

The Early Years of the Nazi Press in Hamburg

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THE struggle against Communism and Soviet expansion has so completely occupied the stage for the last fifteen years, that many tend to forget how Nazism and German expansion once played the same role. But interest is now being drawn again to that momentous and tragic era of European and world history. The period has a wide enough scope to accommodate several disciplines. The sociologist can study how a highly literate society functioned under a totalitarian regime. The psychologist can examine the workings of a distorted mind in possession of absolute power. The philosopher can meditate on how the glorious German cultural traditions failed to halt the development of National Socialism. Finally, the historian has the task of recording the course of events and of analyzing the forces behind them. His work is enlivened by the luridly dramatic quality of this epoch of German history, an epoch ushered in by the violence-ridden years of the early thirties, maintained in an atmosphere of continuous crisis, and brought to an end by the irresistible forces of retribution, a true *Götterdämmerung*.

This paper is a study of a tiny slice of Nazi history, a case study in National Socialist journalism. It records the chief events in the formative years of the Nazi press in Hamburg. The first part covers the establishment of a Nazi weekly newspaper in Hamburg in 1928; the second deals with the conversion of the weekly into a daily and its sudden rise of fortune when the Nazis came to power. The Hamburg press was chosen because of the richness of sources.

Space limitations do not permit a discussion of the background of the Hamburg party press. We must limit ourselves to noting a few salient facts. First, propaganda was especially important to the Nazi movement.¹ The newspaper, because of its basic characteristics of cheapness, mobility, and flexibility, is a fundamental tool of propaganda.² Hitler, displaying his customary aptness in political

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matters, quickly perceived the importance of a newspaper. He expended great efforts and succeeded in acquiring a central party organ, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, a few months after the movement's birth.³ But the Nazis for some years were not able to follow up this initial success by developing a local press system. The party's weakness explains this failure. The humiliation of the collapse of the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, together with the temporary success (1925-1929) of the Weimar Republic in attaining a high level of stability,⁴ drastically reduced the party's potency.⁵ Prosperous and satisfied Germans were not buying the Nazi's program of hate and violence. Hitler fought his way to the top in spite of these adverse conditions; one of the factors in this successful struggle was his concern for the expansion of the party press. The Bavarian police noted in 1929:

The NSDAP in recent weeks has given special attention to the building up of the National Socialist papers and publishing offices. The *Völkischer Beobachter* is still the official central organ and the only daily paper of the movement. National Socialist aggressiveness has increased. . .⁶

The Hamburg National Socialist press had come into existence a year before, in 1928. It was established in either January or February and was given the name of *Hamburger Volksblatt*.⁷ It first appeared as a weekly. The paper did rather well in its initial weeks. That is, it did not make a profit, but the disparity between income and outgo by May 1 had amounted to only 600 RM.⁸

The *Volksblatt* underwent a financial crisis a few months after its founding, when the new *Gauleiter* for Hamburg, Wilhelm Hüttmann, refused to grant the fledgling paper its *Ausfallgarantie*. It is impossible to say with certainty why the subsidy was not forthcoming, but we may conjecture that the *Gauleitung* itself was financially embarrassed.⁹ In the spring of 1928, the Nazi Party was far from the position of affluence it was to reach later. Hitler's alliance with Hugenberg, his conversion of the wealthy industrialists, and the prospects of victory at the polls — all fertile sources of cash — were then in the future. One might argue that Hüttmann cut off support because he was in some way dissatisfied with the editor, Hans Hesse. Evidence for this view would rest on the fact that at the beginning of 1929, the Hamburg *Gauleitung* started another paper to express its opinions, instead of restoring Hesse's subsidy. There is also the point that Hesse believed his circulation was being hurt by unfavorable rumors, originating with the *Gauleiter*, concerning his paper. Krebs denies the validity of Hesse's accusation.¹⁰ In any event, it seems unlikely that there was too deep a rift between Hesse

and the party, since Hesse decided to continue his paper on the gamble that party fortunes would improve.¹¹ That is, he elected to go on with his paper without the financial aid of the party, hoping that the party's situation would improve and it could again subsidize his undertaking. Furthermore, in September of 1928, his paper was still "officially recognized" by the party.¹² This designation was less than that of "official organ" and did not permit the paper to carry the swastika in its masthead, but it does show that there had not been a break between the party and Hesse's paper at that time.

