism of membership and the elite formations eliminates the danger that the leader will ever be forced by the weight of his own propaganda to actually fulfil promises or prove respectability (Arendt 1986: 214). When analysing totalitarian systems it is important to take this factor into account for it explains why the enormity of the totalitarian lies will not necessarily prove its undoing and why the leader will not have to face up to his promises. The totalitarian system appears to be almost foolproof against such normal consequences; its ingeniousness rests precisely on the elimination of that reality which either unmasks the leader or forces him to live up to his pretence.

The membership, while not believing all the statements made for public consumption, will believe all the more the standard clichés of ideological explanation such as the keys to past and future history which totalitarian movements took from nineteenth-century ideologies, and transformed, through organisation, into a working reality. This ideological picture of reality is supposed to be believed like a sacred and untouchable truth. It is carefully surrounded by an elaborate system of scientific proofs which do not have to be convincing for the completely 'uninitiated' but must satisfy the thirst for 'demonstrating' the truth of the membership's worldview. The elite formations of the movement on the other hand need no such demonstrations and are not even fully under the sway of all the ideological clichés. The elite has no such quest for truth. They need no fabricated answers to satisfy a need for

explanation. The whole mindset of the elite member has been structured as such that their capacity for distinction between truth and falsehood has been largely negated. Their superiority above the normal member is their ability to immediately dissolve every statement of "fact" into a declaration of purpose and then into action. Arendt (1986: 215) recognises this disparity in referring to the behaviour of elite Nazi and Soviet formations:

> In distinction to the mass membership which, for instance, needs some demonstration of the inferiority of the Jewish race before it can safely be asked to kill Jews, the elite formations understand that the statement, all Jews are inferior, means, all Jews should be killed; ...

> The tremendous shock and disillusion which the Red Army suffered on its conquering trip to Europe could be cured only by concentration camps and forced exile for a large part of the [Soviet] occupation troops; but the [elite] police formations which accompanied the Army were prepared for the shock, not by different or more correct information... but simply by a general training in supreme contempt for all facts and all reality.

It is of critical importance to understand and recognise this specific mentality amongst the elite formations, if a thorough understanding of the role and function of the totalitarian leader is to be gained. This mentality is not the result of social rootlessness, economic disaster or political anarchy nor is it a mere mass-psychological phenomenon; it is the result of a carefully prepared inculcation process that is aimed at cultivating this particular mindset (see Schoenbaum 1966: 281-286). This process, though subtle at times, took precedence in the curriculum of totalitarian leadership schools (for example the Ordensburgen for SS (Schutzstaffel) troop and the Bolshevik training centres for Comintern agents) over either eugenics indoctrination or the principles of civil war. The movement will never be able to move towards the realisation of its goals without this elite with its artificially induced inability to distinguish between truth and lie. This elite will never stop to think about the world as it really is and will never compare the lie with reality. It is therefore absolutely loyal to the leader who spread forth the principles that the elite will blindly follow.

The upper layer of the organisation of the totalitarian movement, the elite of the elite, is the intimate circle around the leader. This circle can be either institutionalised (such as the Politburo) or not (such as the group of people surrounding Hitler). This inner circle holds the truth of ideological clichés in very low regard. They are willing to change them at any time when circumstances justify so long as the organising principle of the movement is kept intact. This highest elite in the case of Nazi Germany, was willing to do away with the normal dogma or Party line, and form an alliance with a Semitic people, the Arabs, merely for the sake of, and because of, the 'living organisation'; that is, to ensure the viability and survival of the structures of the movement. In much the same way the policy-makers of Bolshevism stood above their own teachings. They were quite willing to interrupt the class struggle to form an alliance with a capitalist state, thus loosing some of their support amongst their cadres and committing treason against their belief in the class struggle.

The main feature of this highest rank of the totalitarian hierarchy is that they view everything in terms of organisation. This results in them exercising a great amount of freedom from the content of their own ideologies. This emphasis on freedom even includes their views of the leader who to them is not necessarily one who is infallibly right, but rather the simple consequence of this type of organisation; he is needed, not as a person, but as a function and therefore he is vital to the movement. The leader is thus not a figure head or a puppet, but an indispensable facet without which the whole organisation would cease to exist (Curtis 1979: 37-39). Consequently totalitarian leaders can count on the loyalty of their inner circle even if the leader chooses to murder some of them. The elimination or removal of the leader would have severe results for the organisation of the movement. It is the nature of the movement that once the leader has assumed his position, everything is absolutely identified with him. Any admission of a mistake or removal from office would break the spell of infallibility around the leader and would lead to a collapse of the movement itself. The whole movement is so action geared and so focused on the leader,

that it is interesting to note that the success or failure of the leader (and therefore of the movement itself) will not be judged by the masses according to the truthfulness of the leaders statements but rather by the infallibility of his actions (Langer 1972: 51-52). Without this sense of a leader whose actions are infallible, the movement would soon be overwhelmed by the complexities of the real world. The judgements of the inner circle on the other hand and their reasons for loyalty go even deeper than this.

At the bottom of the loyalty of those who do not believe either in the ideological clichés of the movement or in the infallibility of the leader, lies a firm and sincere belief in human omnipotence (Arendt 1986: 218). This group of people (that also includes the leader himself) believes that everything is possible as well as permissible. This basic moral cynicism leads them to the view that every obstacle will be overcome merely by superior organisation. Their faith in their particular view of leadership rests not on the assumption that the leader is infallible, but on the conviction the everybody who commands the instruments of violence with the superior methods of totalitarian organisation can become infallible. This particular mentality characterised the top structures of both the Nazi Party and the Communist Party

It is important to realise that an understanding of totalitarianism will not provide us with a complete revelation of the relevant situation in Nazi Germany. It is necessary that we narrow our focus even further. For the study at hand it is important to realise that the above mentioned characteristics refer to totalitarian leaders in general. In this study where the main focus is the German *Führer,* we need to ask ourselves whether Adolf Hitler can be seen in direct equivalence to other totalitarian leaders, such as Stalin, or whether not we should place Hitler in a somewhat distinctive category. It appears as though there must be some distinctive aspect to Hitler's leadership that differentiates it from that of Josef Stalin. There appeared to be a greater focus on the person of Adolf Hitler in the German totalitarian system, than was the case with for example Stalin. This is well illustrated by the fact that most Nazi soldiers readily died in the name of their *Führer,* whereas the Soviet soldiers

offered themselves up in the name of the Soviet state. The factor that made this difference is that Hitler can arguably be seen as one of the most charismatic leaders ever to have held authority in a nation. In this regard reference can be made to a number of authors and scholars who have viewed as Hitler fitting this description. Willner (1984), Toland (1976), Laver (1995) and Kershaw (1987, 1991) all view the charismatic nature of Hitler's leadership as fundamental to an understanding of his rise and eventual rule[1]. Therefore, any study of leadership in the Third Reich must also be grounded in a solid understanding of the phenomenon of charismatic leadership.

3.7 Charismatic leadership

The notion of charismatic leadership as an identifiable political concept had its origin, once again, with Max Weber, the noted German social scientist of the early twentieth century. He introduces the charismatic conception in his classification of legitimate authority. Weber (1986: 232) states that the validity of legitimate claims of authority can be based on different grounds, namely:

> (a) Rational grounds - based on the "legal" pattern of rules and the right of those in positions of authority under rules to issue commands.
> (b) Traditional grounds - based on the established belief in the sanctity of tradition and the legitimacy of those exercising authority according to the principles of such tradition.
> (c) Charismatic grounds - this is based on the devotion to the character of a specific individual seen as exceptional, sanctimonious, heroic or exemplary, and to the specific patterns or order propagated by him. The charismatic leader as such is obeyed because of a personal trust in him and his revealed mission, and because of his heroism and exemplary qualities as far as the individual is concerned.

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[1] See chapter 4 for a discussion of these and other authors' work.

Charismatic authority is not based on a specific office or status, but is derived from the capacity of a particular person to arouse and maintain belief in himself or herself as the source of legitimacy. The focus is therefore on the personal character of the leader and more specifically on the way this is viewed by his or her supporters.

In the context of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership, the concept "charisma" needs clarification. Weber states that "charisma" should be applied

> ...to a certain quality of an individual's personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader (Weber 1986: 239).

It is of great importance to stress that it would be rather futile to go in search of a set of identical or similar qualities of personality, character, temperament or style common to those political leaders who have been seen as superhuman by blindly devotional followers. A comparison between Hitler and Gandhi would result in more variations than similarities. The core of the matter is that charisma is defined in terms of people's perceptions of and response to a leader. It is not what the leader is, but what the people see the leader to be that is important in the generation of charismatic appeal. Charisma is therefore not to be found directly in the personality of the leader but in the perceptions of the people he leads. The followers follow their vision of the leader. It is thus important to focus on the factors that call forth those perceptions from the followers that characterises the charismatic relationship. This relationship between the charismatic leader and the followers is defined by Willner (1984: 9) as having the following properties:

- The leader is perceived by the followers as somehow superhuman.
- The followers blindly believe the leader's statements.
- The followers unconditionally submit themselves to the leader's directives.

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- The followers give the leader unqualified emotional commitment.

This relationship based on the perceptions that the followers have of the leader stands at the centre of charismatic leadership. Yet, as is the case with the above mentioned evaluation of totalitarian leadership, personality cannot be totally separated from charisma, for the personality of the leader might provide him with the ability to project those images of himself that gives rise to charismatic perceptions.

It must further also be clarified that there is a distinction between charisma as basis of leadership and charisma as the dominant basis for authority in a specific society. The distinction between these two aspects is not always very clear for they are both based on a belief in an individual. The difference between charismatic political leadership and charismatic political authority is the extent of the radius of charismatic support. Charismatic leadership can be found within predominantly traditional authority systems or legal-rational authority systems, but when a charismatic political leader manages to convert the majority of the members of the society to a charismatic brand of politics, his charisma has become the basis for authority in that state. The authority base of charisma therefore depends on the distribution of charismatically orientated belief within that system. If a charismatically based authority relation thus exists between the leader and most, or at least the majority, of the members of the society, we can say that charisma is the dominant basis for authority in that society (Willner 1984: 15-17).

Now that the concepts 'charismatic leadership' and 'charismatic authority' have been introduced and some of the common misconceptions surrounding them addressed, it is necessary to identify specific indicators by which the existence of a charismatic relationship between a political leader and followers can be discerned. Drawing from the definition of Willner noted above, three distinct categories of indicators may be identified:

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(a) The first consists of beliefs that associates the leader with spheres beyond the human. It can either be beliefs equating the leader to the divine or the semi-divine, or beliefs that the leader possesses superhuman, supernatural or exceptional powers or capacities.

(b) The second category refers to the unconditional acceptance of the authority of the leader. This can be subdivided into two categories namely the domain of belief which consists of convictions of the truth of all the leader's statements, and on the other hand the domain of action which refers to the unconditional obedience to the leader's directives.

(c) The third category points to the all-encompassing emotional commitment of the followers to the leader, and by implication also to his vision and to the order that he establishes.

An aspect that flows implicitly from the above mentioned commitment of the followers is the belief that the very existence and continuity of the social order they so value depends upon the continued presence and leadership of the leader.

Since perceptions stand at the core of charismatic leadership, it is important to clarify those perceptions that can result in a distinctly charismatic basis for authority. Willner (1984: 20-29) identifies certain indicators of charismatic perceptions that focuses on this specific aspect. It is important to remember the impact of cultural variation when discussing certain of these qualities in a universal or near-universal manner. Attributes that can be considered as exceptional in one culture may not be looked upon with great favour in another. Similarly, different cultures may have different measures for how far a certain quality has to surpass the norm for it to be viewed as transcending normal human potential. With this in mind we can now focus in greater detail on these indicators of charismatic perceptions.

1. *The leader as a god or saviour*

One of the primary and clearest indicators of charismatic perceptions is when the followers equate the leader directly with the divine or the semi-divine. This can take one of the following three forms:

- directly comparing the leader with God or with a specific deity;
- seeing the leader as a saviour or a messiah; or
- equating or linking the leader with the founders of a specific religion or other sacred figures of a specific culture.

The validity of this indicator can be gleamed from the following statements, the first concerning Franklin Delano Roosevelt:

> People are looking to you almost as they look to God (quoted in Willner 1984: 20).

Concerning Mussolini the following statement was overheard by Barzini (1964: 153):

> He is like a god... Like a god? No, No! He is a god.

The following statement concerning Adolf Hitler can be used as an example of seeing the leader as a saviour or messiah:

> My belief is that our Leader, Adolf Hitler, was given by fate to the German nation as our savior, bringing light into darkness. (Adel 1938: 244)

The final category can be amply illustrated by this statement made by a German concerning his first reaction on coming into contact with Adolf Hitler:

> His appeal to German manhood was like a call to arms, the gospel he preached the sacred truth. He seemed another Luther. I forgot everything but the man. (quoted in Willner 1984: 21)

2. *The leader as a seer or a magician*

Accounts of followers of charismatic leaders abound with rather vague references as to the 'emanation of power' or the 'magnetic force' that they sense their leaders to have. They are usually no more specific as to the exact nature of that which they are experiencing. What their statements do point to is the sense of revelation or awakening, and emotional stirring they felt at times of exposure to the leader. It appears as if the only way they can explain their intuitive sense that the leader is somehow exceptional, is by referring to the unusual feelings that the leader arouses in them. Even if it might be difficult for the followers to exactly frame their perceptions of the leader, it is still possible to identify a number of attributes in the leaders that have traditionally and widely been viewed as superhuman, supernatural or magical. If followers belief that their leader is in possession of one these attributes, it can serve as a valid indicator for the presence of charismatically orientated perceptions towards that specific leader. The attributes can be summarised as follow:

- The ability to foretell the future or to prophesy. Therefore the quality of prescience.
- Reading the minds and intentions of others.
- The ability to heal or harm in an unorthodox way. The ability to influence or control the elements can also be included here.
- A general sense of invulnerability portrayed by a form of 'magical' protection or immunity from harm.

This view of leaders is not limited to states in which a belief in the supernatural and magical is still freely admitted. Such views or at least close approximations thereof are also to be found in more scientifically developed and therefore 'intellectually enlightened' states. Here these tendencies are usually expressed in terms referring to a 'sixth sense', 'extraordinary luck', 'singularly good fortune', and the like.

The following statement is made concerning Mussolini:

> Some people are saturated with the knowledge of mankind; they seem to have a perceptive ability in addition to their normal senses. It is an absolutely infallible and subtle prescience that formulates itself immediately a person is confronted, as though all the secrets emerged and steadily developed themselves on a highly sensitized plate. All those who are acquainted with Mussolini agree that he has this power (Finer 1935: 288).

One would not readily expect a contemporary citizen of the USA to view their leaders in a supernatural or magical sense. It can probably be stated that they would not openly admit holding such views. When they do express such sentiment it is usually framed in a very oblique manner. Examples of this are the following statements made concerning Roosevelt quoted by Willner (1984: 25):

> Most extraordinary of all was the fact that the President, by his mere presence, seemed to bring the rain....

> Roosevelt himself seemed to take on magical qualities as his trips through the parched country time and again brought rain.

> It is impossible for the most sceptical opposisionist not to conclude that Franklin was blessed with luck. His followers were inclined to rate his good fortune even higher. It seemed to many of them that a providential arranger was at work.

Though these accounts are all open to easy rational critique, they all point to the potential power and influence of a charismatic leader ascribed with these almost magical qualities.

3. *Unconditional acceptance*

It was stated that the unconditional acceptance of the followers of the personal authority of the leader, is a prominent defining characteristic of the existence of a charismatic relationship. To find a valid indicator for this specific facet of such a relationship, it is necessary to look at more than a mere correlation between

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the followers' beliefs and the leader's statements or the fact that their behaviour conforms with his directives. It should be shown that his statements act as a major source for the formulation of their beliefs and his commands as a sufficient motive for their obedience. For validation of this indicator evidence must be found that points to followers believing what they believe *because* the leader said so. A supreme example of such beliefs, will be beliefs that are adhered to regardless of telling and authoritative factual information that disproves such views. The same applies for actions taken in obedience to the leader's commands. A strong indicator hereof will be actions performed by followers at the command of the leader despite their awareness of hardships and sacrifices that such obedience will entail. A good example of such an attitude is provided by the statement of one of Gandhi's followers in the Transvaal during a campaign of resistance against a restrictive ordinance imposed by the Transvaal government: "Mr. Gandhi, he know. If he say go to prison, we go."(Ashe 1968: 116)

4. *Emotional commitment*

The emotional commitment that the followers display toward the leader is somewhat more difficult to identify categorically since we are dealing with vague issues such as intensity of expression and affective attachment. Since charismatic attachment usually includes an aspect of the metaphysical or supernatural, the emotional commitment to the leader can give rise to the type of emotion usually associated with gods and saviours, such as reverence and adoration. Examples of this are again best expressed by the followers themselves. Concerning Hitler the following statement was made by Albert Speer at the end of World War II when defeat looked inevitable:

> Now at the end of his rule ...although I was opposing him and had to face up to
> the fact of defeat, I still revered him (Speer 1970: 437).

This type of commitment is not usually stated so directly; it is more often inferred, as one can see in the following statement concerning Roosevelt:

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> I voice millions when I say we wish you could be our leader always (quoted in
> Willner 1984: 28).

Pledges of lifetime commitment and absolute obedience are indicative of such
high levels of emotional commitment. This is further illustrated in the following
statement made concerning Mussolini (quoted in Finer 1935: 301):

> We want to do more and better to make Mussolini understand that we want to
> obey him to the death.

Finally, the actions of supports can also be taken into account when trying to
gauge the levels of emotional commitment the followers have towards the
leader. These actions might include: frenzied attempts to see, to reach, or to
touch the person of the leader; according him gestures of worship commonly
offered divinities, and treating objects he has touched or used as sacred relics.
Willner (1984: 29) illustrates this by once again referring to the example of
Roosevelt:

> An example of an action that suggests veneration is that of a woman in Ohio
> who knelt down and reverently patted the dust where he [Roosevelt] had left a
> footprint.

It should be noted that when assessing whether audience responses can be
taken as indicative of charismatic content, it is important to distinguish between
enthusiastic reactions to a leader's statements on the one hand and reactions
to the person of the leader on the other hand.

