



# ARE THERE "GOOD" NAZIS?

It was hard to enter and harder to remain in the Nazi Party. Analysis of membership regulations discredit the "I was forced to join" chorus. Volitional principle stressed by all NSDAP leaders and directives.

Can you tell a Nazi sheep from a Nazi goat? Is it true that many a well-meaning German was forced into the NSDAP membership? Was many another duped, led in while innocent of the Party's purposes and history? Can we make any safe distinction between one date of Party membership and another to determine the dividing line between "good" Nazis and "bad" Nazis?

In the light of a recently completed analysis of NSDAP membership history and policy, Military Government personnel would do well to scan with an extremely skeptical eye the political records of all NSDAP members and member-aspirants. This analysis, gleaned from exhaustive study of Party records and from personal interviews with the leading executives of the Reichsschatzmeisterei (NSDAP treasury, the office in charge of membership affairs), furnishes little support for the deprecations of the "I was forced" or "I didn't know" variety of membership disclaimer. It indicates that there are few if any loopholes of intent, ignorance or timing through which a member or applicant for membership

should be able to escape the consequences of his ideological preference.

## HISTORY OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP

There are five significant dates in the membership history of the NSDAP:

**27 February 1925:** Founding of the "new" NSDAP;

**1 May 1933:** Beginning of closed period for membership (Mitgliedersperre);

**1 May 1937:** Loosening of closed period (Lockerung der Mitgliedersperre);

**1 May 1939:** End of closed period;

**2 February 1942:** Beginning of closed period.

The original Nazi Party was dissolved after Hitler's arrest on 9 November 1923 and recreated on 27 February 1925. Membership in the old NSDAP could not be carried over into the new, and former members who joined the new group could not retain their old numbers (Hitler, who was Member No. 7 in the original group, became Member No. 1 in 1925).

On 15 July 1932, after a closed period, the Party membership gates were swung open and accepted practically anybody who wished to join. This membership



drive lasted for less than a year. (1 May 1933). The Party was not open six years later, for general membership again until 1939; although a temporary exception was made in the early months of 1935 for pre-1934 applicants from Gau Bayrische Ostmark, in memory of Nazi Hans Schemm. Always excepted from the closed periods were members of the HJ who were 18 years old, members of the NSBO, and applicants with active service in the SA or SS. These exceptions were reduced on 2 January 1936 to members of HJ or BDM and members of the Stahlhelm.

### EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

Individual departures from the Mitglieidersperre could be made only by Hitler himself or by Hess. The only large-scale exception was authorized 1 May 1937 when the gates were opened a crack to let in Nazis who had proved themselves active and devoted in the interim. This action was known as the "Lockerung der Mitglieidersperre," or loosening of the closed, and was anticipated in 1935 by the publication of a list of the following groups, who would be eligible to apply as soon as the Lockerung took place.

a. German citizens who had since 1 November 1936 been active in office as Zellenleiter, Blockleiter, Blockhelfer or treasurer in Ortsgruppen and Stuetzpunkten for the NSDAP.

b. German citizens who had been members since 1 October 1934, without interruption, of the SA, SS or NSKK (exception to 1934 qualification: transfers into these formations from HJ or Stahlhelm).

c. Members of the HJ or BDM from 1 May 1933 who had held the minimum rank equivalent of Second Lieutenant.

d. Women who had been members of the NS Frauenschaft prior to 1 October 1934.

e. Pre-November 1934 leaders of NSDOP (Party-controlled league of university readers and teachers) or NSDSTB (Party affiliate composed of university students).

f. Pre-November 1934 officers of Affiliated Organizations.

g. Stammpersonal of the RAD (National Labor Service) who had been RAD members since 1 October 1934 unless transferred into RAD from SA, SS, NSKK or HJ.

h. Army veterans with six years of service who had been honorably discharged after 30 April 1933.

i. German citizens needed by an office of the NSDAP for special services within the Party or whose membership was of special political value, as well as certain Opferring members of proved reliability (as suggested only by the Gauleiters).