Lacking a subsidy, Hesse had to increase his income by building up his subscription list. In the best, or the worst, traditions of journalism, he turned to sensationalism to attract new readers. But in purveying sexual and criminal sensations, he alienated the party people who bought the newspaper for political enlightenment — or so Dr. Krebs has it.¹³ The puritanical Communist, devoting himself wholly to politics, is a familiar figure; but it is not so easy to conceive of the Nazi who preferred his politics unvitiated by sensationalism. Apparently Dr. Krebs would have the better argument here, since in January of 1929, the *Gauleitung* brought out a purely political paper, without sensationalism — and Hesse's *Hamburger Volksblatt* was soon in grave difficulties. The *Hansische Warte*, as the new paper was called, apparently lured away the party members from Hesse's paper. It is interesting to note that the *Hansische Warte* was also a private undertaking; that is, it had financial support from the party leadership, as the *Hamburger Volksblatt* had had, but it was actually in private hands. The Hamburg *Gauleitung* simply did not have the funds to own and operate a paper on its own.¹⁴

This phenomenon of a party press being privately owned was not new to the German scene. Both the Social Democratic and the Center Parties used this system by which, under certain conditions, they would extend to a privately-owned paper the designation of a "recognized" party paper.¹⁵ The conditions were simply that the publisher would follow the party line and print party announcements free of charge — in return for party support in the form of subscriptions and subsidies. The NSDAP as early as 1926 drew up regulations for its privately-owned but party-connected press. The action was taken on July 4 of that year during a *Reichsdelegiertenkongress* held in Weimar. The congress empowered the party leadership to appoint a person to supervise the party press throughout Germany and to ensure its homogeneity. The congress went on to require that the recognized papers print in their mastheads the symbols of their party connection, that is, the *Adler mit dem Haken-*

kreuz im Eichenkranz. This symbol was to be copyrighted and legally protected; it could not be used unless the party leadership formally designated a paper as a party organ. If a paper lost the favor of the party leadership and had its recognition as a party organ withdrawn, German law required it to give up the symbol. By statutes drawn up at the congress, the party leadership reserved the right to approve every new National Socialist publication before its establishment. It also required that the editors of all Nazi papers be formally approved by the top levels of the party.¹⁶ It goes without saying that the editor of the privately-owned Nazi paper had to follow the party line and the directives of the party's Propaganda Office. The papers were also enjoined by the party from accepting advertising from Jewish firms.¹⁷ An editor who disregarded the desires of the party would be subject to expulsion, the paper to loss of its recognition, and to boycott by party members.

Finding himself unable to meet the competition of the *Hansische Warte*, Hesse came to Krebs in February of 1929, and told him that his paper was on the verge of collapse.¹⁸ Krebs conferred with a friend, Edgar Brinkmann, and they decided to purchase the defunct newspaper for their own uses. Krebs belonged to the left wing of the Nazi Party; he states in his memoirs that "he had occupied himself with problems of a social nature in the party, especially with the relation of party and trade union."¹⁹ No longer able to express his views easily in official organs, Krebs resolved to have his own. He further desired to provide an organ for the students of Hamburg University and the *Lichtwarkschule* to express their views "without the restrictions of party formulas."²⁰ But as it turned out, this impulse was not wholly charitable, because the students became firm supporters of the paper. In fact, their subscriptions sufficed to solve the financial crisis that had brought Hesse to his knees.²¹

In the spring of 1929, the *Gauleiter* was again changed, when Karl Kaufmann replaced Hüttmann. Kaufmann had been prominent in party circles on the national level for a number of years.²² He was in his new position in Hamburg only a short time before he brought about a combination of the party's *Hansische Warte* and Krebs's *Hamburger Volksblatt*, the new paper adopting the name of the party paper, *Hansische Warte*, with Krebs as the editor. This merger occurred in June of 1929. The new organ, however, was the property of Krebs and Brinkmann, not of the party. Here again the *Gau* lacked the funds to undertake the responsibilities of owning a paper, and furthermore, the owners of the *Hamburger Volksblatt* insisted on retaining their rights to their paper.²³ But a *modus vivendi* was worked out. While Krebs and Brinkmann retained

formal ownership of the paper, the *Gau* was to have five percent of future profits. Also, Krebs retained ultimate responsibility for editorial policy, but he obligated himself to heed the desires of the *Gauleiter*. Finally, the owners agreed to publish proclamations of the party in Hamburg, without shortening, "if space permitted."²⁴ In spite of these arrangements, Krebs had to fight constantly to maintain his freedom from the *Gau* leadership; it was a fight which he ultimately lost.