3.8 Conclusion

Any study dealing with leadership is confronted by the elusive nature of the
concept in its theoretical construction as well as in its practical application. The
goal of this chapter was not to redefine leadership, but to provide a theoretical
basis for the analysis of leadership in the Third Reich. In this regard two main
aspects were addressed. Firstly, totalitarian leadership with specific focus on
the relationship between the leader, and the structure and members of a

totalitarian movement. Secondly, charismatic leadership with special emphasis on the distinctive nature of a charismatic relationship between leader and followers as well as the three indicators of the existence of such charismatic perceptions. As indicated, the existence of perceptions of the leader as a god or saviour, perception ascribing magical or special powers to the leader, as well as the unconditional acceptance and belief in the leader and his message, all make it possible for us to identify the existence of a charismatic base to the relationship between the leader and his/her followers.

Totalitarian leadership along with charismatic leadership will serve as theoretical cornerstones for the purposes of this study, the aim of which is the analysis of the role and function of leadership in Nazi Germany. As was touched upon in this chapter, and will be pointed out in the following chapters, the leadership styles prevalent in the Third Reich were inherently totalitarian and charismatic. Equipped with a thorough theoretical understanding of these concepts, it is therefore appropriate to now move to an analysis of the events and practices in a Germany under the control of the Nazis.

CHAPTER 4

HITLER AND THE PEOPLE:

CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP IN NAZI GERMANY

4.1 Introduction

The charismatic nature of Adolf Hitler's leadership in Germany is fundamental to any evaluation of his position of authority and leadership in Nazi Germany, for it formed the basis of that authority. Few twentieth-century political leaders have enjoyed greater popularity among their own people than Hitler did during his time of rule over Germany. At the peak of his popularity the vast majority of Germans were convinced 'Hitler supporters'; even the Nazi Party itself never attained such levels of commitment from the people. Hitler's support stretched beyond those who thought of themselves as Nazi's and even included people who viewed themselves as opposed to the institutions, policies or even the ideology of the Third Reich. This adulation of millions of Germans from every walk of life meant that the person of the *Führer*, as the focal point of basic consensus, played a crucial role in integrating the Nazi regime itself. The support by the people helped to legitimise the actions of the regime at home and abroad; it defused opposition, boosted the *Führer*'s independence from the traditional conservative elites and helped sustain the frantic momentum of the regime. This huge base of popularity made Hitler's own power position ever more unassailable, giving him the opportunity for the increasing radicalisation of Germany; translating his personal ideological obsessions into attainable reality.

The leadership cult did not originate with Hitler and the Nazi Party, but had its roots deep in nineteenth century Germany. This quest for a 'heroic leader' provided the NSDAP under the leadership of Adolf Hitler with fertile ground on

which to construct a 'Hitler myth' which could serve as the focal point for a future Nazi government. This they set out to achieve, focusing primarily on Hitler's own charismatic personality as well as using every conceivable method of propaganda. The growth of this 'myth' surrounding Hitler was slow and halting at first, but after 1933 it started to gain incredible momentum, a momentum it was to lose only in the face of total military defeat and the collapse of the entire political system.

4.2 The quest for a 'heroic' leader in Germany

Adolf Hitler's rise to power (1921-1933) and his eventual rule over Germany (1933-1945) cannot be separated from the idea of 'heroic leadership'. Hitler was readily portrayed by the Nazi propaganda machine as the saviour and champion of Germany, sent by 'Fate' to restore the German nation to its rightful position and to lead it into a glorious future. The focus on 'heroic' leadership in Germany did not originate with the Nazi movement. It was a prominent element of the ideas of the nationalist and *völkisch* Right long before Hitler came to prominence (see Jarman 1955: 33-40, Stern 1990: 32-38). The idea of a *'Führer* for the Germans' had been propagated by various nationalist writers and politicians and was therefore not an uncommon or alien viewpoint for the average German in the Weimar era. With the rise of Hitler it was not immediately apparent to the protagonists of the need for 'heroic' leadership that Hitler himself was *the* leader they have been waiting for. This image of Hitler, sometimes called the 'Hitler myth' grew over time until it became the dominant base of authority in Germany.

The readiness to place all hope in the authority of a 'strong man', has not been peculiar only to Germany. Promotion by threatened elites and acceptance by anxious masses of strong authoritarian leadership, often personalised in one charismatic person, has been experienced by many societies in which a weak pluralist political system is incapable of resolving deep political and ideological rifts and where the whole system is perceived to be in a serious crisis. This was most definitely the case in inter-war Europe (Mosse 1975: 60-62). What

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differentiates the German leadership cult from the rest of Europe is that its has to be seen in the context of a specifically German political culture long pre-dating the Hitler era[1].

The roots of the 'heroic' leadership ideas in Germany can be found in the 19th-century when there was a strong focus on political and mythical notion and visions of Germanic leadership in a very romantic and conservative idiom. This was especially prevalent in early *völkisch*-nationalist thought. This line of thinking emphasised aspects such as victory, valour and heroism as part of a growing 'cult of the nation'. It found growing expression in sacral festivals of fire and light, that was intermingled with pagan Germanic and Christian symbolism and ritual all aimed at celebrating the 'rebirth', vitality and strength of the German nation. The growing appeal during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century of heroic leadership notions in populist-nationalist circles of the German Right, was largely the result of an increasing gap between the perceived need for national integration and unity and the apparent lack of unity in practice. This gap was enhanced by three interlinking factors (Kershaw 1987: 17):

- the social and political strain and disruption caused by an almost simultaneous transition of Germany to a nation-state (1870-1871), a constitutional government and an industrial society;
- the deep fragmentation of the social system reflecting deep social divides; and
- the spread of a chauvinistic-imperialist clamouring for a rightful 'place in the sun' for Germany.

The fundamental reasons for the increasing receptiveness towards the 'heroic' leadership ideas and for the growth of exaggerated expectations in a coming leader lay above all in the combination of the aggressive, expansionist hopes placed in world politics and strong perceptions of the weaknesses and dangers of bourgeois party and interest politics in the face of the growing challenges of

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[1] The apparent uniqueness of the German political culture is addressed in the first two

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the political and social order from the democratic forces of socialism. One can state that the greater the internal rifts in a society, and the greater the inability of a government to fulfil the expectations placed in it, the greater is the potential for the spread of notions of 'charismatic' or 'heroic' leadership. The trauma of 1918, especially for the Right, accelerated this process greatly. The collapse of the German military forces, the fall of the monarchy and with it the end of the old order, and the coming to power of the hated Social Democrats, the so-called 'enemies of the Reich', all transformed the previously more latent notions of authoritarian 'heroic' leadership into a broad counter-revolutionary force, if at first in a rather vague and divided one, posing an alternative vision to that of the Weimar party-political system. To the traditional German Protestant, whose attachment to the Church was dwindling, but who was brought up to respect and accept authority, particularly that of the state, the leadership idea being propagated by the *völkisch*-nationalist Right seemed to offer a secularised version of salvation (see Schoenbaum 1966: 289). The ground was thus prepared among them for the acceptance of the 'political salvation' offered by a 'truly' national leader.

When analysing at the specific interpretation that the *völkisch*-nationalist Right attached to leadership it is clear that they broke with the traditional monarch-subject relation. Their view is more neo-feudal incorporating some pseudo-democratic notions of a relationship between a leader and a 'following' in which the leader represented in an authoritative way the will of the people without standing above and outside this will in the fashion of kings and dictators (Struve 1973: 11). The ideal leader was seen as a man from the people whose qualities would embody the basic values of the trenches namely struggle and conflict. He would be hard, ruthless, resolute, uncompromising and radical, destroying the old privilege- and class-orientated society and bring about a new beginning (a *palingenesis* - See Chapter 2), uniting the people in an ethnically pure and socially harmonious 'national community'. This was diametrically opposite to the view held of the Weimar Republic which was viewed by the average German as a 'leaderless democracy' and a divisive

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chapters of T.L. Jarman's book *The rise and fall of Nazi Germany*, 1955.

system run by 'contemptible politicians' and mere party functionaries. 'Leadership' could not be found in constitutional 'systems', but only as destiny rising from the inner essence of the people.

> The Leader cannot be made, can in this sense also not be selected. The Leader makes himself in that he comprehends the history of his people (quoted in Kershaw 1987: 19).

Salvation was to be found only in a leader, selected and blessed by 'providence' who would rescue Germany from its plight and restore it to greatness. A good example of the characteristics of such a leader is found expressed in the following text from 1920:

> The Leader does not conform to the masses, but acts in accordance with his mission. He does not flatter the masses; hard, straightforward, and ruthless, he takes the lead in good days and in bad. The Leader is radical; he is entirely that which he does, and he does entirely what he has to do. The Leader is responsible; that is, he carries out the will of God, which he embodies in himself. God grant us leaders and help us to true following (quoted in Kershaw 1987: 20).

It is important to understand that the expounding of the 'heroic' leadership principle in such an extreme form occupied only a fringe position on the far Right of the political spectrum of Germany in the early 1920's. By the later 1920's, especially in the growing political as well as economic crisis of the Depression era with its perceptions of the total failure of the Weimar Republic and the democratic principles upon which it was based, coupled with the mortal crisis of the entire political system, allowed the image of 'heroic' leadership to move from the sideline of politics to the centre stage. This had a dramatic impact on Hitler's position in German politics. In the early 1920's Hitler was seen by most Germans as no more than a provincial rabble-rouser, that was if they knew him at all. He was still far from being popularly associated with the 'heroic' leadership image (Mitchell 1983: 65-67). But within one decade a vision of him as the great leader sent by providence to the Germans, this vision that was once taken seriously by only a small lunatic

fringe, became by the mid-1930's the central, and decisive idea in German political life.

4.3 The growth of the 'Hitler myth'

Hitler entered the arena of German politics in September/October 1919 when he joined the small and obscure German Workers Party in Munich, an ultra-nationalist fringe party on the Right, led by Anton Drexler. It soon became apparent that Hitler was the true driving force behind the party. Consequently he was put in charge of propaganda in early 1920 (during which time he changed the name of the party to the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP) or Nazi Party for short) and in 1921 he took over the leadership of the party itself (Laver 1995: 17-19). During the first few years Hitler directed all of his considerable oratorical and organisational skill to propagating the ideals of the party amongst the people of Munich. Any notion of the Nazi Party, with Hitler at its helm, dominating German politics in the foreseeable future seem farfetched at the time. Even further from the public mind was the idea that this ex-corporal rabble-rouser was the 'Leader of national salvation' they have been waiting for. This view developed only with time.

An article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* in December 1922 seemed for the first time to make the claim that Hitler was *the* Leader (*Führer*) Germany was waiting for. It spoke of the 'joyful certainty' of Hitler followers leaving a parade in Munich 'to have found something which millions are yearning for, a leader'. Already that year, a book dedicated to Hitler styled him as 'the great man of deed ... the fearless leader of Germany's resurrection'. During the year before the Munich Putsch of 1923 it became clear that a personality cult was starting to form around the person of Hitler from within the Nazi Party itself. In April 1923 Göring, then the Commandant of the SA (*Strumabteilung*), made the claim that thousands of people were already convinced 'that Adolf Hitler is the only man who could raise Germany up again'. Some even started drawing parallels between Hitler and Napoleon (Kershaw 1987: 22-23). It is

noteworthy that the 'Hitler myth' was a creation of his following before he himself became adjusted to the role. It was during his time of imprisonment in the Landsberg prison after the failure of the Putsch, that his 'destiny' to be *the Führer* for Germany took firm hold in his own mind. During these few months he spent a lot of time thinking and reading, and started work on the first draft of *Mein Kampf*. He held daily discussions with his co-internees and receive numerous visitors who all covered him with adulation. This all contributed towards him becoming convinced that he was not just destined to drum up support for a future leader, but to be the *Führer* himself.

The years between 1925 and 1928 can be called the 'quite years' of the Nazi Party. The Party was reformed in 1925 after Hitler's release from prison and was not even regarded as worthy of mention by the majority of the German media. During these years however the Party organisation was extended over the whole of Germany and the membership increased substantially. The Nazi Party became the political home of all remaining grouping of the *völkisch* Right, and Hitler's leadership position within the Party became firmly established and unchallengeable. Important also is the fact that it was during these years that Joseph Goebbels became a devoted and fanatical Hitler-believer. Goebbels became the most eloquent exponent of the 'Hitler myth' in the Nazi Party and used his later position of Minister of Propaganda to spread this leadership myth over the whole of Germany[2].

The deliberate attempt of establishing and expanding the 'Hitler myth' in the years following the relaunch of the Party had the specific function of compensating for any lack of clarity and unity, be it ideological or personal, within the different factions of the Nazi Movement. The *Führer* figure provided the cement binding together the 'following' of ordinary Party members with sub-ordinate Party leaders - establishing a point of unity that was all the more important now that the Party had extended itself beyond its former homebase surrounding Munich and thus now incorporated quite heterogeneous elements from the other regions of Germany. The functional significance of the 'Hitler

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[2] This is very noticeable in Goebbels's own book of 1935 entitled *My part in Germany's fight*.

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myth' can be clearly illustrated by the willingness of Gregor Strasser, head of Party organisation and still rather critical of Hitler, to recognise the value of the 'Führer myth' and to enthusiastically contribute to its establishment. An article he published in 1927 clearly illustrates the point:

> An utter devotion to the idea of National Socialism, a glowing faith in the victorious strength of this doctrine of liberation and deliverance, is combined with a deep love of the person of our leader who is the shinning hero of the new freedom-fighters ... Duke and vassal! In this ancient German, both aristocratic and democratic, relationship of leader and follower, fully comprehensible only to the German mentality and spirit, lies the essence of the structure of the NSDAP ... Friends, raise your right arm and cry out with me proudly, eager for struggle, and loyal unto death, 'Heil Hitler!' (Noakes et al. 1974: 84-85).

Among those who also contributed greatly to the early formation of the 'Hitler myth' was Rudolf Hess, a man who assumed the role of Deputy Führer of the Third Reich in 1933. He regarded it as an imperative

> ...that the Führer must be absolute in his propaganda speeches. He must not weigh up the pros and cons like an academic, he must never leave his listeners the freedom to think something else is right.... The great popular leader is similar to the great founder of a religion: he must communicate to his listeners an apodictic faith. Only then can the mass of followers be led where they should be led. They will then also follow the leader if setbacks are encountered; but only then, if they have communicated to them unconditional belief in the absolute rightness of their own people (quoted in Kershaw 1987: 27).

The rise to prominence of the Nazi Party received a great boost with the results of the 1930 Reichstag elections. In the 1928 national elections the Nazis received only 2.6 per cent of the vote, but in 1930 this jumped to 18.3 per cent totalling about 6.4 million votes. This resulted in the Nazis controlling 107 seats in the Reichstag, making them the second largest political party in Germany (Spielvogel 1992: 50-51). This election which took place amid a growing crisis in the economy as well as in the State, signified the breakthrough not only to a mass following, but also to mass publicity. It showed that the Party had managed to shed much of it's 'lunatic fringe' image and was acquiring more

political and social acceptability among the conservative bourgeoisie. From this time on the Nazi Party and its leader was the talk of the town and the centre of media attention. It was at this point that the Hitler cult ceased to be the fetish of a small minority and began to signal for millions of Germans the hope for a new political era, even though there were still some serious doubters.

Many intelligent and informed observers still thought that the NSDAP was bound to disintegrate sooner or later into various small sections of interests. This they argued on the grounds that its social base was very diffuse as it was merely functioning as a protest party. The Party had no clear political program to offer, only a contradictory almagam of social revolutionary rhetoric and reactionary jargon; and not the least, it was dependent on the personality cult surrounding the demagogue Hitler who was seen as the mouthpiece of petty-bourgeois resentments, but ultimately as no more than a dilettante who, despite temporary success rooted in the conditions of severe economic and political crisis, was bound in the end to succumb to the real power centres in German politics as well as the traditional elites (Childers 1983: 56).

The underrating of the Nazi Party in 1930 was partly the result of the underestimation of the force of the personality cult, of the desire for a strong 'charismatic' leader to truly lead Germany from under the gathering gloom of the Depression, which struck the whole of German society so dramatically, towards a glorious and happy future. There exists copious evidence that proves the striking magnetism of the 'Führer myth' on the average German of the time. One party member explains:

> I did not come to Hitler by accident. I was searching for him. My ideal was a movement to forge national unity from all working people of the great German fatherland. ... The realisation of my ideal could happen through only one man, Adolf Hitler. The rebirth of Germany can be done only by a man born not in palaces, but in a cottage (quoted in Merkl 1975: 540).

This tone of secularised faith is alluded to in numerous examples.

> A non-Nazi who has not experienced the enormous elementary power of the idea of our *Führer* will never understand any of this. But let me tell these people as the deepest truth; whenever I worked for the Movement and applied myself for the *Führer*, I always felt that there was nothing higher or nobler I could do for Adolf Hitler and thereby for Germany, our people and our fatherland. ... The real content of my life is my work and commitment to Hitler and towards a National Socialist Germany ... Hitler is the purest embodiment of the German character, the purest embodiment of a National Socialist Germany (quoted in Merkl 1975: 396-397).

It might be argued that some of these examples were extreme cases of susceptibility to the Hitler cult. However, the rapid growth of the Party membership after 1930 meant that an ever increasing number of Germans were being exposed to the 'Hitler myth'. Hitler was now to be taken seriously as a political force in Germany. From 1930 on Hitler was constantly the centre of media attention, never being out of the headlines for long. A feeling was starting to take root in Germany, that whether one was for him or against him, he was a political figure who was out of the ordinary, one that could not be ignored any longer. The spread of this personality cult was therefor no longer confined to Nazi members, but was extending to every segment of the population as well as to every corner of the country (Kershaw 1987: 31). Although yet to reach fanatical levels on a national scale, Hitler was nevertheless acquiring the reputation of an extraordinary Party leader, a man towards whom opinion could not remain neutral. He either received ecstatic approval or severe condemnation.