The order specified that the purpose of its limitations was to confine acceptance of new membership to cases of proved merit. Applicants whose qualifications did not fully correspond to the exact conditions, yet who could prove their political reliability and zeal, were also given a chance to come into the fold.

### A PARTY WAITING LIST

To make sure that only the choice Nazis could join during the Lockerung, Hess introduced the institution of Parteienwaerter, whereby the aspirant paid dues, wore the Party badge and went through the motions of membership for sometimes as long as a year under NSDAP scrutiny before his acceptance or rejection became final. During the years of the Mitglieidersperre many would-be members banded together in groups called Opferringe to devote themselves to proving their loyalty to Nazism. Their chief contribution to the Party seems to have been cash, and their members were never recognized in the sense the Anwaerter were, probational members of the Party. In 1938 an Opferring was established in Sudetenland and in 1940 one in Alsace. In some districts Nazi enthusiasts who were prevented from joining the Party because of former political or lodge memberships or for other reasons, formed groups called NS-Opfergemeinschaften to prove their readiness to cooperate with

the Hitler regime. These groups, however, never received official recognition from the Party.

It was emphasized by the Party treasury officials that Lockerung was never intended or employed as a free-for-all suspension of the closed period, but was rather, both as proposed and as carried out, a plan for admitting people who had been active in the Nazi movement since memberships were closed in 1933. They maintain that even though the number of people who joined the Party during the Lockerung exceeded the number who joined in 1939 when the gates were reopened, these people represented a very careful selection; since in every single case of admission during the Lockerung, political activity had to be proved.

The Mitglieidersperre was suspended as of 1 May 1939. Further temporary closures were called from time to time for administrative purposes, but the next indefinite closed period did not occur until 2 February 1942. Exceptions to these closings were members of the HJ and BDM, honorably discharged members of the Wehrmacht who had distinguished themselves in service, resettlers, (especially from Southern Tyrol and the Sudetenland), and (after 20 July 1944) soldiers still in service who had proved themselves good National Socialists. Other exceptions had to be approved individually by the Party Chancellory (Martin Bormann).

On 14 July 1942 Hitler decreed that nobody over 35 should henceforth be accepted for membership. This decree was not intended to be published until after the end of the war, although it was strictly followed until the end of 1943. The

*Can the Heilers be healed? MG's job is to ready germany for re-admission to the world family.*

German public in general had no knowledge of the decree; many applicants who were refused at that time for being over-age claim today that they were rejected for political reasons.

#### MEMBERSHIP SELECT AND VOLUNTARY

The primary fact is established that the NSDAP was not at any time intended to encompass the entire German population. Hitler's own conception of the ideal proportion was a mere 10 percent of the total population. It was a qualitative, not a quantitative, group, designed to become a nucleus of the most reliable and trustworthy German elements (in the Nazi sense), who would blindly support the Hitler government at any time and under any circumstances.

That this aim necessarily connoted voluntary membership is made officially clear in the Organisationsbuch der NSDAP:

"According to a statement of the Fuehrer only the best National Socialists shall be admitted into the NSDAP . . . . The call for a German into the Party denotes to him a special honor and distinction, because herewith he becomes enrolled into the following of the Fuehrer. The principle of voluntary entrance into the Party must never be abandoned or tampered with in any way. This principle of



voluntary entrance, which is one of the most valuable and essential features of the movement, must rather be firmly upheld. As natural as it is that the Party authorities should wish to enroll as many as possible of those fellow Germans who appear useful to them, force or pressure to make them join the Party must never be employed in any form, not even in the threat of a disadvantage for those fellow Germans who do not wish to be admitted into the Party."

The principle of volition was stressed repeatedly in succeeding orders and decrees issued by the Reichsleitung.

### RIGID ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

A further corollary to the aim that NSDAP memberships must be select and freely willed is the fact that at no time did automatic or corporative memberships exist. Every membership had to be individually applied for and the application personally signed by the candidate.