The merger appears to have taken place with surprising readiness on Dr. Krebs's part, considering his avowed purpose in buying Hesse's moribund paper — that is, of having an outlet for expressing his views without restrictions. Of course, there was the fact of financial pressures being exerted against both the *Gauleitung's* and Krebs's papers. But we may conjecture that there was probably a degree of ideological *rapprochement* at this time between Krebs and Kaufmann, the new *Gauleiter*, since both belonged to the left wing of the party, headed by Gregor Strasser.²⁵ If such *rapprochement* existed, then Krebs would have known that Kaufmann would permit him to continue expressing his views — since they coincided with those of Kaufmann. Later they were in sharp disagreement, as we will see.

The year 1929 also saw the appearance in Hamburg of a periodical devoted to propaganda on the theme of unemployment. It was entitled *Der Erwerbslose*, this designation forming a counterweight to the Communist Party's *Der Arbeitslose*. The paper was founded by Ingwersen, who in the mid-thirties became the *Gaupressensekretär*. It was circulated throughout Germany, but especially in Saxony, Westphalia, and Upper Franconia. Circulation figures were modest, running on the average about 7000-8000 papers, although during elections the numbers exceeded this average. Significantly, the issues came out irregularly, because the publisher had to wait until all the copies of the preceding issue had been sold in order to obtain the cash to finance the next issue. After the assumption of power by the party, the paper was discontinued, since it had fulfilled its purpose.²⁶

To return to the *Hansische Warte*, it has been described by its former editor as lacking the militancy which characterized the other party newspapers. He admits the justice of the charge which was at that time levied by his *Parteigenossen* in Hamburg, namely, that the paper lacked verve, that it appeared to have "too many pedagogical folds in its forehead."²⁷ However, an examination of the titles of the various sections of the paper would lead one to question the validity of the charge. The form of the newspaper, if not the content, should have satisfied the most zealous Nazi. For ex-

ample, there was a regular column entitled *Sturmkolonne*, for the benefit of the S.A., written by Hermann Okrass, who later became editor of the paper. Meyer Christian, described elsewhere as "perhaps the most despicable of Hitler's underlings,"²⁸ wrote a column entitled *1000 Worte—nationalsozialistisch*. In it, Christian prescribed how the proper party member and S.A. man should behave. The virtues he urged were not, according to Krebs, those of the middle class, nor yet those of robbers and murderers. They were those of a "new hard type, free of illusions and sentiments, suitable for a generation between war and revolution."²⁹ Domestic questions were taken up under the heading *Aus der Kolonie Deutschlands*, the title reflecting the nationalist sentiment that Germany was the object of callous exploitation on the part of those who had won the war. Krebs himself wrote the articles on foreign affairs; he deprecatingly says that only ten percent of the paper's readers paid any attention to his efforts. *Jugend in Aufbruch* and *Akademische Worte* were more or less innocuous titles heading other departments of the paper. A department bearing the name *Hansische Welt* was devoted to historical and geopolitical essays. Inspired by the medieval Hanseatic League, these essays proposed a modern "connection" between Germany, England, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Flanders, and the Baltic States. According to Krebs, this idea stimulated the interest of people in Hamburg both inside and outside the party. Although the paper carried reviews of individual plays, books, and movies, there was not space for essays on aesthetics in general. This was a disappointment to Krebs, who wanted to develop a *Kunst-kritik* suitable to the NSDAP.³⁰

Since it lacked its own printing press, the paper was printed by a commercial press. Ironically, the same press printed the Communist periodical. Krebs and his counterpart, the Communist editor, sat at the same table to examine the proofs of their respective papers. The relation between the two was not one of "heartfelt friendship," as Dr. Krebs expresses it, but the exigencies of their regular proximity to one another led them to exchange the usual amenities about the weather and the news. The Communist editor even took advantage of Dr. Krebs's education by consulting him on questions of grammar and spelling. Krebs tells us that he always responded with "a parade of his dusty *Schumeisterweisheiten*," by which he meant a few minutes instruction on the intricacies of his native tongue. His spirit of cooperation paid off when his editor friend saved him from a beating by some Communist thugs.³¹