The five election campaigns of 1932 increased the momentum behind the growth of the Nazi movement and the adulation of its leader. The expanding Nazi press, which had grown from 6 dailies and 43 weeklies in 1930 to a total of 127 publications in 1932 (Zeman 1964: 28), made full use of the opportunity to create the impression of an unstoppable march to power of a mass movement united behind its leader, a man with a mission to save Germany, a man who was going his way irrespective of temporary setback. Increasingly Hitler was being cloaked with the mantel of Leader of the 'coming Germany'. The Presidential campaign between Hitler and Hindenburg in 1932 provides an apt illustration of how this image was now the central focus of the Nazi

propaganda machine. All over Germany in the last days before the election, a poster depicting Hitler's head on a completely black background appeared. Stark slogans hammered home the message that a vote for Hitler was a vote for change whereas a vote for Hindenburg was a vote for the status quo (see Bullock 1962: 210-218). The election was portrayed as a contest between the representative of the Weimar system, and the Leader of the new, young Germany, 'the *Führer*, the Prophet, the Fighter ... the last hope of the masses, the shining symbol of the German will to freedom', in Goebbels's glowing rhetoric (quoted in Bramsted 1965: 201). This propaganda was definitely starting to make inroads on the German population in general.

The Nazi propaganda focused on integrating and personalising in the *Führer* figure the disparate motivations of Nazi supporters. As the mouthpiece of lower middle-class resentments, Hitler articulated and legitimised individual grievances, demands and self-interests, while the personal bonds of loyalty to the *Führer* sharpened the point of identification with the Movement. For the bourgeoisie, who were increasingly finding in Nazism an attractive proposition, Hitler offered a counter to the doubts about the NSDAP ability of being a responsible governing party (Kershaw 1987: 40). People from all classes were being drawn together under the banner of Adolf Hitler. By 1932 the idea of National Socialism had become inseparably linked to the '*Führer* myth', at least for the Party supporters. Hitler for them was the idea and the idea was Hitler.

The rise of Hitler to the position of '*Führer* of the people' was not always a smooth one. In the autumn of 1932 the election weariness and internal difficulties within the Party provided a testing time for Hitler's 'charismatic appeal'. During this time Hitler drew smaller crowds to his meetings and people started to complain that they had enough of Hitler and the Nazis. This critical period for Hitler proves how fragile such a personality cult could be, and how only recurring success could guarantee its continued vitality (Kershaw 1987: 45). Despite this temporary setback it appears that approximately thirteen million Germans were under the sway of the 'Hitler myth' when the NSDAP came to power in January 1933 (Spielvogel 1992: 67). Among the rest of the

population opinion varied from deep suspicion and even hatred towards Hitler to the view that despite his shortcomings he might be useful for Germany.

When Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933 it seemed to add the needed impetus for the rapid extension of the *Führer* cult to the great majority of Germans. Three general factors need to be taken into account when trying to understand the reason for the swift growth of the support for the new Chancellor:

- Firstly, the sense of a need for change. Of great importance was the widespread feeling that the Weimar political system and leadership were utterly corrupt. The impression existed of an utterly divided nation tearing itself apart in a succession of bitter election campaigns. In such a state of affairs, the image of a young, dynamic and energetic leader offering a decisive change in direction and backed by an army of fanatical followers was by no means unattractive. Most people were at least prepared to give Hitler a chance. It was especially the apparent drive and tempo of Hitler's government just after he took over the Chancellorship that impressed people.
- The great underestimation of Hitler before 1933 lead to a surprised enthusiasm when he apparently mastered within a short space of time the internal political situation in Germany; something that once appeared totally beyond his capabilities .
- Hitler, embodied a well-established, extensive, ideological consensus that embraced most of those who had previously not belonged to the Nazi camp, with the exception of the Left. Virulent anti-Marxism, the perceived need for a strong counter to the forces of the Left, a deep hostility to the failed democratic system, a belief that strong authoritarian leadership was necessary for any recovery, and a feeling that Germany had been badly wronged at Versailles and was now threatened by enemies on all sides, were all elements that were prevalent in the majority of German society. All this created the potential for the support of a strong leader who appeared to offer absolute commitment, personal

sacrifice, and selfless striving in the cause of inner unity and external strength (Kershaw 1987: 46-47).

For Hitler, success in the pursuit of a national goal and the banning of the divisiveness of party politics, could bring new stature as a national leader, not only as a party leader. With this stature there could be potential to convert former lukewarm supporters and even opponents into admirers of the *Führer* and therefore into at least tacit adherents to the Nazi State. This conversion task now lay in the hands of the Nazi propaganda agencies, that now had almost total control over the media. They had to persuade the people to support Hitler as well as to convince them that he was the only one that could look after their interests (Snyder 1976: 247-248). This is all the more important seen in light of the fact that great parts of especially rural Germany still had to be won over to active support or even tacit agreement with the Nazis. It seemed as though these areas of Germany were surrounded by a wall of profound apathy and scepticism created by the hardships of the Depression and apparent ceaseless electioneering and party-political infighting. A lot of people still thought that there was little chance of Hitler lasting longer than the previous Chancellor, General von Schleicher. Despite their apparent pessimism, they were at least prepared to give Hitler a chance to see what he could do for they felt it could scarcely get worse. If Hitler could prove himself by attaining quick success this opportunity he was granted could turn into whole-hearted support.

From the beginning Hitler's government complied, displaying a dynamism and force which contrasted it sharply with the paralysis of the previous governments. There was a growing feeling, even among non- Nazis, that a turning point had been reached, that at least something was now being done. At the centre of these expectations stood the new Reich Chancellor. Nazi propaganda was working hard to create the image of the *Führer* as a new and different kind of leader, bestowing ever more grand attributes on this leadership 'genius'. The Nazis now started even taking their big rallies out of the cities and to the countryside where Hitler's new position was heralded as not merely

another change in government but as a 'world-historical event' (Stern 1990: 27). Hitler was portrayed as the last bulwark against communism, the final hope and protector of the peasants and workers and the protector of the Christian religion. In this regard Hitler's strong action impressed the people. He's claims of restoring peace and order and the forceful action that accompanied it found fertile ground amongst the people. They were even willing to accept brutality and repression (which was in evidence especially against the 'Marxists' and later also against the Jews) for the sake of some semblance of peace and order. This was not the last time that flagrant brutality in the interest of 'peace and order' would increase Hitler's popularity and function as an important component of the 'Hitler myth'. Above all the propaganda of 1933 appealed to the people to give the new Chancellor a chance (Layton 1991: 33-38).

It appears as though the German people did decide to give Hitler a chance, for during the first few months of 1933 there a seems to have been a tremendous growth in Hitler's appeal amongst the whole of the German population. Hitler-euphoria was burgeoning in an unrestrained manner. This 'German Hitler Springtime' is well expressed in the following pseudo-religious poem:

> Now has the Godhead a saviour sent,
> Distress its end has passed.
> To gladness and joy the land gives vent:
> Springtime is here at last (quoted in Stern 1990:74).

The emotive force laying behind such unbridled 'verse', which was by no means isolated to a handful of gullible 'lunatics', provided the propaganda machine with an opportunity to centre on Hitler not as Party Leader or head of government, but as the focal point of a 'national rebirth'. The point was stressed that a fundamental change was taking place in the interest of the whole nation; that an end was being made of the old hypocritical way of doing things and that a new era has dawned heralding an end to all social and political divisions. The manufacturers of the *Führer* cult placed heavy emphasis on the many-sided 'genius' of Hitler in all their public addresses and press

releases. They also did not forget to stress the 'human side' of the man and played up for example the loyalty and compassion he showed to a dying 'Old Fighter' of the movement when he visited his bedside and spoke to him 'full of fatherly gentleness and goodness', departing with a 'long heartfelt handshake' (quoted in Kershaw 1987: 59). The Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, who contributed more than anyone else to the building of the 'Hitler myth', had clearly himself succumbed to its force. He constructed this image of a warmth and protectiveness that Hitler offered to every member of the 'peoples community'. This image tapped a vein of pseudo-religious, secular salvation emotions, something that was not insignificant in the popular psychology of the day. This coupled with a propensity to personalise politics and to admire political 'greatness' all contributed in a considerable measure to the receptivity of the *Führer* cult.

Neither rhetoric nor coercion would have been very successful in the building of Hitler's image had it not been for the fact of the apparent successes of the new government. The general feeling amongst the population was that the government was actively combating problems such as unemployment, rural indebtedness and poverty. This gave rise to new hope amongst the people, a sense that things were improving again, something which gave Hitler and his government a new prestige and added markedly to the impact of the Hitler myth for this change was personalised in the person of the *Führer* (Morstein Marx 1936: 150-151). He was accepted as the single-handed creator of Germany's 'economic miracle' of the 1930's. Even people who still found the extremes of the Nazi movement laughable were now ready to accept that Hitler was no ordinary politician: it was difficult to ignore his 'achievements'. Even amongst people who lived under the full weight of the material hardship of the day there seemed to be a growing attachment to the *Führer*. Hitler stood in a sense above and outside the 'system', detached from the dismal 'normality' of everyday. It seems as though the Hitler myth could transcend daily material worries and function as a compensatory mechanism. While the euphoria surrounding a foreign policy success or a speech lasted only for a short while before the routine of everyday life took over again, there was a lasting feeling

that, whatever the temporary hardships and cares, the *Führer* was in control and knew how to lead them into a glorious and better future (Kershaw 1991: 101-102, 253). The Hitler myth therefor played a crucial stabilising and integrating role in the Nazi movement by defusing discontent and offering a sphere of 'national' policy and interests which lay outside the normal private sphere of life of the average citizen.

Otto Dietrich encapsulated the growth of the *'Führer* myth' in a eulogy he wrote for Hitler's birthday in 1935: in 1933 it had been Hitler as the 'fighter for and creator of German unity', in 1934 he was the 'statesman and architect of the new Reich', and now in 1935 he was 'the supreme Leader of the nation.' As a 'simple worker' Hitler had initially restored Germany's 'social freedom', and now the former 'simple front-lone soldier' had, with great 'soldierly achievement', restored Germany's 'national freedom' (quoted in Kershaw 1987: 72). By 1936 Hitler could add success on the plane of international politics to the list of attributes of the *Führer* image. His success in the Saarland referendum[3], the rearmament initiative, and the unilateral reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 all added to the growth Hitler as the 'symbol of the nation'. Hitler was regarded as an upholder and defender of Germany's just rights, a rebuilder of Germany's national strength and a statesman of extraordinary ability. Added to the 'Hitler myth' during the first half of the war (1939-1941) when the Germany armed forces achieved some remarkable successes, was the view of Hitler as a military leader of formidable standing, one who, as a former front-line soldier distinguished for bravery, understood the ordinary soldier and could guide them to one resounding victory after another (see Strawson 1971: 111-115). Even after the tide of the war started to turn against Germany, many people still saw in Hitler Germany's unwavering and resolute will to strive for final victory even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Hitler was clearly being portrayed, not as a dictator, but as the 'executor of the people's will'. This approval that the people gave to the *Führer*'s orders was not

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[3] In 1935 the population of the Saar district bordering Germany and France, previously under the administration of the League of Nations after the First World War, decided by plebiscite to return to Germany and become part of the Third Reich.

the result of some form of constitutional 'compromise' between an authority and a population, but was the expression of a 'trustful following'. Simply stated, and in accordance with Max Weber's terminology[4], the 'Hitler myth' had become the basis of the German governmental 'system'; the essentially arbitrary 'will of the *Führer*' had become the basis of authority in Germany. Clearly by 1936 this threshold to a fully fledged Leader cult was crossed and that it continued to grow, reaching a zenith during 1938-1940.

An important question to be addressed is, how widespread the influence of the 'Hitler myth' was amongst the German population. It is very difficult to asses the exact amount of people that were under the sway of this myth at any given time. However, it seems certain, as the analysts of the anti-Nazi *Sopade* reports were repeatedly prepared to accept, that many who were at first sceptical or even hostile to the Nazis did not remain unimpressed by the series of sensational apparent 'successes' which the Nazis under Hitler could lay claim to (Langer 1972: 53). Hardly anyone was able to completely escape the perpetual projection of the *'Führer* myth' in the media. Any German who read a newspaper, listened to the radio, went to the cinema, or who was generally aware of what was happening around him or her, was constantly confronted by a highly effective propaganda machine's portrayal of the Hitler cult. It became very difficult to avoid an admission that Hitler had indeed brought about a remarkable transformation in Germany: the combination of apparently irrefutable successes stretching from the eradication of unemployment to the recovery of the Saar and the Rhineland, coupled with ubiquitous propaganda made the drug of the 'Hitler myth' hard to resist. The extent of the personality cult makes it clear, however, that propaganda was only effective where a readiness to trust and believe in unbridled political leadership had already been cultivated and was widespread. At the foundation of the 'Hitler myth' lies a specific perception that the Germans had of their *Führer*. It is this perception, forming the basis of Hitler's charismatic authority, that warrants closer inspection.

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[4] see chapter 3.

4.4 How the German people saw Hitler

When trying to formulate a conception of Adolf Hitler as the German People knew him we must not forget that their knowledge of him was greatly influenced and limited by a media firmly under the control of the Nazi leadership. On the other hand, many thousands of Germans have seen him in person at public appearances such as party rallies, especially during the first few years of the Third Reich, and could use this experience as a basis for their individual conception of him.

Hitler, from a physical point of view, was not a very imposing figure - certainly not the Platonic idea of a great, fighting Leader or the Deliverer of Germany and the creator of a new Reich. In height he was a little below average. His hips were wide and his shoulders relatively narrow. His muscles were flabby; his legs short and thin, the latter usually being hidden by heavy boots or long trousers. He had a large torso and a hollow chest to the point where it was said that he had his uniforms padded (Langer 1972: 42-43). From a physical point of view he would not have passed the requirements to his own elite guard. While testifying as a witness in Hitler's trail in 1923, Professor Max von Gruber of the University of Munich, the most eminent eugenist in Germany, stated:

> It was the first time I had seen Hitler close at hand. Face and head of inferior type, cross-breed; low receding forehead, ugly nose, broad cheekbones, little eyes, dark hair. Expression not of a man exercising authority in perfect self-command, but of raving excitement. At the end an expression of satisfied egotism (quoted in Ludwig 1940: 11).

Whatever effect Hitler's personal appearance may have had on the German people, it is safe to assume that this had been greatly tempered by millions of posters, placed in every conceivable place, which showed the *Führer* as a fairly good looking individual with a determined attitude. In addition, the press, newsreels, and the like, were continually flooded with carefully prepared photographs showing Hitler at his best (Mitchell 1983: 186). This undoubtedly, in the course of time, blotted out any unfavourable impression he may have

created as a real person in the past. The physical Hitler most Germans knew was a fairly presentable individual.

The only other real contact most Germans had with Hitler was through his voice. Hitler was a tireless speaker and would sometimes give three to four speeches on the same day, often in different cities. Even his opponents had to concede that he was the greatest orator Germany had ever known. Hitler did not necessarily posses the best quality of voice, nor were his speeches always well structured. In fact, his speeches were usually overly long, badly structured and very repetitious, but nevertheless, when he delivered them they had an extraordinary impact or effect on fect on his The power in his speeches lay almost wholly in his ability to sense what a crowd wanted to hear. He then took this knowledge and adapted his theme in such a way as to arouse the emotions of the people in the crowd. Gregor Strasser spoke at length concerning this ability:

> Hitler responds to the vibration of the human heart with the delicacy of a seismograph ... enabling him, with a certainty with which no conscious gift could endow him, to act as a loudspeaker proclaiming the most secret desires, the least permissible instincts, the sufferings and personal revolts of a whole nation (Strasser 1940: 62).

Before coming to power almost all of Hitler's speeches focused on three themes:

- the treason of the 'November criminals' that resulted in the Versailles treaty and the Weimar 'system';
- that the rule of the Marxists must be broken; and
- the world domination of the Jews.

No matter what topic was advertised for a given speech, Hitler would invariably wind up addressing one of these three topics. Yet people liked it for its inherent simplification of reality brought clarity and certainty to the complexity of their daily lives. People would attend one meeting after the other to hear him speak.

It was, therefore, not so much what he said but how he said it that the audiences liked. Hitler had a definite sense for the dramatic and that appealed to the people. He would always speak late in the evening when the audience would be tired and thus have their natural resistance lowered. He would always send an assistant ahead of him to make a short speech to warm up the crowd. His meeting always had a military flare with Storm troopers and flags lining the aisle with a band playing lively march-like music. At the critical moment Hitler would appear in the door at the back of the hall. With a small group of followers behind him he would march through the rows of SA men to reach the front. He never glanced to the right or to the left as he came down the aisle and became annoyed if anyone tried to hamper his progress. When he began to speak he usually showed signs of nervousness and was unable to say anything of consequence until he had got the 'feel' of his audience. As soon as he found it, the tempo of his speaking increases in rhythm and volume, the staccato invective beginning slowly, rising to abuse and vituperation until he is shouting at the climax. Long conscious pauses which free the waves of thunder from the public in front of him were used with great deliberation to scan the next part of his script, his hand raised to calm the roar when he was ready to proceed, the crescendos of abuse alternating with harsh, hectic avowals and public declarations of an intimate, personal commitment and manly sincerity (Stern 1990: 1-2). Through all this the listener seemed to identify with Hitler's voice which becomes for them the voice of Germany. This is well expressed by the following observation of a non-German journalist attending one of his speeches:

> The beginning is slow and halting. Gradually he warms up when the spiritual atmosphere of the great crowd is engendered. For he responds to this metaphysical contact in such a way that each member of the multitude feels bound to him by an individual link of sympathy (quoted in Langer 1972: 46).

Newsweek reported on the impact of Hitler's speeches: "Women faint, when, with face purpled and contorted with effort, he blows forth his magic oratory" (quoted in Langer 1972: 47). Unquestionably, as a speaker, he made a great impact on the average German. His meetings were always crowded. His

speaking seemed to numb the critical faculties of his audience to the point where they were willing to believe almost anything he said. He always managed to say what the majority of the audience were already secretly thinking but were not able to verbalise. When the audience began to respond it affected him in return. This reciprocal relationship soon intoxicated both him and his listeners with the emotional appeal of his oratory (Strasser S.a.: 24-25).