Prerequisites for application, as stated in the NSDAP directions for the guidance of the national treasurer, specified that a member-aspirant must be 21 years of age and a citizen of the Reich, and male applicants under 25 must show proof of having honorably completed their military service. Membership was automatically denied when the applicant:

a) had a marriage partner of "Jewish or colored racial mixture;"

b) had children surviving from such a marriage, even though the marriage had been dissolved by death or divorce;

c) was a member of the Freemasons, Oddfellows, Druids or any similar fraternal or secret society;

d) had been convicted of defamatory actions; exceptions were made in cases of "special merit."

e) had been dishonorably discharged from the armed forces;

f) suffered from hereditary illness as defined by the law of 14 July 1933;

g) had voluntarily resigned from the Party (unless his application for re-ad-

mission had the personal approval of the Gauleiter);

h) was a professor, instructor or student of theology or a member of certain religious sects.

Even more stringent requirements were decreed by Law 7/42 which put upon sub-district and local officials (Kreisleiter and Ortsgruppenleiter) the responsibility of deciding whether the individual applicant was by conviction a true National Socialist. Clergymen were eliminated by this law, which stressed the necessity of an "impartial" viewpoint toward the Church on the part of NSDAP members. It also demanded mental and physical fitness and racial "purity."

### APPLICANTS WERE INVESTIGATED

Although it was the duty of the Kreisleiter and especially the Ortsgruppenleiter to investigate the qualifications of applicants, it appears that in 1933 such investigations were often of a rather superficial nature, and were likely to be more concerned with the candidate's party donations and subscriptions to Party papers than with the history of his politics. This was not the case after 1936 when the applicant had to submit, in addition to the previously required application and photograph, detailed Fragebogen on his personal and political background. An organization was set up for thorough investigation and evaluation by the Ortsgruppenleiter of these Fragebogen; and special arrangements were made for the investigation of Wehrmacht and RAD (Reichsarbeitsdienst or Compulsory National Labor Service) personnel within their own organizations, since they were out of reach of the Party officials.

In order to avoid a break in discipline during the war, it was forbidden to interrogate subordinate police officers and men about their superiors' politics. However, a public official, who was also Amtstraeger of the party, could speak freely if asked by a Party office about

*(Continued on page 16)*

# THE ANTI-NAZI PW RETURNS

Carefully selected and thoroughly trained in the ways of democracy, several thousand former prisoners of war may now help reorient their fellow Germans.

While the war was ranging in Europe, while battles were still being fought and their outcome was an uncertainty, a small group of men in the War Department were laying out part of the foundation of democratizing a defeated Germany. Even then the Provost Marshall General's office in Washington was preparing a training program for German Prisoners of War who were already being shipped to the States in ever increasing quantities.

## SCHOOLS FOR DEMOCRACY

Today, MG can begin to reap the fruits of their foresight. Several thousand German PWs have been shipped from the States to the theater, trained in the concepts of American democracy and prepared to take many of the positions vacated by the denazification program.

These men were selected for exposure to democracy because it was learned through screening that they had a natural anti-Nazi attitude. But merely being anti-Nazi doesn't mean they could help rebuild Germany into a democratic country . . . they had to know how. So in Fort Getty, and Fort Whetherhill and elsewhere, schools were established to teach democratic fundamentals, procedures, and democratic forms of government. In the schools the PWs had an opportunity to study under some of our best college professors, the democratic way of life, its

privileges and benefits, and its responsibilities. In addition these battle-born students were able to see democracy in operation through films, radio, newspapers, and to a limited extent through direct observation. Every opportunity was given them to realize that democracy actually lives and breathes — that its application is not limited to classroom or textbook work.

Most of these men are now in Germany. They will be registered and screened in accordance with the denazification laws, then placed on jobs through local labor office.

## PROCESSING PRIORITIES

OMGUS has issued instructions to give priority to the processing of these men in order to hasten the time when MG can benefit by their training. Their processing is being speeded up only because they are anti-Nazis and it is to the advantage of MG aims to get them on the job as soon as possible. The instructions make the point that all returning prisoners of war are not to be given screening priority, and that priority is not being given merely for military service.

For ease of rapid identification, each United States-trained prisoner carries an identification card distinguishing him from ordinary veterans.