This relationship of the sworn enemies did not last long; the Communists transferred their paper to another printer. The tenu-

ous financial situation of the *Hansische Warte* is shown by the dire straits to which it was put when this transfer took place. That is, when the printer lost his contract with the Communists, he could no longer afford to extend credit to Krebs and the Nazis. The officials of the paper cut expenses drastically. Fortunately for the paper, only one of the editors was dependent on emoluments from the paper for his living, and he lived at home with his parents and so did not require a regular stipend. The others disdained that "Phoenecian-Semitic invention, money" (in Krebs's words) and devoted themselves martyr-like to their poverty-stricken journal. In the beginning of January, 1930, the paper sold about 3000 copies of each issue, of which a third went to subscription holders. The revenue from advertising was only about 1000 RM.³²

The fortunes of the Nazis changed radically with the arrival in Germany in 1930, of the world economic crisis. Krebs records that by the beginning of the summer of 1930, the sales of the *Hansische Warte* began to increase rapidly, because people, now desperate for hope, wanted to find out more about the views of the formerly despised and ridiculed rightist-extremists.³³ The increased circulation brought in more money and also resulted in more advertising business, enabling the paper to move to more commodious quarters, to buy more furniture, and to hire assistants. The financial situation further improved after the Nazi's big electoral victory in September of 1930. In the preceding election, held in 1928, the NSDAP had secured less than a million votes and sent to the Reichstag only twelve delegates. In 1930, the party gathered in almost six and one-half million votes and sent over a hundred delegates to Berlin. The party's strength had enormously increased and it was stimulated to further efforts, which finally brought it victory, ushering in a totalitarian dictatorship for Germany. The *Hansische Warte* in Hamburg found that with the victory, its economic cares were over — the number of pages could now be increased, complimentary copies could be printed and distributed for propaganda purposes, a great emphasis on street sales could become possible, and a reserve fund could be built up. Since the party was about to intensify its efforts, it was time to think of converting the *Hansische Warte* into a daily. This was accomplished in January of 1931.

In 1928, the NSDAP possessed only two dailies, with a total circulation of 22,800. In 1929, the party converted many of its weeklies to dailies and founded other dailies from scratch. In 1931, reflecting the deepening depression and its effects on the party's fortunes, seventeen more dailies were established, including the *Hamburger Tageblatt*.³⁴

The improved position of the party after the 1930 elections encouraged Krebs and his co-worker Edgar Brinkmann to expand their weekly to a daily. They calculated that of the 140,000 Hamburgers who had voted National Socialist, enough would buy the paper to support its daily appearance.³⁵ They supposed also that putting out a daily would not be different in kind from putting out a weekly — only more work would be required. In fact they encountered formidable obstacles. Although heralded by an enthusiastic advertising campaign, the new daily was scarcely readable because the printing and paper were of such poor quality. Distribution was so inefficient that the paper appeared on the streets only after the urban crowds had gone home for the day. News in the paper was already stale when it was printed.³⁶ Krebs characterized the newspaper in these words:

The mouse, which the laboring mountain brought forth, was not only very small and loathsome, but seemed scarcely viable.³⁷

The main trouble appears to have been in the printing room. As part of their expansion program, Krebs and Brinkmann decided to cease depending on a commercial printing press and buy their own equipment. Unfortunately, their printers, Hubenthal and Buring, did not know how to use their equipment. Also such technical problems as composing a page, rapid correcting of proofs, inserting of last minute news, and the like, baffled the men in the *Druckerei*.³⁸ Curiously enough, Hitler later commented that it had been a mistake during the "struggle-period" for some of the party newspapers to have owned their own presses, although he was not thinking of the *Hamburger Tageblatt* at the time. He had in mind the fact that party-owned presses were expected to print the myriad of propaganda pamphlets gratis — which was most uneconomical for them.³⁹

The expansion of the *Hansische Warte* into a daily required the negotiation of a new agreement between the owners and the *Gauleitung*. This time, the *Gauleitung* was to make a more determined attempt to secure complete control over the content of the paper, an attempt which Krebs firmly resisted, only to lose out in the end. To force the negotiation of a new agreement, the *Gauleitung* threatened to set up another paper which would have the sanction of the party. This was a serious threat, and even if it were not carried out, Krebs realized that the party could seriously damage his paper in other ways. For example, it could boycott it by removing its stamp of approval, or it could sabotage the editors of the paper by requiring their underlings to follow the orders of the *Gauleitung* rather than those of the editors. A schism between the