It was this Hitler that the Germans knew. Hitler, the fiery orator, who tirelessly rushed from one meeting to another, working himself to the point of exhaustion on their behalf. Hitler, who was striving heart and soul for the 'Cause' and who struggled endlessly against overwhelming odds to open their eyes to the truth concerning Germany's, and therefore their past, present and future. Hitler, who could arouse their emotions and channalise them towards the goal of national aggrandisement. Hitler the courageous, who dared to speak the truth and defy national authorities as well as international opponents. It was he who would lead them back to self-respect for he had faith in them (see Mitchell 1983: 211-215). This basic conception of Hitler provided an ideal base on which the Nazi propaganda could build. Most Germans trusted in his sincerity and were ready to believe any good thing that was said about him. Goebbles and the whole of the propaganda machine behind him did not miss out on this opportunity. The 'image' the propaganda agencies tried to create for the *Führer* consisted of the following main points (Langer 1972: 48-53):

- Hitler was a man shrouded in mystery. From the earliest days of his political career he refused to divulge anything about his personal life. Even to his immediate associates he was a 'man of mystery'. This provided fertile ground for propaganda for the more secrecy he maintained about his personal life, the more curious his followers became; an ideal situation for the building of a myth around him.
- Hitler was always portrayed as something extra-human. Everything he did was presented in such a manner as to exemplify his special character. When Hitler abstained from eating meat or drinking alcohol, it was not because it would improve his health. Such mediocre motivations

were not seen as worthy of the *Führer*. No, he abstained because he found it increased his endurance to such a degree that he could give more of himself to the German people and their ideals. It also proved, according to the propaganda that Hitler was a man with tremendous will power and self discipline. Hitler himself promoted this conception with his references to the Nietzschian conception of 'will to power' as being manifested in his life style.

- He was depicted as a man overflowing with kindness and generosity. This was brought forth by focusing on his apparent love for children and a fondness for animals, particularly dogs. The focus was on his modesty and simplicity, as a man full of gentleness, kindliness and helpfulness. He was portrayed as the "Great Comforter - father, husband, brother, or son to every German who lacks or has lost such a relative" (Oeschner 1942: 69).

- A lot was also made of the assertion that power never went to Hitler's head. As proof of this the propaganda often pointed to the fact that he continued to wear the uniform of a simple storm trooper and never appeared in gaudy uniforms befitting of his position. At heart, the propaganda stated, he was still a worker, and his interests were always with the working classes with whom he felt thoroughly at home.

- Hitler was also a man of incredible energy and endurance. His day consisted of sixteen and eighteen hours of uninterrupted work. The ability to work long hours was used to portray him as working absolutely tirelessly for Germany with no regard for personal comfort. This view contributed to Hitler being viewed as an exceptional individual, standing apart from the average person.

- A great deal was also made of the *Führer's* determination. He was depicted as someone that will never give up no matter what setbacks he has to face or tribulation he has to endure. Even his refusal to let moral principles stand in his way was cited as a sign of greatness.

- A great deal of publicity was also give to his 'breadth of vision' and 'ability to penetrate the future, especially in organising the Party and the country in preparation for obstacles they will have to overcome; all

serving as further indicators of a charismatic foundation for his exercise of authority[5].

- Hitler was seen as the soul of efficiency and as possessing the extraordinary power of resolving conflicts and simplifying complex problems that have baffled all experts in the past. His infallibility and incorruptibility were not only implied but were usually directly stated.
- The propaganda machine also portrayed him as a man of peace and great patience. His patience with the democracies, especially Czechoslovakia and Poland, was often repeated. Fundamentally he was a man of peace who desires nothing quite so much as to be left alone to work out the destiny of Germany in a quiet manner; for he was a builder at heart and an artist, and these proved that his creative and constructive characteristics were predominant. This did not mean, however, that he was a coward. No, his war record 'proved' that he was a man of outstanding courage. A great amount of stories were circulated concerning his bravery in the trenches of World War I for which he was awarded the Iron Cross First Class.

Fundamentally, Hitler was presented to the German people as a 'man of steel'. He was well aware of his mission, and nothing, no sacrifice, coercion or unpleasant duty could dissuade him to alter course. He never lost his nerve for a moment when faced by a crisis. Yet, he was full of the great human virtues of loyalty and justice. He was also seen as the embodiment of German honour and purity; the Resurrector of the German family and home; the greatest genius of all history possessing an inexhaustible fount of knowledge (Stern 1990: 67). He was a man of action and the creator of new social values. He was, indeed, according to the Nazi propaganda bureau, the essence of all virtue (Bullock 1962: 390). The following is a good example of the extent to which Hitler's praises were sung:

> Hitler is a modest man - and the world needs modest men. Therefore the people love him. Like every good leader, he must be an efficient follower. He makes himself the humblest disciple of himself, the severest of all disciplinarians with

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[5] see chapter 3

> himself. In fact, Hitler is a modest monk, with the three knots of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience tied to his invisible girdle. A zealot amongst zealots. He eats no meat, drinks no wine, does not smoke. I am told he takes for himself no salary but lives privately from the income of his book, *Mein Kampf*... Surplus funds he turns back to the SA. His work day consists of eighteen hours, usually, and he often falls asleep in the last hour of his work... He once gave a lecture in Bayreuth on Wagner and *Deutsche Lieder* that astounded the musical critics and revealed him as a music scholar of parts... Sheer opportunism never lured him as much as the opportunity to preach his doctrine. His quality is Messianic; his spiritual trend is ascetic; his reaction is medieval... (Phillips <u>S.a.</u>: 40-41).

It is already noticeable in this statement that the German people were prepared to take the short step further in seeing their *Führer* not as a mere man, but as a messiah for Germany. Public meetings and especially the Nuremberg rally took on strong religious overtones. All the staging were designed to create a supernatural atmosphere all centring around the person of Hitler. During the rally there was a huge photograph of Hitler underneath which was the inscription 'In the beginning was the Word...' Ziemer (1940: 84) reports on seeing a huge canvas on the side of a hill in Odenwald with the following words painted on it:

> We believe in Holy Germany
> Holy Germany is Hitler!
> We believe in Holy Hitler!!

The Mayor of Hamburg is reported to have said, "We need no priests or parsons. We communicate direct with God through Adolf Hitler. He has many Christ-like qualities" (quoted in Langer 1972: 56). Rauschning (1939: 76) states that the Nazi party adopted the following creed:

> We all believe, on this earth, in Adolf Hitler, our *Führer*, and we acknowledge that National Socialism is the only faith that can bring salvation to our country.

Langer (1972: 56) also quotes Hans Kerrl, *Reichsminister* for Church Affairs, as saying: 'There has risen a new authority as to what Christ and Christianity really are - that is Adolf Hitler. Adolf Hitler... is the true Holy Ghost.' This casting

of Hitler in the role of a god-man, messiah, or even God himself clearly corresponds to a further indicator of a charismatic authority base[6], therefore establishing even more strongly the charismatic base of the authority the German people ascribed to Hitler.

4.5 The representative individual with a personal witness

A further relational aspect between Hitler and the German people, something that is noticeable in all his personal writings, public speeches and private conversations, is that he explicitly assumed the role as representative of the German people and a spokesman of 'the forces of German history'.

> I have come from the people. In the course of fifteen years I have slowly worked my way up from the people, together with this Movement. No-one has set me to be above this people. I have grown from the people, I have remained in the people, and to the people I shall return. It is my ambition not to know a single statesman in the world who has a better right than I to say that he is a representative of the people (quoted in Stern 1990: 9).

This claim of representativeness proved to be one of his most effective political 'weapons' for it made an appeal to the heart of every German. Hitler was the embodiment of the aspirations, desires and needs of the German *volk*; he lived and breathed Germany and carried within him a personal experience of the people of Germany and could therefore rightly interpret their virtue. His views presented what many of the people hoped for and feared. He therefore confronted themselves for them; he pressed contemporary thought to the point of no return, beyond where the normal individual German would treat, onto ground where only the collective 'German spirit' would dare to venture.

Hitler's originality in the treatment of the idea of 'representativeness' lies in his deliberate reversal of the functions normally attributed to personal-existential values on the one hand and social-political values on the other. His discovery was simple, namely to introduce a conception of personal authenticity into the

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[6] see chapter 3

public sphere and to proclaim it as the chief value and sanction of politics. The way he did this was to translate personal genuineness, sincerity as well as living experience from the private sphere into the public sphere and to validate this move by the claim that he, the exceptional individual with his intimate personal experience of the life and struggle of the 'little man', is the Nation's representative by virtue of the genuineness of that experience. Hitler personalised politics; all impersonal aspects thereof such as its institutions as well as principles like the rule of law were designated as 'abstract', 'bureaucratic' and 'inauthentic'. The broad acceptance of this view must again be seen in a specifically German context. In most other Western state politics based on private experience came to be distrusted as arbitrary and tyrannical, and was usually substituted by politics stemming from legal-rational principles resulting in such devices as parliaments and constitutions. German thinking on the other hand tended to mistrust such devices as 'mere form' or show (Stern 1990: 13-14). Starting with the Romantics of the early nineteenth century, this personalisation of politics as we have already noted, was always present in the Germanic search for the fulfilment of their political hopes. For Hitler the personal values of courage, resoluteness, vitality and self-discipline within a 'genuine' or 'natural' leader all formed a substantial part of his professed *Weltanschauung*, and their cultivation a proclaimed purpose of his national programme.

When this conception of an authentic 'inner experience' is translated into practical politics it can be seen that Hitler used it in three distinct ways:

- as a substitute for a specific programme and consistent ideology;
- as a social symbol and rallying point for the people; and
- as a 'living testimony' in almost pseudo-religious terms.

Stern (1990: 16) expresses Hitler's intentions well. He states that Hitler was basically saying, 'Here is my experience, here are my rock-like convictions, my representative *Erlebnis* ('living experience') of the world. This is the self-validating source of my likes and hates, my scheme of values which is right

because it is yours as well as mine, yours by being mine. I am not a man to 'politick', or haggle with Fate. To my every decision my whole existence, and thus yours, is committed. Therefore follow me, for there is no other way and I cannot go wrong, for the forces of History and Nature are on my side.' This was the political message at the beginning of his political career; to this he continued to appeal until the end. Even in his last will and testament, written in the Berlin bunker while the Third Reich was collapsing all around him, he revered to this personal witness (Griffen 1995: 164-165).

4.6 Hitler's views on the masses

A final point that needs to be addressed is Hitler's views concerning the importance of the masses and the ways of handling them, whether it be a crowd at a Party rally or the broad populations approached through the national media. This is an important matter seeing the charismatic base of authority that Hitler enjoyed. The whole basis of legitimacy of the Nazi system therefore rested on Hitler gaining and retaining the broad support of the population. His basic approaches and specific techniques are therefore of special importance to this study. Walter C. Langer's (1972: 62-68) study done in 1943 for the British Office of Strategic Services, provides an analysis of this particular topic. He identified 27 factors pertaining to group psychology that the Nazi's, especially Hitler himself, applied with great effect. These can be summarised as follows:

* Hitler had a full appreciation of the importance of the masses in the success of any movement. Hitler (1939: 213) made the following statement in *Mein Kampf*:

  The lack of knowledge of the internal driving forces of great changes led to an insufficient evaluation of the importance of the great masses of the people; from this resulted the scanty interest in the social question, the deficient courting of the soul of the nation's lower classes.

- Recognition of the important role of youth support in imbedding a social movement with a wild fervour and enthusiasm so typical of young people. Alongside this is the importance of early socialisation and indoctrination. Hitler's appreciation of this is exemplified in the *Hitler Jugend*, an organisation that lay very close to Hitler's heart.
- Recognition of the role of women in advancing a new social movement as well as the view that many of the reactions of the masses has some strong 'feminine characteristics'. Already in 1923 Hitler made the following statement to one of his inner circle:

> Do you know the masses are just like a woman... Someone who does not understand the intrinsically feminine character of the masses will never be an effective speaker. Ask yourself: 'What does a woman expect from a man?' Clearness, decision, power, and action. What we want is to get the masses to act. Like a woman , the masses fluctuate between extremes... The crowd is not only like a woman, but women constitute the most important element in an audience. The women usually lead, then follow the children, and at last, when I have already won over the whole family - follow the fathers (quoted in Langer 1972: 62-63).

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler (1939: 288) writes:

> The people, in an overwhelming majority, are so feminine in their nature and attitude that their activities and thoughts are motivated less by sober considerations than by feeling and sentiment.

- The ability to feel, identify with, and express in very passionate language the deepest needs and aspirations of the average German and then to present opportunities or possibilities for their fulfilment.
- The acknowledgement that enthusiastic political action can only be realised if the emotions are deeply involved.
- There must be an appreciation of the willingness of the masses to commit, and even sacrifice themselves for a cause, especially for social improvement and spiritual values.
- You must appeal to the most primitive, as well as the most ideal inclinations in a person, arouse the basest instincts and yet cloak them in nobility,

justifying all actions as means to the attainment of an ideal goal. Hitler appreciated that although people will die only for an ideal, their continued zest and commitment can only be maintained by a series of more immediate and earthly satisfactions.

- Appreciation of the fact that the broad public want and need a sustaining ideology for political action. A movement must satisfy this 'spiritual' hunger if it wants to mobilise the whole hearted support of the people.

> All forces which do not spring from a firm spiritual foundation will be hesitating
> and uncertain. It lacks the stability which can only rest on a fanatical view of life
> (Hitler 1939: 222).

- The use of imagery is very important. You must be able to portray conflicting human forces in vivid imagery that is understandable and moving for the ordinary person. This comes down to the use of metaphors in the form of imagery, which Aristotle called the 'most powerful force on the earth'.
- This imagery must be applied especially in drawing on the traditions of the people, as well as in the use of classical mythology which all invokes deep unconscious emotions in the audience. Hitler stressed that the great eternal symbols locked up in tradition and mythology has a greater unconscious influence than is generally recognised.
- Realisation of the importance of artistry and dramatic intensity in the conduct of rallies, large meetings and festivals. As we already mentioned, Hitler clearly recognised the necessity of his participation in the total dramatic effect at such a gathering as the chief character and 'hero'. He became a master in all the arts of highlighting his specific role in the movement for a Greater Germany.
- Appreciation of the importance of slogans, catch-phrases and happy aphorisms in penetrating the unconscious of the people, especially if they are repeated over and over again.
- Realisation of a fundamental loneliness and feeling of isolation in people living under modern, industrialised conditions along with a craving to 'belong' to an active group that carries with it a certain status, providing

cohesiveness, and giving the individual a feeling of personal importance and worth.

- Hitler fully understood the value of a hierarchical political organisation in that it affords direct contact with each individual. He used this to maintain the allegiance of a group of devoted aides whose talents complimented his own.
- He realised the importance of winning the confidence of the people through a demonstration of efficiency within the party and the government. Every effort was made not to make a promise that cannot be fulfilled at precisely the appointed time. Hitler understood the important role played by little things that affect the daily life of the ordinary person in building up and maintaining the morale and support of the people.
- Full belief in the fact that the overwhelming majority of the people want to be led and are ready and willing to submit to such a leader if he can win their respect and confidence. Hitler was very successful in this regard for he convinced his followers of his own self-confidence, and in 'guessing' right on a number of occasions he created the impression of infallibility. This ability to anticipate events stems largely from him being a tactical genius.

> Sometimes his intelligence is astounding ... miraculous political intuition, devoid of all moral sense, but extraordinarily precise. Even in a very complex situation he discerns what is possible and what is not (quoted in Langer 1972: 66).

- Hitler possessed a high degree of fanatical stubbornness. His firm belief in his mission and, in public, his complete dedication to its fulfilment created the image of a man whose convictions were so strong that he sacrifices himself daily for the cause. This appealed to the people and induced them to follow his example.
- Hitler also had the ability to portray himself as the bearer of Germany's burdens as well as their future. This resulted in people becoming concerned with him as an individual. Many people as a result, particularly women, felt tenderly and compassionate towards him. They felt that they must always be careful not to inflict any annoyance or suffering on their *Führer.*

- Hitler's ability to negate his own conscience when making political decisions helped him to overcome the force that usually checks and complicates matters for socially responsible statesmen with ground-breaking ideas. The result was that he frequently outplayed his opponents, and attained goals that would not have been so easily attainable through normal means. Linked to this was his ability to persuade others to repudiate their own conscience and allowing him to become their conscience. He could then dictate to the individual what is right and what is wrong.
- Hitler had a thorough appreciation for the usefulness of mobilising the fears of the people. He undergurded this with a very clever application of terror.
- He was always willing to learn from others even though he might have been violently opposed to what they stood for. The use of terror, for example he learned from the communists, the use of slogans from the Catholic Church, and the use of propaganda from the democracies of western Europe.
- As we already mentioned, Hitler was a master at the art of propaganda. Ludecke (1937: 97) wrote:

> He has a matchless instinct for taking advantage of every breeze to raise a political whirlwhind (sic). No official scandal was so petty that he could not magnify it into high treason; he could ferret out the most deviously ramified corruption in high places and plaster the town with the bad news.

  His primary rules were: never allow the public to cool off; never admit a fault or a wrong; never concede that there may be some good in your enemy; never leave room for an alternative; never accept blame; concentrate on one enemy at a time and blame him for everything that goes wrong; people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one; and if you repeat it often enough people will sooner or later believe it (Langer 1972: 67-68).
- Lastly, Hitler had a 'never-say-die' spirit. Even after a severe and crushing set-back, he was able to rally his closest supporters and start making plans for a 'comeback'. Set-backs seemed to serve for him as a stimulant for even greater effort and commitment.

These were some of Hitler's outstanding talents and capacities that enabled him to attain a position of almost unprecedented power in an incredibly short period of time, and over, one must admit, a rarely used route. No other Nazi in a high position possessed these abilities to any comparable degree, and could not have displaced him in the minds of the German people for the 'Hitler myth' totally dominated the average German's views of the Nazi regime. For Hitler himself it became more and more difficult to distinguish between himself and the myth. He had to live out more and more the constructed image of omnipotence and omniscience Kershaw (1987: 264). The more he fell victim to his own myth, the more his judgements became impaired by faith in his own infallibility, thus he started to lose grip on reality, thinking that all can be achieved through the mere force of his will. As his national and international success grew this self-delusion became stronger until it knew no bound, consuming all traces of the calculating and opportunistic politician that characterised Hitler during his first few years on the political stage. In this sense the 'Hitler myth' was a fundamental reason for the underlying instability of the Nazi regime.

4.7 Conclusion

In such conditions as prevailed in Germany during the last years of the Weimar Republic, namely that of the total discrediting of the State based upon 'functional' leadership acting as representatives of a impersonal rational-legal form of political domination, the only salvation that appeared possible was in a leader who possessed personal power and who was prepared to take personal responsibility. The powerful leader would sweep away all the faceless bureaucrats as well as the misery over which they presided. Hitler stepped into this role. He used the prepared soil of the long-standing needs and quest for a 'heroic leader' amongst the Germans as a foundation upon which to build a leadership cult around himself. With each success of the Nazi movement and later on the Nazi government, the extent and level of the adulation towards Hitler grew. The person of Hitler came to be seen as synonymous with every achievement of and improvement in the nation, whether it was the improving of

the economy, a foreign policy success or a military victory. As this mythical image around Hitler grew, driven on mainly by a very effective propaganda machine but also, as was pointed out, by some exceptional personal abilities of Hitler, it started to provide all the tenants for a charismatic base of authority in Germany. This manifested in that the greater majority of the German people started to see Hitler as an extraordinary human being without parallel, even equating him with a deity; they were willing to submit themselves to all his directives for the belief existed that he had incredible insight into the truth and just could not go wrong (all his successes backed this up they believed); and they had a sincere belief in his vision and the order he wanted to establish for Germany.

In exploring the main components of the popular image of Hitler and their blending into a leadership 'myth' of remarkable strength, the distinction between the image created by propaganda and the true person is striking, making the 'mythical' content unmistakable. The main bases of this 'myth' can be summarised as follow:

- Hitler was regarded as the personification of the nation and the unity of the 'national community' or Germany. As representative of the people and based on his personal experience, he could stand above selfish sectional interests and material concern even as far as the Nazi Party itself was concerned.
- He was seen as the architect of the economic recovery of Germany during the 1930's, therefore providing for every German a job, improved living standards and a new basis for lasting prosperity.
- Hitler was accepted as the upholder of 'popular justice', the upholder of public morality, and the representation of strong, if necessary ruthless, action against the 'enemies of the people' (i.e. Marxists and Jews), yet still personally sincere and even a 'moderate' compared to the radical and extreme elements in the Nazi Party.

* Concerning foreign affairs, Hitler was seen as an upholder of Germany's rights and a builder of national strength as well as a statesman and military leader of incomparable genius.

The massive popularity of Hitler, recognised even by the opponents of the regime, was a decisive element in the structure of the Nazi rule over Germany. The leader cult provided the central motor for integration, mobilisation and legitimisation within the Nazi system of rule. It fulfilled this role for the 'non-organised' masses (whose image of Hitler has been the central concern of this chapter) as well as the Party faithful and the Nazi and non-Nazi elite. The Hitler that was presented to the people with his strength of will, his certainty of action, his self-confidence, genius and indispensability all provided the foundations of a charismatic authority of extraordinary strength. It justified the Nazi rule over Germany and provided the population with a reason for their submission to its rule.

CHAPTER 5

Hitler as the Leader of the Nazi State

5.1 Introduction

The Nazi state was, first of all, a dictatorship based on the personal power of Adolf Hitler. Hitler had already exercised absolute power as the charismatic leader of the Nazi party. When he was designated *Führer* and Reich Chancellor in August 1934, his charismatic base of authority was simply transferred to the state. He became the embodiment of the nation's common will, and his power was total, unlimited and free. No conditions or controls could legally be attached to it and his power was theoretically total. But how total was his control really and what was his specific role and function within this system of totalitarian control? Attempts at answering this line of questions resulted in various interpretations ranging form views of Hitler as the absolute and omnipotent master of the Third Reich, to the view that he was a weak dictator, a mere victim of structural forces that he could not control and was passively swept along by. It is important to gain a thorough understanding of Hitler's position and function within the structure of the Nazi movement and Germany as a whole, as well as clarity on his relationship to the structure of the Third Reich, before we can attempt to answer these basic questions. An analysis of the most prominent perspectives on Hitler's leadership will serve as a good point of departure when trying to understand the role and function he fulfilled.

5.2 Historical perspectives on Hitler's leadership

Determining the direct role and function of Hitler within the Nazi system of rule is not as simple as it might appear at first glance. It has in fact become one of the central problems of interpretation for historians and social scientists of the

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Third Reich. At the root of the problem lies a moral issue. It is the feeling that the evil that was Hitler is not being adequately expressed; that he was underestimated by his contemporaries and is now being marginalised by some historians. This central issue determines the whole character of the debate concerning Hitler's role and function in the Third Reich. This moral root is in turn inseparable from the political and ideological value judgements of present-day society.

The main issue to occupy social scientists in this regard is to get a grip on the role of the individual in shaping the course of historical events, as opposed to the limitations on the individual's freedom of actions imposed by impersonal structural determinants[1]. Are the terrible events of the Third Reich to be explained as the result of the personality, ideology, and will of Hitler, or was he not, in part at least, a 'prisoner' of forces, of which he was the instrument rather than the creator, and whose dynamic swept him along. This polarity of viewpoints is clearly demonstrated in the work of Rich (1973: 11) where he states that 'Hitler was master in the Third Reich' which is diametrically opposed to the view of Mommsen, of a Hitler 'unwilling to take decisions, frequently uncertain, exclusively concerned with upholding his prestige and personal authority, influence in the strongest fashion by his entourage, in some respects a weak dictator.' (quoted in Kershaw 1993: 60). This difference of interpretation is one of the main factors that characterised the study of the events in the Third Reich. It is reflected in two opposing perspectives on Hitler's rule, namely the 'intentionalist' approach and the 'structuralist' approach. It is important to make a clear distinction between, and evaluation of, each of these approaches since the approach used will have a great impact on the results of the study of the role and function of Hitler's rule in the Third Reich.

5.2.1 The intentionalist approach

The intentionalist approach can be encapsulated in that it places a central focus on Hitler and his personal intentions. According to this approach Hitler

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[1] see chapter 3 for the various interpretations of the concept 'leadership'.

was the begin all and the end all of the Third Reich. It is therefore necessary to have a thorough understanding of Hitler's personality, his motivation, strengths and weaknesses when trying to explain any facet or aspect of the Third Reich or Nazism in general. It emphasises Hitler's freedom of action and will as well as the uniqueness of the historical situation. This Hitler centrism found expression in three categories of works: biographies, psycho-historical analysis as well as certain high quality, non-biographical academic works.

By virtue of its very nature most biographical studies placed heavy focus on the central role played by Adolf Hitler in the events unfolding in the Third Reich. Major biographical works of Hitler, like the dated yet classic *Hitler. A study in Tyranny* of Allen Bullock (1952), Joachim Fest's *Hitler* (1974), Werner Maser's work also titled *Hitler* (1971), John Toland's *Adolf Hitler* (1976), and even *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by William Shirer (1960), all reflect the weakness inherent in the biographical method. A lot of emphasis is placed on the individual in question whereas structuralist issues are placed on the periphery or overly personalised as regards to the individual in question. In the above mentioned biographies Hitler's childhood is discussed in great detail, whereas major socio-economic issues is only briefly referred to. Not that the individual events do not warrant careful study; it must just be placed within the framework of a proper appreciation of overall societal events.

The second category of works, namely those based on a psycho-historical approach, takes the intentionalist interpretation to its zenith. This approach made a great impact during the 1970's and achieved some standing amongst certain segments of the population. These works, as exemplified by Robert Waite's *Adolf Hitler. The Psychopathic God* (1977) and Rudolf Binion's *Hitler among the Germans* (1976), all try to explain the complex and horrible events of the Third Reich by referring to Hitler's childhood and relationship with his mother (in graphic psychoanalytical terms), a disturbed adolescence and certain psychic traumas. Kershaw (1993: 61) makes it clear that it is difficult to see how this all can help to explain how Hitler could come to rule over Germany and how his personal ideological paranoia came to be the

government policies of non-paranoids in a sophisticated, modern bureaucratic state.

The third category of works can be called the 'programmatist' interpretation in that all the works that can be classified as such hold the view that Hitler had a specific 'programme' which he held to from the 1920's right up to the collapse of his rule in 1945. All his actions in leading the Third Reich were based on his ideological principles or 'programme'. Hitler's ideological obsessions therefore became government policy. Out of the works of authors like Bracher, Hillgruber, Hildebrand, and Jäckel came the view that Hitler was much more than a mere power-hungry opportunist; he was a fanatical man pursuing definite goals with a steadfast consistency, yet tactical flexibility. The questions surrounding the totalitarian dictatorship fascinated Karl Dietrich Bracher as political scientist. He accorded a central role to Hitler and stressed the motivating force of Hitler's ideology. He focused on what he viewed as essentially planned, regulated and 'rational' progression to preconceived goals (Bracher 1969). He stated that 'the antagonism between rival agencies was resolved solely in the omnipotent key position of the *Führer*...' (Bracher 1973: 128). For him Nazism cannot be separated from Hitler and Hitler's *Weltanschauung*, and it is therefore quite legitimate to call it 'Hitlerism' (Bracher 1979: 200-201).

The intentionalist view is taken furthest in the works of Eberhard Jäckel and Klaus Hildebrand. According to Jäckel the Nazi system can be equated to 'sole rule' (*Alleinherrschaft*) in 'that the essential political decisions were take by a single individual, in this case by Hitler' (Jäckel 1987: 28-29). He further makes his case that all these decisions were in essence based on Hitler's worldview which served as a blueprint for his rule. Hildebrand to supports the view of the absolute centrality of Hitler's leadership to events in Nazi Germany. He states that at its roots the Third Reich was monocratic rather than polycratic and that Nazism cannot be separated from Adolf Hitler (Laver 1995: 103).

The intentionalist approach, as expounded by the above mentioned authors, has some obvious appeal. Hitler certainly appeared to have consistently held his ideological aspirations from his early days in the beer halls right through to his suicide in the Berlin bunker. These aspirations that were once the domain of only a very small group on the lunatic fringe, became the declared government policy of Germany when Hitler took over the reigns of government. All this seems to conclusively support the 'intentionalist' argument. There are however certain flaws in this line of reasoning that detract form the soundness of these arguments. By focusing on Hitler's intentions less attention or credit is given to other agencies of change, especially social, political and economic factors. It is too readily assumed that historical developments can be sufficiently explained by an examination of the motives and intentions of the leading role players in the events. Every aspect thereof is subsequently explained with reference to these intentions and motives as direct cause of the events following (Eatwell 1992: 190-191). An alternative to the intentionalist view, that challenge their basic assertions, can be found in the works of those who have come to be labelled as 'structuralists'.

5.2.2 The structuralist approach

The structuralist point of view differs fundamentally from that of the intentionalists in that they cannot agree with what they call the 'undue emphasis' being place on the role of Hitler by the intentionalists. The structuralist or 'revisionists', as they are alternatively labelled, tend to focus their interpretation of the Third Reich on the structures of the regime as well as a functional policy analysis within the German government. This approach rose as a challenge to 'Hitler centrism' in the 1960's, largely as a result of the development of systems analysis in political science filtering through to the study of Nazi Germany (Layton 1992: 144-145). The result was a number of studies that pointed to a multidimensional power-structure of which Hitler was but one element, be it a very important one. This view, which inferred a certain amount of ambiguity and chaos in the leadership structures of the Third Reich, directly challenged the orthodox approach with its view of the total and

monocratic control and direction Hitler had over all aspects of the functioning of Germany. The works that were produced pointed to the important, even vital role of previously neglected topics in the broader study of the Third Reich. They focused on aspects such as the relationship between the civil service and the Nazi Party, the importance of the *Gauleiters* (provincial party leaders) with their provincial power bases, the economy and the industrial powers, ect. The most prominent works in this regard unquestionably came from two authors: Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen.

Martin Broszat produced an analysis of the internal structure of the Nazi regime called *The Hitler State* in 1981. In this work Broszat focuses on the development of the internal power structures of the Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945. He points to the tension inherent in the form of leadership adopted by Hitler, which could not be directly reconciled with the normal practice and organisation of government. In Broszat's (1981: 346) view the administrative chaos so prevalent in the Nazi regime was not the result of Hitler's skilful application of the 'divide and rule' principle, as stated by the intentionalists, but it rather pointed to his lack of organisational ability. Hitler was unable and at times even unwilling to regulate the relations between the Party and the State in order to create a systematically structured and ordered authoritarian government. Broszat states that the dictatorship started with an uneasy power-sharing between the conservative 'authoritarian' reactionary forces in the State and civil service, and the radicalised 'totalitarian' masses of the Nazi movement (Broszat 1981: 346-347), who once they had power in their hands had no clear idea what to do with it apart from fighting their perceived enemies such as the bolshevists and the Jews. This structural uncertainty allowed Hitler to place himself above all the infighting and resultant conflict between the various segments and warring factions of the new government, and to develop a wide ranging sphere of autonomy. He makes it clear that Hitler did not necessarily use this autonomy in a consistent and logical manner, but more often than not in a rather piecemeal, haphazard and incoherent manner.

Broszat does not ignore Hitler's ideological obsessions, but the way in which he approaches it differs from that of the intentionalist school. While taking cognisance of these ideological intentions, he places it within the framework of the functional pressures that existed between the various, and often competing, components of the governmental 'system' in all matters regarding state control and policy planning. His views undermine the reasoning that a planned and systematic pursuit of clearly defined objectives served as a bases for all governmental activity in the Third Reich (Broszat 1981: 10-11). According to the structuralist viewpoint Hitler functioned more as a sanction for pressures originating from the different forces at work within the regime, rather than functioning as an originator of policy. The symbolic authority of the *Führer* was of greater importance than the direct will of Hitler as person. The *Führer's* *Weltanschauung* had little to do with the daily running of the country; it served more as long term goals, although it became more important in later years as the other ideals of the Party proved to be illusionary. The structuralists, as exemplified by Broszat, therefore accords an important role to Hitler in terms of the directing of events in Germany, but in a less direct and personal manner than seen by the 'intentionalists'.

The most radical proponent of the 'structuralist' arguments and their implications is Hans Mommsen who produced a number of important works on the topic of Hitler's position in the Third Reich. According to Mommsen the few and very vague ideological obsessions that Hitler adhered to were not close to being enough to form the basis for rational decision-making within a governmental framework (Mommsen 1991: 167-168) . In his opinion

> Hitler remained first and foremost a propagandist, with an eye to the *presentation* of an image and the exploitation of the opportune moment. His ideological statements ought therefore to be seen more as propaganda than as 'firm statements of intent' (quoted in Kershaw 1993: 66).

Mommsen points to domestic policy, foreign policy and even the 'Final Solution' as examples of policy actions that cannot be sufficiently explained as the result of careful calculation based on an attempt to implement Hitler's

ideological intentions (Mommsen 1991: 171). Two issues are of central concern for Mommsen in this regard:

- The absence of clear planning and direction from Hitler; and
- the complicity of the German elite in policy making within the Nazi government (Mommsen 1991: 182).

Mommsen sees within these two factors the reasons for the collapse of ordered government into a system that generated by its very nature disintegratory impulses. He stated it as follows:

> Hitler's role as a driving force, which with the same inner compulsion drove on to self-destruction, should not be underestimated. On the other hand, it must also be recognised that the Dictator was only the extreme exponent of a chain of antihumanitarian impulses set free by the lapse of all institutional, legal, and moral barriers, and, once set in motion, regenerating themselves in magnified form (Mommsen 1991: 187).

Since Hitler was not the only protagonist of these radical policies, it is necessary to also pay careful attention to the role and complicity of the elites that helped Hitler to power and sustained him in that power. It is therefore argued that the study of the Third Reich cannot be reduced to a mere focus on Hitler, but that the emphasis must rather be on trying to understand the conditions and structures that allowed such a barbarous system to thrive in a civilised and industrial society like Germany.

The 'structuralist' viewpoint however appears to have some weaknesses. It might have a point concerning domestic policy where it appears as though Hitler had very little interest in the day to day running of the state. However well this point may be argued, it is a completely different matter when we look as matters such as foreign affairs and anti-Semitism, and the policy that resulted in these two areas. Here Hitler, in his personal capacity, appears to have dominated proceedings totally. Another weakness is the argument that all the internal chaos and the self-destructive dynamic within Nazi Germany,

something the 'structuralists' focused on, did not precipitate the collapse of the Third Reich, but that it was only the combined weight of the Allied armies that could eventually destroy the Nazi system after seven years of all-out war. A final question that also seems to undermine the 'structuralism' argument is what would the course of the German government have been without Hitler at its helm, for it focuses the mind on the importance of Hitler rather than de-emphasising his role in the whole of the Nazi government. The 'structuralists', it must be noted, do not however totally ignore Hitler's importance. They only seek to place this important role of his within the context of various additional pressures present in the governmental system. They state that the Third Reich was so inherently complex in nature, that it is impossible to solely focus on Hitler's personality and ideology, without studying him in his functional role within a multi-dimensional system of rule. This argument, as basic premise of the 'structuralist' approach, cannot easily be ignored (Kershaw 1993: 67-68).

5.3 The organisation of Germany under Nazi control

The organisational basis of the Nazi movement was already largely established by the time they formally took over power in 1933. Even before this assumption of state power it already encompassed many distinct and competing institutional and organisational structures. Chief amongst these was of course the NSDAP or Nazi Party for short, and its related organisations like the SA, SS, Hitler Youth, Labour Front, National Socialist Physicians' League and many more. Continual clashes were the order of the day for each of these organisations sought to grow and to increase their influence. The conflict between the Party and the SA, as well as those between the SA and the SS is a well documented historical fact (see Bullock 1952; Bracher 1969). Even within the various structures themselves this conflict and clashes of interests and aspirations were an everyday occurrence. The conflict between the hierarchically arranged top structure of the SA and the cliquish, gang-like character of the lower units which resulted in continuous friction within the SA itself, is a good example of this (Broszat 1981: 35). When Hitler took up his position as leader of the German nation this organisational structure with all its

internal deficiencies, was carried over from the Nazi movement and was imposed on the German state institutions. Hitler, as the pinnacle of the centralised structure of the Third Reich, presided over this whole system from the day of its conception as the centre of decision-making. He was however never able to establish a single, and completely integrated hierarchy of command as was the case in Stalinist Russia (Curtis 1979: 53).