party and the paper would lose subscribers, but even more important, it would ruin the credit of the paper. That is, creditors were not so hesitant about lending money so long as they knew that the paper was backed by the resources of the party, but an independent paper, especially a fledgling paper hampered by all sorts of difficulties, would be a different matter. Accordingly, Krebs agreed to compromise. The agreement resembled closely the earlier one between Kaufmann and the *Hansische Warte*. The *Hamburger Tageblatt* was to remain in private hands, that is, in those of Krebs and Brinkmann, but fifty percent of its profits were to go to the *Gauleitung*. The paper was to print all the party news and to follow the party line. Krebs remarks that his bargaining position was bolstered by the support of a "South American aunt" with 70,000 RM. Krebs insisted that Gregor Strasser be accepted by both sides as an arbitrator for any future quarrel between the *Hamburger Tageblatt* and the *Gauleitung*.⁴⁰

With a new connection firmly established, help came to the nascent daily newspaper. Several businessmen regularly advertised in the paper; an insurance company provided some assistance; and one Albert Petersen contributed without compensation a novel for serialization.⁴¹ If his novel resembled the rest of the *Blubo* literature current in Germany during the *Hitlerzeit*, we may imagine that the columns of the *Hamburger Tageblatt* were the proper place for it.

The new daily generally retained the departments of the *Hansische Warte* and also added some new ones. The latter included such titles as *Volk und Scholle*, *Sozialpolitische Rundschau*, and *Deutsche Not-Grenzlandnot*. This last was devoted to racist organizations and parties outside of Germany, especially in the old Hanseatic lands of Flanders, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden. According to Krebs, these essays had no "imperialist" character;⁴² we may suppose that they were devoted to the struggle of the "Nordic community" against *Blutunreinheit*. Another new feature of the paper was its reliance on news services. This was made necessary by the requirement of getting out an issue every day — that is, the editors no longer had time to compose their own material. But the news of a professional news gathering agency was not suitable for a National Socialist paper, and the editors soon learned to gloss it to meet their own ideological purposes.⁴³ One feature carried over from the old paper was that of the volunteer editor. Of the six editors of the *Hamburger Tageblatt*, three received no salary, and the three who were paid found their stipend "not large enough to live on, but not small enough to die on."⁴⁴

Krebs almost from the beginning of the new daily's existence evaded the agreement with the *Gauleitung* which required him to follow the party line. In the beginning of February, 1931, only a month after the paper had come into being, he wrote an article differentiating between National Socialism and Fascism, a thesis that collided with the official party position of equating the two. He wrote this article deliberately to test how far he could contradict the party's position. He also criticized the "Harzburg Front," the merger of right-wing groups, including both the racist-nationalist groups such as the Nazis and the more traditional conservatives such as the industrialists, the old princely families, and the army and navy, having as its goal the substitution of a "nationalist government" for that of Chancellor Brüning. Since Hitler had brought the Nazis into this Front, any criticism of it was bound to include Hitler. Krebs also attacked Dr. Funk, who entered the party in 1931, becoming a liaison man between it and the commercial-industrial interests, as a representative of "economic-liberalism" (*Wirtschaftsliberalismus*). By using this term, Krebs was attacking conservative capitalism, although Hitler at that time was moving to the right in order to secure the support of the industrialists. Krebs openly or covertly attacked the party position on a number of other issues, "from ethnology to the South Tyrol problem." Curiously, the party protested Krebs's deviationism only when he began to support Brüning.⁴⁵ But Krebs's record was recalled later and used against him to expel him from the party.

The Hamburg authorities failed to note the disagreement between the *Hamburger Tageblatt* and the NSDAP, and when they wanted to strike at the latter, they did it by banning the former. The paper was prohibited from publishing a total of six times in the year and a half period between March, 1931 and October, 1932. In the initial prohibition, the paper was closed down for four weeks, beginning on March 16, 1931, as a punishment for the murder of a Communist in the area. The first order halted the presses for an "indeterminate period," but the agitation of party members succeeded in lifting the ban after four weeks. Next the Hamburg officials evicted the paper from its quarters, subjecting it to the inconvenience and expense of a move. The paper was forbidden to publish for a second time in September, 1931, before the municipal elections. This prohibition lasted only a week, but it was followed by another one on October 1, caused by the paper's criticism of the Hamburg police department. In June of 1932, a fourth banning occurred, this time as a reprimand for an insult to a Bavarian minister. The fifth prohibition in this period occurred two months later,

in August, when the head of the Hamburg police was insulted. Both of these prohibitions lasted for five days. In October it was prohibited again for five days.⁴⁶

These blows of the Hamburg authorities fell on Krebs and his department heads. Krebs relates that he was appearing before the courts twice a month in this period. He recalls that the judges were fair, "even [and here his memoirs betray a feeling of surprise] the Jewish and half-Jewish judges." These actions of the public officials were taken under the authority of a "Law for the Protection of the Republic," passed by the Reichstag in March of 1930. It was not the first such law, a precedent having been set in the early twenties. Fines were levied more frequently than prohibitions, and they were always difficult to pay because of the shaky financial structure of the paper. According to Krebs, the government used the prohibitions in the belief that they would wreck the economic foundations of the paper by cutting off subscription and advertising income. But Krebs says that they had the opposite effect, because they provided the paper with priceless propaganda which drove up circulation figures each time the bans were lifted. Also, the ban periods cut down expenses, thereby enabling the paper to squeeze by just as bankruptcy threatened. But the suspensions did cut back the propaganda outflow of the party, which had no adverse effect on the convinced party member, but which hurt the party during election campaigns, when it was trying to attract the uncommitted voter.⁴⁷

The financial situation of the *Hamburger Tageblatt* did gradually weaken. At one time, the paper's fortunes had so deteriorated that the publisher put on the bulletin board a notice of dismissal for the entire staff of the paper.⁴⁸ In the years of plenty after Hitler's assumption of power, this dismissal notice was retained on the wall as a reminder of the period of privation. The reasons for the threatening bankruptcy are not hard to determine. Krebs and Brinkmann had expanded their weekly to a daily with only a small reserve fund, which was quickly used up. Inexperience in the business matters of a daily newspaper took its toll; finally the paper's distribution and circulation problems were turned over to another firm. This company — the *Firma Neckel* — opened up the distribution bottlenecks and raised circulation figures, but this could not compensate for the losses in the paper's *Druckerei*. The printing establishment was not able from its own income to meet the monthly payments on its equipment, which had been acquired on credit, or even to pay the salaries of its staff. Reserve capital was first used to meet these expenses. When that fund was depleted, the publisher

had to make a bi-weekly tour of the city begging for cash from party members or personal acquaintances. Only in this way could he mollify his employees, who regularly appeared *en masse* to demand their wages.⁴⁹

In spite of the earlier agreements, the *Gauleitung* had never given up its ambition to have direct and formal control of the paper, without the intermediary of private ownership. The lack of financial success of the paper gave Kaufmann and the other party leaders in Hamburg an excuse to try again. As early as February, 1931, only two months after the agreement concerning the status of the new daily, the *Gauleitung* demanded a paper under its direct control. Krebs continued to resist, however, but financial pressures made his position increasingly untenable. Finally, when Krebs went on a vacation trip, the *Gauleitung* stepped in. The party leaders bribed one of the subordinate editors, Humbert, to win the paper's staff away from Krebs by promising him the post of chief editor. The leaders simultaneously gave an ultimatum to Brinkmann; he was either to accede to the wishes of the *Gauleitung*, or the *Gauleitung* would withdraw its recognition of the *Hamburger Tageblatt* and establish another paper.⁵⁰

Brinkmann and Krebs outflanked the Hamburg party officials. They decided that if they had to give up their ownership of the paper, they would be better off selling it to the Eher Verlag, the top publishing house of the NSDAP, rather than to the local *Gauleitung*. It was a simple question of distances — the Eher Verlag was located in Munich, and Krebs and Brinkmann felt that control exercised from Munich would be less onerous than control exerted at home. Accordingly, they went over the heads of Kaufmann and his cohorts and travelled to Munich to negotiate the transfer of the paper. The two journalists were soon followed by the Hamburg party officials, and a *Wirbel* was created into which were pulled the top levels of the party, including Hitler himself. Krebs's terms were that the Eher Verlag should take over the ownership and the debts of the paper, paying a certain sum for it, and leaving Krebs and Brinkmann in their posts. Amann, the head of the Eher Verlag, agreed to these terms with one exception — he declined to pay for the paper. Thus the transaction was practically an expropriation, such as became the usual fate of non-Nazi newspapers after the *Machtübernahme*.⁵¹