After Hitler took over the leadership of the Nazi Party in 1921 he started an immediate reorganisation and expansion of the party's bureaucratic structure (for an authoritative account of the entire reorganisation process as well as the eventual structural organisation of the Nazi regime, see Bracher 1969, especially pp.159-342). By 1928, after the initial slump in fortune that resulted from the Munich Putsch, the reorganisation started to bear fruit. At this time the party had already established a core organisation throughout the whole of Germany, for Hitler's vision was concerned with the whole of Germany and not just local Bavarian politics. This nation-wide structural base that the party possessed stood them in good stead when the economic shock of the Great Depression shook Germany in 1929. The resultant economic collapse caused an intensification in the domestic political conflict; something the Nazis were prepared for. Hitler now stood at the head of a political organisation that was ready to mount a campaign to seize the highest power in Germany. The years 1929-1932 were characterised by a number of national elections and referendums. During all the accompanying election campaigns the Nazis proved themselves to be an effective nation-wide political party in that they were successful in marshalling and mobilising mass support in all regions of Germany.

Upon assumption of the office of Chancellor in 1933, Hitler made it clear that his real task only started now. In July 1933 he made the following statement to the SA:

> We have the power. Today nobody can offer us any resistance. But now we must educate German man for this new state. A gigantic project lies ahead (Fest 1974: 417).

Hitler started using his new legal power to organise the whole of German society along the lines of the Nazi Party. Hitler wanted a highly centralised system with him at the pinnacle. From this position he envisaged the total control of government and society. The Nazi state was, first of all, a dictatorship based on the personal power of Adolf Hitler. When Hitler was designated *Führer* and Reich Chancellor in August 1934, his charismatic base of authority was simply transferred to the state. Ernst Huber, as one of the foremost constitutional theorists of Nazi Germany, stated that the office of the *Führer* "has grown out of the movement into the Reich." He defined Hitler's position in terms of "*Führer* power", stating that all public political power came from the *Führer*. He was the embodiment of the nation's will and his power was therefore total, unlimited and free (Spielvogel 1992: 82-83). Hitler, at first, justified his authoritarian actions, stating that they were legal within the framework of the Weimar constitution's grant of emergency powers to the Chancellor. He used these emergency powers to formulate a number of decrees in February 1933 by means of which he severely curtailed and mostly eliminated all civil liberties. In March came the 'Enabling act' by which all legislative authority was transferred from the Reichstag to the executive authority under Hitler. In like vein the division of power in, as well as the federal system of Germany was gradually destroyed and replaced by a centralised system of power under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. All other political parties were outlawed and political opponents were simply arrested by the secret police and sent to detention camp from where few of them returned (Schoenbaum 1966: 202-205). In terms of the actual ruling of Germany attention also had to be given to the functional relationship between the Nazi Party and the state.

5.3.1 The Party vs. the State

The fundamental political problem that had to be addressed after the Nazi take-over was whether the party would dominate the state or the state the party. This dualism was never really settled simply because of the position that

Hitler occupied. Hitler's demand for loyalty and his own method of governing created numerous party and state offices that competed for power, creating constant friction and conflict as well as administrative chaos. Within government structures an alliance was forged with bureaucrats, especially with the conservative elite, who continued to administer the country under Nazi direction. The major organ for this administration at national level was the cabinet, composed of Reich ministries of state. These offices were mostly staffed by professional bureaucrats under ministers of a generally high quality. After the Nazi take over of power in 1933 there were only two Nazi ministers in the cabinet, Wilhelm Frick, minister of the interior, and Hermann Göring, minister without portfolio. All the other ministries such as Defence, Finance, Foreign Affairs and Labour, were all held by non-Nazis. By 1935 the ranks of the Nazis had grown by three with the addition of Goebbels as minister of propaganda, Walter Darre as minister of agriculture, and Hans Kerrl as Reich minister for ecclesiastical affairs. The ministers continued to run their departments much in the same manner as was the practice before the Nazi take over. But Hitler made a significant change to the overall functioning of the whole administrative process. Hitler did not like the bureaucratic process nor the daily routine of administrative responsibility. He therefore started to eliminate this day to day routine of government. Fewer and fewer cabinet meetings were held, the last taking place in February 1938 (Spielvogel 1992: 85-86).

Hitler's withdrawal from the day to day running of government left a political vacuum at the head of government that was filled (or supposed to be filled) by the Reich Chancellery under its state secretary, Heinrich Lammers. He brought ministerial business to Hitler, who increasingly did not bother to stay in touch with his ministers. Collegial and collaborative government was soon replaced by a system of separate ministries carrying on business as best they could.

It was not long before the power of the Reich Chancellery was challenged and undermined. The Presidential Chancellery under Otto Meissner and the Party Chancellery of Rudolf Hess, the Führer's deputy, later passing to the control of

Martin Bormann, all competed for power (Broszat 1981: 314). Hitler further undermined the Reich ministries by appointing special deputies who operated independently only responsible to Hitler himself. These deputies could arbitrarily take over certain functions of the government departments and could themselves issue administrative decrees. Hitler felt that such special grants of authority would cut through bureaucratic delays and expedite the accomplishment of a given task, but it also undermined the regular state agencies and created a lot of conflict over proper spheres of authority.

Duplication of functions was another tendency within this tussle between party and state. The Foreign Ministry is a good case in point. This department stood under the control of the conservative Konstantin Freiherr von Neurath, but he never had full control. He faced competition from both Alfred Rosenberg as director of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Nazi Party and Joachim von Ribbentrop's own foreign affairs bureau. It was only in 1938 that Hitler decided in favour of Von Ribbentrop when he dismissed Von Neurath along with Generals Von Blomberg and Von Fritsch (Snyder 1976: 247). In most cases of duplication there was no such clear cut decision from Hitler to clear up the chaos created by the duplication.

Hitler realised the importance of the government bureaucracy in the effective ruling of the government. Since his goals included economic recovery and military rearmament, he was careful not to weaken the bureaucratic structure of state. Consequently, after an initial purge of Jews and Communists in April 1933, there was no major replacement of civil service personnel by party faithful. The civil service continued to follow its own legal and administrative rules. Hitler however, as we saw, countered their independence by creating Special Reich Authorities which gave special executive authority to party leaders. In so doing Hitler (knowingly or unknowingly) created a great degree of 'administrative anarchy' within Germany which enabled him to stay in the background and to play the role of final arbiter when conflict arouse.

When regarding the overall system, the Nazi propaganda put forward the notion that the Third Reich was an efficient totalitarian dictatorship superior to liberal democracy. There were even some in the West who believed this propaganda. The true fact of the matter was as we have seen quite different. Nazi Germany was never free of personal and institutional conflict producing a system of near authoritarian anarchy. Hitler's position in all this was that he remained in the background and almost refused to get involved in resultant conflicts. The cause of this state of affairs and the impact it had on domestic and foreign affairs brings us back to the 'structuralist' versus the 'intentionalist' debate. The structuralists state that Hitler was a weak dictator in that his dislike for making decisions created this chaos and undermined his own authority. They believe that his more radical decisions such as the extermination of the Jews, were not clearly ideologically motivated decisions, but were rather ad hoc responses to events. The greater the institutional anarchy, the more extreme were the responses. The intentionalists on the other hand argue that Hitler, as the Master of the Third Reich, intentionally created this administrative chaos. He saw himself as a person with an artists temperament and disliked administrative routine. Hitler relied on 'inspiration' and 'will' which resulted in him merely expressing his expectations to his associates, giving rise to the so-called '*Führer* order'. The intentionalists state that Hitler applied the principle of 'divide and rule' within the party and in the relationship between the party and the state. They argue that through this Hitler ensured that he always remained the only true source of power. They also emphasise that Hitler was a believer in Darwinian struggle (Laver 1995: 27). The Third Reich was an institutional jungle in which only the ruthless and cunning survived and where the weak fell. Whatever the approach adopted, it remains that the transformation of the pre-Nazi bureaucracy to the Nazi controlled system of dualism between the party and state, had a profound impact on day to day governing of Germany.

This transformation of Germany under the Nazis did not however stop at government level , but permeated every level and corner of society. All societal activity had to be brought under the organisational structure of the new system. The old had to make way for the new. A whole network of new

associations was established: cultural organisations, youth organisations, athletics organisations, philanthropic associations, book clubs, trade unions, educational associations and all forms of professional organisations. All sectors of society were infiltrated by Nazi organisation. They took over total control of the media and the educational system. Through the youth organisations they penetrated even the family and started shifting the loyalty of children to the party, the state and ultimately to the *Führer.* Home life was redirected by means of the state organised leisure activities (Schoenbaum 1966: 193). The result was that no independent source of information or opinions was left in Germany; every facet of life was coloured with the black, red and white of Nazi thinking.

This huge behemoth of total control that swept through Germany after the Nazi assumption of power sometimes might appear to consist of a dichotomy between overt order and unbridled chaos. This apparent contradiction can largely be explained by considering the structure of the Nazi movement as a whole and then more specifically the role of the *Führer* within this hierarchy of order. For this we can refer back to Hannah Arendt's analysis of the structure of totalitarian movements (see chapter 3) and consider how this can be applied to the case of Nazi Germany and to the role of Adolf Hitler.

5.3.2 The structure of the Nazi movement

The way in which the Nazi movement was structured holds a lot of the answers to questions about the internal functioning of a system that appears to be full of contradictions. An understanding of this structuring will reveal the central role of the leader figure in holding together the whole system. It should be clearly stated that an attempt to understand the events unfolding in the Third Reich should not depend solely on an understanding of Adolf Hitler, but must be based also on an understanding of the role and function that he had to fulfil within the structure of the Nazi totalitarian system as a whole. It is with this view as starting point that we can now turn to Hannah Arendt' s analysis of totalitarian organisation and apply it directly to Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler.

In chapter 3 reference was made to Arendt's identification of certain distinct categories that can be found in totalitarian movements. She made mention of (a) sympathisers, (b) members, (c) elite formations, (d) inner circle, and (e) the leader. These categories find direct application in the Third Reich. The Nazi form of totalitarianism started out as a mass organisation which was only gradually dominated by elite formations. It is therefore important to pay special attention to the role of the masses. The Nazi movement was surrounded by a great cloud of sympathisers in various front organisations. Then there was also the party membership that was much smaller in number than the sympathisers. This category can include members of the *Hitler Jugend* although in the last years of the war some of them should more properly be classified as part of the elite formations. The elite formations of the Nazi Party included amongst others the SS and the Gestapo. Next was the inner circle around Hitler. It was never formally structured but consisted of a loose array of people that carried Hitler's trust. They included Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, Rudolf Hess and Martin Bormann. The leader in the case of Nazi Germany referred of course to Adolf Hitler, the *Führer* of the Third Reich. Although it is tempting to analyse the above mentioned categories in a hierarchical manner it must be remembered that the *Führer* had absolute sovereignty apart from the structure of the movement; put in another way, his authority was not dependent on the hierarchy of the movement for this would have caused it to act as a restriction on his power that was supposed to be total.

The sympathisers can be seen as people who were vaguely sympathetic to at least some aspect of the Nazi movement. They were the great masses upon whom was counted during the elections of the early thirties but who were considered to be to fluctuating in their commitment for full membership. This huge body of people was seen by the Nazi leadership not only as a reservoir from which to draw future party members, but also as a decisive force in itself for the movement. It was Hitler himself who asserted that the movement should divide the masses which have been won over through propaganda into

two distinct categories, sympathisers and members. Hitler stated that most people are too cowardly and lazy for anything more than theoretical insight, and that only a small minority would want to fight for their convictions (Hitler 1939: 250). He therefore advanced the policy of constantly enlarging the ranks of the sympathisers while at the same time keeping the numbers of the party members limited. This principle was strictly adhered to once in power. Of the 7 million members of the Hitler youth only 50 000 were accepted as party members in 1937 (Broszat 1981: 201). The notion of a minority of party members surrounded by a majority of sympathisers came to be a reality in the Third Reich. The eventual function of the sympathisers must not be underestimated, for they were no less essential to the functioning of the movement than the actual membership itself.

In chapter 3 reference was made to a 'hierarchy of contempt' and a 'graduation of cynicism'. It is specifically with regards to the sympathisers that we can return to these two concepts for it is essential that they be understood if a person wants to gain any understanding as to the functioning and reasoning behind the organisational structure of the Nazi movement as well as the role of Hitler within this system. The sympathisers formed a protective wall around the party members. They separated the party members from the reality of the outside world and also provided them with a link to the 'normality' of the outside world. For the party member the sympathiser became the norm for the outside world. In this line the sympathiser thus protected the member from the reality outside of the members fanatical views. To the party member his views did not appear to far removed from reality for he compared it to that of the sympathiser. The sympathisers thus not only isolated the members but offered them a semblance of outside normalcy which helped to ward off the impact of the true reality more effectively than mere indoctrination. The sympathisers also served to strengthen the party members in their convictions. Arendt states it as follows:

> It is the difference between his own and the fellow-traveller's [sympathiser] attitudes which confirms a Nazi ... in his belief in the fictitious explanation of the world, for the fellow-traveller has the same convictions, after all, albeit in a

more 'normal', *i.e.*, less fanatic, more confused form; so that to the party
member it appears that anyone whom the movement has not expressly
singled out as an enemy (a Jew, ... ect.) is on his side, that the world is full of
secret allies who merely cannot, as yet, summon up the necessary strength
of mind and character to draw the logical conclusions from their own
convictions (Arendt 1973: 366).

The member of the Nazi Part looked down on the sympathiser with a measure
of contempt because of their lack of resolve as well fact that they were not as
informed as to the totality of the Nazi program of action as the member was.
The Nazi sympathisers appeared for all intents and purposes to still be part of
the non-Nazi world, but they were the vehicle that was used by the Nazi
movement to spread their fantastic lies in a milder and more generally
accepted form, thus slowly saturating the whole atmosphere in Germany with a
Nazi 'reality' which could later hardly be distinguished from normal political
reactions or opinions. These sympathisers not only influenced the members'
views of the outside world, but also clouded the outside world's opinion on the
true nature of the movement, for the sympathisers surrounded the whole Nazi
movement with a cloud of normality and respectability.

This dual function of being a separation from reality and forming a link to
perceived normality was repeated on the other levels of the Nazi movement.
As the members were shielded by the sympathisers, so the members provided
the same manner of protection to the elite members of the movement. To the
party member the sympathiser was a normal German citizen who has merely
adopted some aspects of the Nazi creed. The elite members on the other hand
also viewed the ordinary party member as still belonging mostly to the outside
world. They were seen as people who's total life were not yet aligned to, and
geared for, the greater goals of the Nazi Party, even though they might in a
crisis, choose to go the Nazi way. The member of the SS for example, wholly
identified with the movement and had no private life nor profession apart from
it. To them the normal outside world was represented by the ordinary party
members. This inherent characteristic of the Nazi movement led to what is
called a graduated hierarchy of militancy by Hannah Arendt (1973: 367). In this
hierarchy each rank represented the higher rank's image of the non-Nazi world

on the outside because it is less militant and not so totally organised. This helped to blunt the initial impact of that terrifying totalitarian dichotomy namely that the whole world is divided into basically two camps, the one being encapsulated in the Nazi movement and the other in the rest of the world; two camps the must fight totally until only one survives. This hierarchy shielded its members, of ever being fully confronted by the outside world and the true hostility that this dichotomy entails. Most Nazis were so well shielded from the outside world that they never fully realised and consistently underestimated the tremendous risks entailed in the policies they advanced.

Another facet that this type of organisation added to the Nazi movement is the fact that it allowed the movement to remain in a constant state of flux. This was achieved because the structure allowed them to regularly insert new layers and define new degrees of militancy. When the SA was formed in 1922 it was the first Nazi organisation which was supposed to be more militant than the party itself. In 1926 the SS was founded as elite branch of the SA. Later the SS was separated from the SA and placed under the control of Himmler. He continued this process within the SS, creating one level after the other, each more militant than it's predecessor. First came the Shock Troops, then the Death head formations above them (later merged in the Armed SS (*Waffen-SS*)). Finally came the Security Service and the Office for Questions of Race and Resettlement (Snyder 1976: 281, 329-330). Amongst each of these new layers there existed the same type of relationship as existed between the party member and the ordinary sympathiser. These elite formations were more sharply separated from the outside world than any other group. The Nazis realised very early on the connection between total militancy and total separation from normality. It was because of this realisation that an SA member was never assigned to duty in his home community, and the SS were so mobile and so frequently exchanged so that they would not get used to any one place in the ordinary world. One of the specific functions of especially the SS was to serve as a reminder to the ordinary party member that he/she has left the ordinary world in which murder is outlawed and that they will be held jointly accountable for the crimes of the elite. As Hitler openly and

systematically claimed responsibility for all crimes he left no doubt that they were committed not for his own good or that of the elite, but for the ultimate good of the movement (and later Germany) itself. The elite can further also be characterised as having acted is some sense like a secret society. The important factor here was something called 'degrees of initiation' (Arendt 1973: 376). Total obedience was expected from the elite. This obedience was based on an allegiance to Hitler personally as being the pinnacle of the 'initiated'. This allegiance was founded on a 'mental picture' of Hitler that was often very mysterious and incomplete, usually the result of propaganda and careful indoctrination or political education at the *Ordensburgen*, the Nazi leadership training schools for the SS. The whole life of a SS member was regulated according to secrets and sometimes clearly fictitious assumptions that created the aura of him being part of a select or initiated group of people. This SS member, not wanting to loose this, then desires to protect this initiated core of the movement, specifically Hitler, from the half-initiated and from the hostile outside world.

At the top of this Nazi organism with its progressive militancy, cynicism, levels of initiation, and clouded perceptions of reality, sat the *Führer*, Adolf Hitler. He stood right at the centre of the movement, being someone without whom this whole elaborate structure would not be able to function. The reason being that the whole elaborate and even chaotic and conflicting structure of the movement, had the sole purpose of communicating the will of Hitler down to all the ranks and eventually to the whole of the country. Hitler's supreme task was the same as that between the different ranks of the movement, but his was of even greater importance for he had to act as the shield or defence against the outside world for the whole of the movement and not just for one layer of the movement. At the same time he was also the link that connected the whole movement to 'normality' or the 'outside world'. It is because of this vital function that total responsibility for the whole of the system was entrusted to him. The indispensable nature of his dual function along with this total responsibility that went with it, served as part of the foundation of the *Führerprinzip* in Germany. One of the most difficult aspects to comprehend concerning Hitler's leadership

responsibility is how he was able to at the same time openly assume total responsibility for all the crimes committed by the elite formations like the SS while still being able to count on the whole hearted and honest support and respectability of the most naïve sympathiser. It must however be noted that Hitler tried to appear moderate to the outside world while trying to conceal his role of driving the movement forward at any price. Laver (1995: 68) quotes Admiral Erich Raeder in this regard:

> When information or rumours arose about radical measures of the Party and the Gestapo, one could come to the conclusion by the conduct of the *Führer* that such measures were not ordered by the *Führer* himself.... In the course of future years, I gradually came to the conclusion that the *Führer* himself always leaned toward the more radical solution without letting on outwardly.