But Krebs and Brinkmann must have thought that they had done rather well for themselves. They had evaded the control of Kaufmann, had gotten rid of their debts, and at the same time had retained their posts. Moreover, they could still express their own

views, since the party did not yet enforce a homogeneous editorial policy for all of its papers. This enforcement should logically have come from Rosenberg, who bore the formal title of *Reichspresschef*, but he was undercut by Amann, who distrusted him. The Amann-Rosenberg quarrel was only one of dozens which plagued the leadership structure of the NSDAP — pettiness and Nazism went together. In any event, Rosenberg devoted his energies to getting photographed in Hitler's presence, so that he had no time for his official duties, so Krebs tells us.⁵²

The *Gauleitung* regarded the Munich settlement as a defeat, and to restore its prestige it set out to destroy the positions of Krebs and Brinkmann. In fact, as Krebs himself readily admits, the *Hamburger Tageblatt* had ceased to adhere to the party line. For example, Krebs believed that Brüning should be given a chance; he considered that the Chancellor might be able to bring about a revision of the Versailles Treaty and end the abuses of parliamentarianism, and thereby reform the Reich in "head and members." The party's position was one of total opposition to Brüning, and when Krebs refused to print a typically hysterical attack on Brüning, probably written by Hitler himself, he was on dangerous ground. The Nazi papers were put under a more centralized direction during the two presidential election campaigns in 1932. To compensate for what it considered inadequate coverage by the non-party press of Hitler's speaking tour around Germany, the party leadership set up a news service composed of the various Nazi editors. That is, the editors reported to each other the events of Hitler's campaign as they transpired in their own locales.⁵³ This system was supplemented by a *Büro des Reichspresschefs* which sent to the various papers standardized campaign stories and propaganda, all of which the papers were expected to print in full. Hitler by now had subordinated whatever social ideals he may have had to his quest for power at any price; the reports of his campaign as they were written by the Leader's press service "revealed Hitler's demonic and violent simplifications wrapped in cold hostility."⁵⁴ Krebs undertook a more active opposition, contacting people even outside the party, and endeavoring to win them to his views. He was still following Strasser, who was now advocating a coalition with the Center Party to support Brüning, instead of whatever it was that Schleicher had in mind for the Nazis. Krebs even organized *Ausspracheabende* in the name of the *Hamburger Tageblatt* to spread his views. When Krebs published an article critical of Schleicher, a group of Hamburg party officials went to Berlin to show Dr. Goebbels the *Sündenregister* they had prepared on Krebs's departures from orthodoxy. The result

was Krebs's expulsion from the party and his replacement by Herr Jacobi as editor of the *Hamburger Tageblatt*.

The paper thus came into orthodox hands. Its fortunes henceforth paralleled those of the party. In 1931, its circulation was 10,000. A year later, it had more than doubled, to 21,090. By 1933, figures had shot up over five-fold, as people flocked to read the official utterances of their new masters.⁵⁵ The sudden surge in circulation figures put a heavy strain on the paper's organization and structure, especially since it and the other National Socialist papers were ordered after the taking of power to convert themselves from a "*Kampfpresse*" to competent urban newspapers.⁵⁶ "Combat press" was probably a synonym for poor writing and editing. To ask these Nazi journalists to convert their scribble sheets into respectable city newspapers, especially when their work was multiplying several-fold because of the rapid rise in circulation, was asking a lot. They had no doubts of their ability to accomplish what was desired; a Nazi journalist in Hamburg wrote in 1935:

We are conceited enough to maintain that we are making a good German newspaper. The explanation for this is simple; for we have standing beside one another in a collective endeavor the old National Socialist publisher and the experienced technical leader, the old National Socialist editor and the experienced *Chef vom Dienst*, we have youthful strength beside the old canons. Today we have technical perfection and mature journalistic experience with the driving will to produce, with unbounded ambition, persistent diligence, the purest sense of comradeship and a high morale. The old National Socialist combative spirit combines with old journalistic experience. . . . The path was long, but it was successful and will remain so. It will always go upward, just as the path from the *Kampfbblatt* of 1931 to the modern urban newspaper of 1935 was always upwards — in spite of all crises, all cares, all hunger, and all need.⁵⁷

We have followed the Nazi press in Hamburg from its beginning through the vicissitudes of the early years and into the period of its glory after Hitler's assumption of power. Here our present sources run out; Krebs ends his newspaper reminiscences at the time when he was expelled from the party, and the manuscript compiled for Hitler carries the story only to 1935. For esthetic purposes, we would like to carry the account to 1945, when the Nazi press in Hamburg perished in the holocaust. Then we would have a true morality play — a beginning when, under Dr. Krebs, the paper was not completely untinged by the saving grace of idealism, then the fall, when the paper was wholly taken over by the hardcore Nazis, then the flourishing of evil in the days of Hitler's successes and finally the retribution, when the forces of good avenged themselves.

1. See Henry M. Pachter, "National-Socialist and Fascist Propaganda for the Conquest of Power," in *The Third Reich*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955, pp. 710-741.
2. Otto Groth, *Die Zeitung, ein System der Zeitungskunde*, 4 vols., Mannheim: J. Bensheimer, 1929, I, 370-541, discusses the German party newspaper. It should be noted that an important recent study warns against attributing too much importance to the newspaper as a Nazi propaganda tool. In the formation of mass opinion, the newspaper played an ancillary role when compared to the large rally, where skilled demagogues harangued hundreds or even thousands. See Karl D. Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik; eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie*, Stuttgart: Ring, 1955, pp. 125-126.
3. For a sketch of the *Völkischer Beobachter's* career, see "The Story of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, *Wiener Library Bulletin*, Vol. VIII, no. 5-6 (Sept.-Dec., 1954). A Nazi history of this newspaper is available in Adolf Dresler's *Geschichte des Völkischen Beobachters und des Zentralverlages der NSDAP Franz Eher Nachf.*, Munich: Eher, 1937. Its facts are reliable, but the account is shallow.
4. These developments are admirably covered by S. William Halperin, *Germany Tried Democracy*, N.Y.: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1946.
5. Konrad Heiden describes the party's low fortunes in this period in his *Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus; die Karriere einer Idee*, Berlin: Rowohlt, 1933.
6. Berlin Documents Center, Hauptarchiv, Akten des Staatsministeriums des Innern (Bayern), File no. 1768, report of February 20, 1929, cited by O. J. Hale, Unpublished Manuscript, Section II entitled "The Nazi Party Press, 1925-1933," p. 11. The manuscript is available at the University of Virginia. This source is hereafter abbreviated as "Hale Manuscript."
7. In the memoirs of Dr. Krebs, who played a leading role in the newspaper and its successors for some time, the founding month is given as February (Albert Krebs, *Tendenzen und Gestalten der NSDAP*, Stuttgart: Deutsche, 1959, p. 79). In an account of the Nazi press drawn up in the mid-thirties for Hitler's edification, now available at the Library of Congress in Washington, the month is given as January. See "Die statistische und geschichtliche Entwicklung der NS-Press, 1926-35," Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Captured German Documents, Container 474. (This source will be abbreviated hereafter as LC-Manuscript.) The discrepancy of date is of little or no significance.
8. Krebs, p. 78.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
12. Hale Manuscript, Section II entitled "The Nazi Party Press, 1925-1933," p. 9.
13. Krebs, p. 79.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Groth, II, 466.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Hale Manuscript, Section II entitled "The Nazi Party Press, 1925-1933," p. 3.
18. Krebs, p. 80.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. Alan Bullock, *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*, N.Y.: Harper, 1952, p. 122.
23. Krebs, p. 82.
24. *Ibid.*
25. For Kaufmann's connection with this wing, see Otto Strasser, *Hitler and I*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940, pp. 85-86.
26. LC-Manuscript, p. 123.
27. Krebs, p. 82.
28. Strasser, p. 74.
29. Krebs, p. 84.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
34. These data are taken from the Hale Manuscript, Section entitled "The Gau Press, 1925-1933," p. 9.
35. Krebs, p. 86.
36. LC-Manuscript, p. 126.
37. Krebs, p. 88.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.
39. *Hitler's Secret Conversations*, N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953, p. 376.
40. Krebs, pp. 86ff.
41. LC-Manuscript, p. 126.
42. Krebs, p. 89.
43. *Ibid.*
44. LC-Manuscript, p. 126.
45. Krebs, pp. 90-91.
46. A record of these prohibitions can be found in the LC-Manuscript, pp. 126-130. It is of interest to note that when the Nazis began to acquire posts in the provincial governments, they at once began to ban their opponents' newspapers. See Kurt Koszyk, *Zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur; die sozialdemokratische Presse von 1914 bis 1933*, Heidelberg: Quelle, Meyer, 1958, pp. 197ff.

47. Krebs, pp. 97-98.
48. LC-Manuscript, p. 124.
49. Krebs, pp. 98-99.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
52. *Ibid.*
53. LC-Manuscript, p. 129.
54. Krebs, p. 112.
55. These figures are from the LC-Manuscript, p. 8.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.