While not always wanting to appear outwardly too radical, it still remained a fact that when responsibility had to be taken, Hitler always did so. The purge of June 1934 resulting in the so-called 'Night of the Long Knives' is a good example. The key to understanding this apparently complex situation is to be found in a combination of Hitler's charismatic leadership style along with the effective propaganda that went with it[2], and his above mentioned dual function within the totalitarian hierarchy that made him the absolute *Führer* of Germany. Added to this must be an understanding of Hitler's general views on leadership, for these views did in the end permeate the whole of the Nazi system, and came to be embodied in the so-called *Führerprinzip* or leadership principle.

5.4 The *Führer prinzip*

Alongside Hitler's ideas of Struggle and racial conflict (which will not be individually dealt with in this study), the role of leadership formed the basis of his *Weltanschauung*. The *Führer prinzip* was directly related to the concept of the *völkisch* state. To win the overall racial struggle, Germany must be moulded into a *völkisch* community. This community took priority over the

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[2] see chapter 4

individual and citizenship of this community would be based on blood. The result would be the *Volksstaat* (racially based state) whose responsibility would be the advancement of the Aryan race (Baynes 1942: 871-872). The goals of this community could not be realised through a system of majority rule, for this system was based on a principle of equality amongst individuals. Hitler believed not only in the inequality of the races, but also in the inequality of the individual. He stated:

> I must evaluate people differently on the basis of the race they belong to, and the same applies to the individual men within a national community (Baynes 1942: 783).

Even within the Aryan racial community, superior individuals would emerge from the struggles of daily life.

> This sifting according to capacity and ability cannot be undertaken mechanically; it is a task which the struggle of daily life unceasingly performs (Hitler 1939: 443).

The result of this 'natural selection' would be the emergence of the leaders of the racial state - the Nazi elite:

> A philosophy of life which endeavors to reject the domestic mass idea and give this earth to the best people - that is, the highest humanity - must logically obey the same aristocratic principles within this people and make sure that the leadership and the highest influence in this people fall to the best minds (Hitler 1939: 443).

In Hitler's view, then, the best people would lead this *Volksstaat*, and standing at the very top would be the *Führer*, the supreme leader who would embody and actualise the will of the *Volk*. This leader alone would possess the 'right' to command. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler stated:

> From the smallest community cell to the highest leadership of the entire Reich, the state must have the personality principle anchored in its organization. There must be no majority decisions, but only responsible

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> persons, and the word "council" must be restored to its original meaning. Surely every man will have advisers by his side, but the decisions will be made by one man. ... ; responsibility... can and may be borne by only one man, and therefore only he alone may possess the authority and right to command (Hitler 1939: 449-450).

Hitler lost no time in trying to actualise these statements of his after he came to power in 1933. He set about establishing a *Volksstaat* with himself as absolute ruler. In a speech to the Hitler Youth on September 2, 1933, he expounded on the continuity of this vision:

> We have to learn our lesson; one will must dominate us, we must form a single unity; one discipline must weld us together; one obedience, one subordination must fill us all, for above us stands the nation (Baynes 1942: 538).

The German youth responded to this statement with the chant of "*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer.*" Gradually through the course of Hitler's reign from 1933 to 1945 this idea was translated into reality, at least as far as the majority of Germany was concerned.

Nazi Germany cannot thus be analysed without paying careful attention to the role of its *Führer* and the direct nature of the impact he had on the Third Reich. Armed with a thorough understanding of the organisational nature of the Third Reich as well as the ideas underlying the *Führer prinzip*, it is necessary for a complete evaluation of the role and function of Adolf Hitler as leader of the Third Reich, that we return to the structuralist/intentionalist debate and try to find answers to the question stated before as to whether Hitler was a 'weak dictator' or the absolute 'master of the Reich'.

5.5 Hitler: 'Weak dictator' or 'Master of the Third Reich'?

An evaluation of Hitler's power needs to address the basic question raised by both the intentionalist and structuralist schools of thought, that is, whether Hitler is to be seen as a 'weak' leader that was swept along by circumstances

beyond his direct control or as a masterful controller of every aspect relating to rule and power in the Third Reich. This examination must work from a foundation of what potentially, might compromise his 'strength' and 'weakness' within the overall power constellation of Nazi Germany. Kershaw (1993: 68) identifies at least three possible categories of weaknesses that will serve us as guidelines in an assessment of Hitler's rule and the internal power structure of the Third Reich:

- An argument can be made that Hitler was weak in that he regularly shied back from making a decision. It can be stated that he was forced to do so in order to stay out of factional politics so as to protect his image and prestige form being tarnished by being associated to wrong decisions or unpopular actions. If this can be proved it would mean that the chaotic centrifugal tendencies in the Third Reich were part of the inherent 'structure' of the overall system and not mearly the consequence of Hitler's ideological inclinations, or the result of a 'divide and rule' strategy.
- Hitler could be regarded as 'weak' if it could be shown that his decisions were ignored, watered-down, or not implemented as he ordered it by his subordinates.
- It might be stated that Hitler was 'weak' in that his scope for possible action, was predetermined or limited by factors outside his control but inherent to the 'system', such as the demands of the economy or fear for social unrest.

There is no fundamental disagreement amongst social scientists over the fact that Nazi Germany was chaotic in structure (see Broszat 1981: 294-312; Spielvogel 1992: 90-101). The fragmentation and lack of co-ordination in internal administration, as well as the overlapping, conflicting and contradictory spheres of authority all point to a chaotic situation. The real question is, what significance should be attached to this 'chaos'?

The intentionalists sees in this chaotic situation a reflection of a calculated policy of 'divide and rule' practised by Hitler, pointing to his pivotal role and complete control of events in the Third Reich. The structuralist interpretation of this 'chaos' is that it was the inevitable result of Hitler's charismatic style of leadership, with its accompanying rejection of the institutional and bureaucratic norms of 'rational' government in favour of dependence on personal loyalty as basis of authority. This interpretation emphasises the lack of efficiency, fragmentation of decision-making, absence of clear and 'rational' medium term policies, and a diminishing sense of reality - all resulting in an inherently unstable political system.

The claim of an active 'divide and rule' strategy on the side of Hitler was first made by his former press chief, Otto Dietrich. The claim was that Hitler did this by deliberately blurring lines of command, and by creating a duplication or even triplication of an office. An example that is usually cited is how Hitler broke up the unified control over the Party's organisation that was so meticulously built up by Gregor Strasser. Following Strasser's resignation in December 1932, Hitler himself took over the formal leadership of the Party's 'Political Organisation'. He also strengthened the position of the *Gauleiters* at the expense of the Reich Leadership, and divided power at the centre between Robert Ley (who took over Strasser's old title of 'Reich Organisation Leader' but with less power), and Rudolf Hess, who was given the title of 'Deputy *Führer*' with the right to decide in Hitler's name all questions relating to Party leadership (Shirer 1960: 206-208). Whether this can serve as an illustration of a 'divide and rule' strategy is debatable. Hitler, in fact, promoted the establishment of some huge power bases. Robert Ley was give control over the huge Labour Front to add to his position of Reich Organisation Leader. Even this mini-empire was insignificant compared to those under the control people like Göring, Himmler and Bormann. The greatest threat to Hitler in the early phase of his rule, Ernst Röhm and the SA leadership, was eliminated only after Hitler had bowed to intense pressure and prodding from the army along with Himmler and Göring. It, however, did appear that Hitler was deadset against any attempt to impose even the slightest institutional or legal restriction

upon his authority. His authority had to be totally unobstructed, theoretically absolute, and wholly contained within his own person. Hans Frank, head of the Nazi Lawyers Association declared in 1938 that: "Constitutional Law in the Third Reich is the legal formulation of the historic will of the *Führer*, but the historic will of the *Führer* is not the fulfilment of the legal preconditions for his activity" (quoted in Kershaw 1993: 71). Hitler therefore did not place much trust in forms of institutional loyalty. For him only extreme forms of personal attachment could be seen as a sufficient basis for loyalty. He thus had a suspicious view of everyone who related to him out of mere institutional obligation which included army officers, cabinet members as well as the normal government bureaucrats, and judges.

Hitler's inherent distrustful nature and his consequent reliance on personal loyalty further entrenched the principle of charismatic authority within a totalitarian system. The bonds of personal loyalty became the guiding principle of government and administration. Hitler appears to have had no inherent distrust of those people who derived their power from him, no matter how strong they became. So long as they were loyal and submitted to his person he trusted them. The sincerity of this trust is reflected by Hitler's shock at the betrayal of Himmler (his 'loyal Heinrich') during the final days of the war in 1945 (see Trevor-Roper 1972: 202). This loyalty principle was transferred from the Party to the governing of the whole Reich after 1933. It did not however replace the normal bureaucracy, but was rather superimposed on it which resulted in a situation where free reign was given to those who had Hitler's trust. Their avoidance of administrative restraints resulted in energies that were inevitably destructive of the rational government order (Layton 1992: 64-65).

Hitler's preoccupation with social Darwinian notions led him to allow rivals to contend with one another on various issues and then he would side with the party that steps out as victor. As mentioned, he also displayed the tendency to resort to the creation of new agencies when ever a crisis arose. These agencies had no attachment to the existing institutional arrangements and had to operate solely within the confines of the 'will of the *Führer*. This all

prevented the establishment and setting of clear and rational policy priorities which in turn precipitated a gradual disintegration of central government in to a amalgamation of competing and uncoordinated government ministries, party offices, and hybrid agencies all claiming to interpret the *Führer*'s will. The one certainty that developed out of this chaos was the growth in the autonomy of the *Führer*. As Hitler became increasingly isolated from any co-operative involvement in government he became subject to growing delusions of grandeur and a diminishing sense of reality (see Broszat 1981: 308-323). This impacted greatly on his dual function of linking the movement to the outside world as well as protecting the movement from the impact thereof. The greater the delusion in Hitler, the greater was the myth within which the whole of Nazi Germany lived, and the greater the potential for chaos in the running of the country. This chaotic situation was further exacerbated by Hitler's personal style of non-bureaucratic and idiosyncratic leadership.

> His eccentric 'working' hours, his aversion to putting anything down on paper, his lengthy absences from Berlin, his inaccessibility even for important ministers, his impatience with the complexities of intricate problems, and his tendency to seize impulsively upon random strands of information or half-baked judgements from cronies and court favourites - all meant that ordered government in the conventional understanding of the term was a complete impossibility (Kershaw 1993: 72).

Hitler certainly was lethargic and uninterested in matters he regarded as trivial and of mere administrative detail, things that were beneath his level of concern. But there does appear to have been at least some calculation behind certain of these actions. Protection of his own position and prestige carried a lot of weight with Hitler. This can explain some of his unwillingness to intervene in problem areas and rather to allow things to develop by themselves hoping for a solution to come forth or at least for the opposition to show themselves. This makes it apparent that Hitler's distance and hesitancy in leadership were not merely components of his specific style of leadership, but must also be seen as essential for his specific type of charismatic authority. He needed to maintain loyalty within the ruling circle as well as the myth of the *Führer*'s infallibility both among the Party elite and the people themselves. He thus had

to live up to this image or myth concerning himself and had to produce greater and greater feats to bind the people ever closer to him so as to prevent notions of disenchantment creeping into the German state. This had a definite impact on Hitler's leadership style. Aloofness, non-interference, 'moderation' in sensitive areas, and a tendency to always side with the strong, can all be ascribed to attempts at maintaining the *Führer* myth. This again underlines for us the fact that totalitarian and charismatic leadership principles both played a prominent role in Hitler's government.

Taking into account all of the above mentioned aspects, and despite clear attempt of the *Führer* to protect his position of authority against any possible limitation, it seems better to leave aside the notion of a systematic 'divide and rule' strategy as main explanation of the governmental chaos in Nazi Germany. Despite this conclusion and the assertion that the chaos in Germany was not necessarily a deliberate creation, we cannot directly conclude that Hitler was a weak dictator. The concept of weakness would have been applicable if it could be shown that Hitler wanted to pursue a specific line of action but was prevented from doing so, or found himself unable to do so. If there were a conflict between Hitler's *intentions* and the *structure* within which he operated then it might have been possible to conclude that Hitler was 'weak' (Kershaw 1993: 68, 74). This does not appear to have been the case. Hitler chose to stay out of the conflicts amongst his underlings, he displayed a disinterest in the legislative process and at times his action seemed to indicate a clear attempt a furthering the governmental chaos rather than resolving. All this certainly does not point to an inherent conflict between intention and structure, which make it difficult to assert that Hitler was a weak leader because of a structural framework within which he operated that placed severe restrictions on him.

The second possible criterion for weakness we identified was whether Hitler's decisions were ignored, watered-down of not implemented by his subordinates to whom he gave the order. It must be recognised that Hitler was often very impulsive and off-hand in the way he gave orders. When Hitler gave his verbal

agreement to a proposal casually presented to him at an opportune moment by one of his subordinates, this was usually viewed as sufficient sanction for this proposal to be seen as a '*Führer* Order' and to be implemented with the full backing of the 'will of the *Führer*'. There were times when this 'informal' way of policy formulation did lead to some embarrassment when it became clear that this order was impractical. These decrees were then not revoked, for that would have implied a mistake on the side of the *Führer*. These decrees were simply ignored with the tacit approval of Hitler. It would however be wrong to take these few 'mistakes' as sufficient prove that Hitler's orders were of little consequence to events in the Nazi state, for in general it can be said that the orders were viewed by his subordinates as unchangeable directives and were strictly adhered to.

Examples can also be found of situations where Hitler had to bow to economic pressure and had some decisions forced upon him (see Peterson 1969: 48 where he refers amongst other to the payment of financial aid to Jewish department stores for economic reasons). These examples can possibly serve as proof for the third criterion of weakness. It would however be wrong to claim that Hitler was a weak dictator on the evidence of a few isolated examples. If one were to argue that there were limits on Hitler's power one must juxtapose any 'limits' with the notion of 'absolute' and 'total' power. Peterson is unable to provide an example of an instance where a policy decision that Hitler regarded as of central importance was blocked or disregarded by any of his subordinates (Peterson 1969: 432). Tim Mason (1971) also tried to show that Hitler was limited and inhibited by the economic realities in Germany.

Mason in his study on Hitler's relationship with the German working class, tried to argue that Hitler was restricted by the inherent structural tension in the Nazi economy, especially in the vital years between 1936 and 1941. This again addresses our third criteria for possible weakness. He argued that Hitler, being afraid of working-class unrest, was very sensitive towards discontent among workers. Mason states that Hitler became increasingly apathetic and indecisive

in the face of growing class antagonism, something which 'strength of will' alone could not overcome. This argument did not find much favour and drew some serious criticism from many quarters. The intentions of the regime simply cannot be underplayed. One needs rather to see structure and intentions as part of the same analysis and not necessarily as mutually exclusive determining factors in the Third Reich.

It seems clear that Hitler's intentions and the socio-economic 'structural determinants' were not in direct conflict with one another, but rather combined to produce a dynamic that pulled in the same direction, and made Nazi Germany a distinct and unique occurrence. We therefore need to look at the synthesis of the initial assertion of 'intention' and the antithesis thereto namely 'structure'. We cannot separate 'intentions' from the impersonal conditions which shaped the framework within which these intentions became actualised. It is important to note however that 'intentions' might be swept along by circumstances which it created that then gained a momentum of its own. A good example of this is cited in Kershaw (1993: 78) of how Hitler and the Nazi leadership unquestionably wanted to wage war for they saw this as the only solution to Germany's problems. As the momentum behind the drive to war started to build up it started to develop a shape and timeframe that were not exactly as Hitler envisaged it. The decision in 1935 to rearm Germany as *the* national priority of the economy, planted a root of tension in the economy between provision for armament production on the one hand and general consumption on the other. This decision fixed Germany on a course that would have been very difficult to withdraw from. Despite attempts to prepare for a long war expected to commence somewhere in the mid-1940's, this was beyond Germany's economic capability. The only war Germany could fight with a realistic chance of winning was a quick and decisive war - a *blitzkrieg* - sooner rather than later. Germany's economic problems deepened considerably between 1937-39. There was very little that Hitler could do except work toward a victory in the war, which he saw as the panacea to the whole of the situation. In September 1939 Hitler got the war he *intended*, but against Britain and not the Soviet Union as his blueprint of events required, and at the

best available but no means ideal point in time. The spectacular victories that Germany won in the first years of the war momentarily detracted from the underlying weaknesses in the German economy. The Nazi leadership were not initially able to fully mobilise the economy and it was only when they had their backs against the wall after 1943 that the economy began to operate more efficiently, but by then it was too late.

Hitler's 'intentions' played a vital role in developments in the Third Reich. They are not however an adequate explanation on their own. The *Führer*'s 'will' was very important and probably the single most important guiding principle in Nazi Germany, but its translation into government policy and the implementation thereof was not solely subject to Hitler himself. The fact that very little of what happened in the Third Reich ran contrary to the *Führer*'s will, at least up to the middle of the war, makes it difficult to call him a weak dictator. On the other hand the implementation of his 'will' is not as straight forward as the intentionalist school would have it. We can conclude with the assertion that if Hitler was not a 'weak dictator', he certainly was also not the omnipotent 'master of the Third Reich'.

5.6 Conclusion

The exact nature of Hitler's role and function as leader of the Nazi state has been the source of considerable debate amongst social scientist for more than five decades. The complex nature of the structural arrangements in Germany coupled with an almost unfathomable personal system of intentions and loyalty around Hitler, make any attempt at clarification difficult. How did Hitler fit into the behemoth of Nazism, was he the driving force behind every action and impulse thereof, or was he merely one of the actors, be it an important one, in a system wrought by inherent tensions, being driven by an unstoppable and unchangeable momentum? This difference of interpretation is clearly encapsulated in the two opposing schools of thought we call 'intentionalism' and 'structuralism'.

The basic question that both the intentionalist and the structuralist asks is whether Hitler dominated the structure or whether it so limited him and guided his actions that it can be said that the structure of the Nazi state dominated Hitler. It is apparent from the way in which the whole Nazi movement was structured and the way it functioned that the state could not operate without Hitler, for he served as the link between the whole of the Nazi structure and the outside world, while also acting as the defence of the system against an unfriendly world. This was his supreme task, something without which the system would not have been viable. This dual function along with the total responsibility that went with it, served as the foundation of the *Führerprinzip* which, seen in the light of Hitler's charismatic base of authority, made him, as a person, indispensable to the whole of the Nazi system.

While acknowledging the *Führer*'s indispensability to the system, this does not necessarily imply that he acted with impunity to certain structural constraints. It has been shown that Hitler was limited in to a certain extent by amongst others the economic situation in Germany before and during the war. These constraints did not however change the focus of his intentions greatly, but it did caused modifications to his action plan for the attainment of these aims. 'Intention' and 'structure' are therefore both essential elements of an explanation of the Third Reich, and need synthesis rather than to be set in opposition to each other. Hitler's intentions seem above all important in shaping a climate in which the unleashed dynamic, shaped by the structure of the Nazi system, turned them into a self-fulfilling prophecy. One of Karl Marx's dictums provides a meaningful summation: 'Men do make their own history, but they do not make it as they please, nor under the conditions of their own choosing, but rather under circumstances which they find before them, under given and imposed conditions.'

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

The role and function of Adolf Hitler as leader of the Third Reich has been the subject of serious academic studies almost from the moment he assumed the position of *Führer* of the Nazi movement in 1921. Various explanations have been put forward in an attempt to bring clarity to a system that appeared so inherently chaotic, yet seemed to be so successful in mobilising the German masses in support of the ideological goals of the Nazi leaders. This study addressed these complex issues by focusing on two fundamental and interrelated factors, namely the so-called 'Hitler myth' and the '*Führer Prinzip*'. Though this study can in no way claim to resolve all the questions and ambiguities surrounding the leadership of Hitler, it did identify and clarify the main pillars upon which the rule of Adolf Hitler rested, as being Hitler's charismatically based relationship with the German people, and the totalitarian style of leadership he adopted in the ruling of the German state. All this was done within the context of a distinctly German form of fascism whose mythical core facilitated both these processes.

Fascism is a concept that suffered from a process of inflation and diversification almost from the moment of its inception. More and more phenomena and permutations were gradually included under the concept 'fascism', especially by the opponents thereof, with the result that it started to lose its discriminating and evaluative value. This has reached the point where even amongst serious students of the subject there seems to be a lack of consensus surrounding even the most fundamental aspects of fascism.

This diversification in interpretations of the concept 'fascism', necessitated a relook at the very fundamental aspects thereof, in an attempt to come up with a working definition of the concept for this study; a definition that will identify

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the true essence of fascism, while also helping to elucidate the role that leadership, such as that found in Hitler's rule, plays therein.

It should be made clear that the approach followed in this study was that a definitive genus of 'fascism' can be identified, while making adequate allowance for manifestational differences resulting from certain national and environmental peculiarities. Thus, the defining of fascism provided us with the foundation needed for a more detailed analysis of Nazism. Further, it needs to be made clear that the aim here was only to formulate an *ideal type* of the fascist minimum that will be useful and applicable in the main focus of this study namely an analysis of the role and function of political leadership in Nazi Germany. In this regard the focus was on the identification of a common core of fascist phenomena that could be treated as the definitional minimum of fascism.

Fascism was identified as a political ideology that, as with other political ideologies, possesses a mythic core which embodies the fundamental political myth which mobilises its activists and supporters. This mythic core refers to the inspirational and revolutionary power which the ideology exerted on its supporters, quite apart from its apparent rationality or practicality. Though fascism is clearly not a political religion or revivalist cult, religious connotations were used in the formulation of its central myth, especially in the case of Nazism. With this said, we identified the mythic core of generic fascism as a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism, which implies a mobilising vision of the nation being reborn after a period of perceived decadence brought about by the forces of humanism and liberalism. This movement is thus anti-liberal and depends on mass support, but is elite driven.

When analysing this fascist minimum it became clear that it will preclude the nationalism of dynastic rules or imperial forces that was the norm before the advent of politics inspired by the masses, as well as the liberal nationalism that usually replaces a dynastic ruler with a representative democracy. It thus rejects both absolutism and pluralist representative governments. Fascism therefore tends to favour charismatic forms of politics in which the cohesion

and dynamics of the movement depends almost totally of the leader to inspire loyalty and action among both supporters and the broad public.

A fascist movement might strive for mass appeal, but this movement should in the view of the leadership always be under the direct control of the elite for only they posses the true insight and will-power to bring forth the yet to be realised national community. But it does not end at the creation of the new national community; at no point in the fascist program for the future is there a time when power will be directed from the people to the leadership. Power is to be placed in the hands of those who have risen 'naturally' through the ranks of the organisation that is seen as representing the totality of the nation's energy (in the case of Germany, the Nazi Party). This process of 'natural selection' will result in a leader who will be the absolute embodiment of the general will of the public. In this idealised version of direct democracy the leader will stand as the sole representative of the people to whom he claims to be linked by a metaphysical bond of a common nationhood.

The inherent vagueness of the fascist mythic core makes the guidance of an effective leader with effective leadership tactics vital for the maintenance of a coherent movement. The leader can make use of this vagueness to shape the movement to fit specific environmental conditions in the system to help the movement attain a mass following.

Nazism, as unique manifestation of fascism, fits in well with the definition of fascism we identified. Though it had its own unique cultural tradition that resulted in singular form of ultra-nationalism, it displayed all the elements of the fascist minimum. Some of the unique elements of Nazism that distinguish it from other forms of fascism is its focus on race with the related stress on anti-Semitism, and Hitler's foreign policy aimed at a radical restructuring of Europe; but it was the especially lucid form of leadership cult that developed around the person of Adolf Hitler, in the form of the 'Hitler myth' and the *Führer Prinzip*, that really sets Nazism apart from all other manifestations of fascism. The basis of this leadership cult was the inherent charismatic nature of leadership that follows from the inherent logic of fascist systems coupled

with the totalitarian leadership style Hitler adopted. This combination resulted in the fact that the political leadership in Germany possessed an inherent dynamism that was very complex and heterogeneous in nature and function. The analysis of this leadership demands a clear understanding of the concept leadership itself.

Leadership, despite being a universal characteristic of human interaction, remains one of the most widely observed but least understood phenomena related to the social interactions of mankind. Over time social scientists have produced a host of different definitions for leadership, but they remain only ideal types. Since the aim of this study was not to redefine leadership as such, but rather to analysis the specific style of leadership present in the Third Reich, we defined leadership in this study only in its broadest sense as an interaction between members of a group in which the leaders are agents of change, whose actions effect other people more than other peoples' acts effect them. A distinction can be made between autocratic- and democratic leadership, and as was shown, Hitler's leadership fell in the first category. In dealing with the Third Reich, we were however dealing with a specific form of authoritarian rule, namely totalitarianism along with the specific type of leadership it entails.

As far as totalitarian leadership is concerned, we identified twelve characteristics that served not only as basis for the analysis of Hitler's rule as leader of the Nazi state, but also as a description thereof:

- the impact of the personality of the dictator on the whole of the system;
- the leader stands at the centre of the movement and all action flows from him;
- the leader is separated from the rest of the movement's elite by an inner circle of 'the initiated';
- the life of the leader is shrouded in mystery;
- the position of the leader within the inner circle does not depend on his demagogic or bureaucratic-organisational qualities, but rather on his ability

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to handle inner-party struggles through intrigue and his skill in constantly changing personnel;

- the movement functions according to the single principle that the will of the leader is the sole expression of purpose in the movement. The whole hierarchy of the Party has been established with the goal of speedily communicating the will of the leader to the lower ranks;
- continual struggles, and rivalries characterise the inner circles of the Party, but it has a surprisingly small impact on the leader, for there exists the firm conviction in the inner circle that without him as their leader everything will be lost.
- the leader enjoys an almost total independence from the normal chain of command or party hierarchy. The leader's power is thus not dependent on the hierarchy. It is the will of the leader and not his orders as expressed through a hierarchy, that is the supreme law in the totalitarian system;
- the leader has the task to shield the movement from the harsh reality of the outside world, while at the same time being the bridge that links movement with it;
- the leader claims personal responsibility for every action, deed, or misdeed committed by any member of the movement. This total responsibility is the most important organisational aspect of the *Führerprinzip*. The *Führer* identified himself totally with every one of his functionaries;
- the leader appears to stand well removed from all the functional activities of the movement; and
- structurally and organisationally the movement is totally dependent on the position of the leader.

These characteristics of totalitarian leadership does not necessarily serve as an adequate explanation of the specific role and function of Adolf Hitler in the Third Reich. What was the role of Hitler in the shaping of the events that unfolded in Germany between 1921 and 1945? Can the events that surrounded the Third Reich be explained as the result of the will and personality of one man or was it imposed on Germany by impersonal structural determinants? Was Hitler a weak dictator swept along by structural

forces of which he was an instrument rather than the creator, or was he the all-powerful master of the Third Reich who held all the strings in his hands? The complex nature of the structural arrangements in Germany, coupled with an almost mysterious system personal intentions and loyalties around Hitler, makes it difficult to find coherent clarity on the subject.

Structural theorists have argued that the inherently chaotic nature of the Nazi rule points to Hitler being a weak leader driven along by structural forces. If there was a conflict between Hitler's intentions and the structure within which he operated then it might have been possible to conclude that Hitler was weak. This, as was shown, does not appear to have been the case. Neither does it appear as though Hitler's intentions and the socio-economic structural determinants in Germany were in direct conflict with one another, but they rather combined to produce a dynamic that pulled in the same direction, and made Nazi Germany a distinct and unique occurrence.

There is an element of synthesis between the intentionalist and structuralist schools of thought as far as Hitler's leadership is concerned, for it is very difficult to completely separate the 'intentions' from the impersonal structural conditions which shaped the framework within which these intentions became actualised. On the other hand we saw that Hitler's intentions were sometimes swept along by circumstances which it created that then gained a momentum of its own. Hitler's 'intentions' thus played a vital role in the developments in the Third Reich, but they are not however an adequate explanation on their own.

The *Führer*'s will was very important and probably the single most important guiding principle in Nazi Germany, but its translation into government policy and the implementation thereof was not solely subject to Hitler. The fact that very little that happened in Germany during his rule ran contrary to his wishes, makes it very difficult to call him a weak dictator. On the other hand, the implementation of his 'will' was not as simple a matter as contended by those who adhere to the intentionalist approach. We can conclude that while Hitler

was not the a simple pawn in the hands of broad and sweeping structural forces, he certainly was also not the omnipotent 'Master of the Third Reich'.

An understanding of the charismatic nature of Hitler's authority in Germany is also fundamental to any evaluation of his leadership, for as was shown, it formed the basis of his authority. In defining the concept 'fascism' is was made clear that fascism has a preference for the charismatic approach to authority which lends itself to the formation of a leadership cult. The leadership cult in Germany did not however originate with Hitler and the Nazi Party, but had its roots deep in nineteenth century Germany. As was pointed out, the focus on 'heroic' leadership was a prominent element of the ideas of the nationalist Right long before Hitler entered the stage. Various politicians and writers have advanced the idea that there existed the need for a strong leader for the German nation. All these ideas were expressed in a very romantic and conservative idiom. The idea of a 'Leader for Germany' was thus not an uncommon or alien idea for the average German in the Weimar era, and it proved to provide fertile ground for the development of the Hitler myth.

The Nazis set out to construct this 'Hitler myth', focusing primarily on Hitler's own charismatic personality, as well as using every conceivable method of propaganda. The growth of this 'myth' surrounding Hitler was slow and halting at first, but after 1933 it started to gain immense momentum, a momentum that only started to fade slightly in the face of total military defeat and the collapse of the entire political system. Hitler's charisma became the basis for authority in Germany, and he never seemed to lose the charismatic appeal he had with the German people during the time of his rule.

The charisma of Hitler was based not necessarily on a specific trait of personality or temperament, but on people's perceptions of him and response to him. The relationship between Hitler and the German people can be categorised as being charismatic in nature in that it exhibited the following characteristics to a greater or lesser extent:

- Hitler was perceived by his followers as being somehow superhuman;
- his followers blindly believed his statements;
- they unconditionally submitted themselves to the *Führer's* directives; and
- they gave Hitler unqualified emotional commitment.

As is the case with the totalitarian side of Hitler's leadership, personality cannot be totally separated from charisma, for his personality gave him the ability to project those images of himself that gave rise to the charismatic perceptions, namely those contained in the 'Hitler myth'.

The main elements of the popular image of Hitler, all blended together into a leadership 'myth' of remarkable potency and resilience, even though there existed a gulf between the figure of the *Führer* as created by the propaganda machine based on the foundation of the pre-existing leadership ideals, and the genuine Hitler. Difficult though it may be to evaluate, our analysis pointed to seven significant bases of the 'Hitler myth' in each of which the 'mythical' content is unmistakable.

Firstly, Hitler was regarded as the personification of the German *volk* as well as the unity of the national community. He was the embodiment of the aspirations, desires and needs of the German nation; he carried within him a personal experience of the people of Germany and could therefore rightly interpret their virtue. He was seen as standing above the selfish sectional interests and material concerns which marked the normality of everyday life and which created the damaging divisions in society and politics. He was the selfless exponent of national interest, whose incorruption and unselfish motives were detachable from the scandalous greed and hypocrisy of the Party functionaries. Secondly, Hitler was accepted as the single-handed architect and force behind Germany's 'economic miracle' of the 1930's, eliminating the scourge of mass unemployment which continued to plague other European nations, revitalising the economy and thus providing for

improved living standards, and offering a new basis for lasting prosperity. Thirdly, he was seen as the representative of 'popular justice', the voice of the 'healthy sentiment of the people', the upholder of public morality, the embodiment of strong, if necessary ruthless, action against the 'enemies of the people' to enforce 'law and order'. Fourthly, Hitler was widely viewed as personally sincere, and in matters affecting established traditions and institutions, such as the Church, as a moderate opposed to the radical and extreme elements of the Nazi movement, but largely kept in the dark by them about what was really going on. Fifthly, in the area of foreign affairs, Hitler was regarded as an upholder and a fanatical defender of Germany's just rights, a rebuilder of the nation's strength, a statesman of genius, and for the most part, it seems, not as a racial imperialist warmonger working towards a 'war of annihilation' and limitless German conquests. Sixthly, during the first half of the war Hitler was seen as an incomparable military leader who, as a former front-line soldier distinguished for bravery, knew and understood the ordinary soldier. Even after the tide of the war started to turn against Germany did he continue to be viewed by many as the epitome of Germany's unwavering will to victory. Seventhly, there was Hitler's image as a bulwark against the nation's perceived powerful ideological enemies - Marxism/Bolshevism and, above all, the Jews. This image registered most strongly among those sections of the population whose exposure to ideological 'schooling' was the greatest, particularly, therefore, among committed members of the Party.

In conclusion it can thus be stated that the charismatic basis of Hitler's authority serves as one of the main explanations for the success of his leadership between the years 1921-1945. If we combine with this his totalitarian leadership style, and also take into consideration the ideological framework within which all these events took place, we arrive at a very distinct form of leadership that sets Hitler's rule over the Third Reich apart from any other. Although these three factors will not always be sufficient to explain all aspects of leadership in Germany during the tumultuous times leading up to and during World War II, it will provide us with a greater understanding of the intricate nature of these complex events.

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Summary

Political leadership in Germany between 1921 and 1945:
Linking charisma and totalitarianism

By

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Degree for which
this dissertation
was presented: *Magister Artium* in Political Science

The functioning and apparent successes of the political leadership in Nazi Germany, has for long presented political scientists with a very complex and seemingly ambiguous system to interpret and explain. This study addresses this very matter by firstly identifying the ideological environment within which it functioned as one in which an effective leader with effective leadership tactics was vital. Secondly, two factors are identified as key to the understanding and explanation of political leadership in the Third Reich. These factors are the 'Hitler myth' as a vibrant leadership cult that stood at the centre of Adolf Hitler's relationship with the German people and thus formed the base of Hitler's authority, and the '*Führer Prinzip*' as expression of the totalitarian style of leadership present in the Nazi movement and the Nazi State, especially regarding the role of Hitler as *Führer* of the Nazi Party and later also of the Nazi State.

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Key concepts:

Political leadership; Fascism; Nazism; Totalitarianism; Totalitarian leadership; Charismatic leadership; Ideology; Adolf Hitler; Hitler myth; Third Reich

Samevatting

Politieke leierskap in Duitsland tussen 1921 en 1945:
Die koppeling van charisma en totalitarisme

Deur

Frederik Gerhardus Wolmarans

Studieleier: Mnr. J.T. Bekker

Departement: Politieke Wetenskappe

Graad waarvoor
verhandeling in
gedien is: *Magister Artium* in Staatsleer

Die funksionering en suksesse van die politieke leierskap in Nazi Duitsland, het vir lank aan politieke wetenskaplikes 'n baie komplekse en skynbaar dubbelsinnige stelsel gebied om te interpreteer en verklaar. Hierdie studie spreek die saak aan deur eerstens die ideologiese omgewing te identifiseer waarbinne dit gefunksioneer het as een waarin 'n effektiewe leier met effektiewe leierskaptaktiek baie belangrik was. Tweedens, word twee faktore geidentifiseer as sleutel tot die begrip en verklaring van politieke leierskap in die Derde Ryk. Die faktore is die 'Hitler miete' as 'n leierskapkultus wat sentraal gestaan het tot Adolf Hitler se verhouding met die Duitse volk en dus die basis gevorm het van Hitler se gesag, en die 'Führer Prinzip' as manifestasie van die totalitêre styl van leierskap teenwoordig in die Nazi beweging, veral sover as dit die rol van Hitler betref het as *Führer* van die Nazi Party en later ook van die Nazi Staat.

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Sleutelterme:

Politieke leierskap; Fascisme; Nazisme; Totalitarisme; Totalitêre leierskap;
Charismatiese leierskap; Ideologie; Adolf Hitler; Hitler miete; Derde Ryk