RESISTANCE IN THE THIRD REICH?:

POLITICAL DISSENT IN ROTTENBURG AM NECKAR, 1933-1938

A Thesis

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by

ELLEN JEAN THORNE

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ABSTRACT

RESISTANCE IN THE THIRD REICH?:

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Ellen Jean Thorne
University of Guelph, 2000

Advisor: Professor E. Reiche

This thesis is an investigation of popular opinion and political dissent in Rottenburg, Germany from 1933 to 1938. Relying on oral interviews conducted by German researchers, this thesis explores the attitudes of ordinary Germans to the seizure and strengthening of power by the Nazi regime. The main aspect of opinion addressed is the effect of the Church-State conflict on this Catholic population and the extent to which their religious and social values were able to withstand Nazi attack. It is found that, although there were no major acts of resistance, a distinct climate of dissent existed within the city. The inhabitants of Rottenburg, like many other average Germans, were not effectively integrated in the Volksgemeinschaft and they did retain their religious allegiances and former convictions.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A Typical Swabian Town?</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rottenburg’s Response to the <em>Gleichschaltung</em></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>State vs. the Church</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Germany 1918-1935</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Württemberg</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Rottenburg am Neckar c. 1935</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>City Centre-Rottenburg am Neckar</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Reichstag and Landtag Elections, 1919-1933</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table I: Population Distribution According to Religion Affiliation

Table II: Total Population Distribution into Main Economic Sectors 1933

Table III: Reichstag Elections in Rottenburg, 1924-1933

Table IV: NSDAP Proportion of Total Vote in Reichstag and Württemberg Landtag Elections, 1924-1933

Table V: Presidential Elections-Rottenburg
Chapter 1:
Introduction

More than fifty years since the demise of the Third Reich, the image of masses of enthusiastic men, women and children thronging to have a glimpse of the Führer is still part of popular imagination. The 'totalitarian' image of brainwashed, fanatical masses being led by an all powerful leader has been propagated by films, books and the works of some historians. The goal of Nazi social reform was to integrate the entire German people into a Volksgemeinschaft or 'national community'. Through sophisticated propaganda methods the Nazis hoped to mould the population into a disciplined, obedient mass which would be prepared to fight the nation's ideological enemies. This idealized self-representation of the regime still influences the perceptions of many people today, but how accurately does it reflect the true situation of life in the Third Reich? The subjects of opinion and resistance of the German population to the Nazi regime have been intensely debated by scholars around the world for several decades and have produced an enormous body of historical research. While early works tended to see German society in the Third Reich as being rather monolithic, more recent research has taken new approaches to the evidence and even to the definition of resistance itself, resulting in the conclusion that there were numerous expressions of dissatisfaction and acts of
This study is an attempt to examine the attitudes and opinions of ordinary Germans living in one small southwestern town between 1933 and 1938. How did the residents of Rottenburg am Neckar react to the changes brought about by the instatement of Nazi policy and ideology? To what extent were the Nazis successful in integrating the population of this town into their 'national community'? Undoubtedly there existed within the Reich an acclamatory side to popular opinion, however this examination will focus on the "dissenting strands of opinion, falling for the most part well short of real opposition let alone resistance to Nazism but setting nevertheless the acclaim for Hitler and for certain Nazi aims and policies in perspective."¹ An attempt will be made to cover the widest possible spectrum of opinion within the town, but the study was conditioned by the availability of sources. The main aspect of popular opinion addressed in this study is the effect of the Church-State conflict upon the Catholic population, who formed a majority in Rottenburg, and the extent to which their religious and social values were able to withstand Nazi attack. In most cases the actions and attitudes of the town's people could be classified as ranging from accommodation or indifference to non-conformity, but with respect to their religion, and its traditions and institutions, their opinions often led to open opposition.

The reasons for choosing Rottenburg as an area of study were manyfold. This study began as an attempt to research the fate of the city's Jewish community and the

reactions of the local inhabitants. While looking through files, however, and upon spending more time in the city, it became obvious that Rottenburg was somewhat renowned, at least within its local area, as having been a ‘resisting’ city during the Third Reich. It also seemed that over the years the city had in a sense cultivated this image of having resisted by honouring several prominent citizens. The first of those to be publicly acknowledged was former Württemberg president and Centre Party politician Eugen Bolz, who was born in Rottenburg and who had been executed in connection with the July 20th conspiracy. At the January 1946 ceremony to honour Bolz and twenty-three other local victims of Nazi persecution, the mayor made an intriguing speech in which he claimed that no city had resisted as much as Rottenburg and that “it was a solid bulwark of Christianity and as such an obstacle to the endeavours of Nazism and a permanent monument against its disgraceful deeds.” This was merely the beginning of a series of honours which were to be bestowed on other local heroes. The anti-Nazi mayor Josef Schneider, who will be discussed at greater length in chapter three, was given the title of honourary citizen of the city in 1949. He was followed by Josef Eberle (made honourary citizen of the city in 1961), another local hero who has been honoured over the years as


3For additional information on Schneider see StAR D11 Josef Schneider; Grosse Kreisstadt Rottenburg am Neckar: Jahresberichte 1992 (Rottenburg am Neckar: Rottenburger Druckerei, 1993), 5-6.
both a Nazi resister and a local scholar and poet, despite the fact that he had spent the
greater part of his adult life in Stuttgart. Finally, perhaps the greatest resistance figure in
Rottenburg was the bishop, Joannes Baptista Sproll, who was banned from his diocese for
seven years after having refused to vote in the 1938 plebescite regarding the annexation
of Austria. Much has been written about Sproll and he will be discussed in more detail in
chapter four. Having discovered all this evidence of resistance heroes, it was decided to
broaden the scope of the study to look at what the average inhabitant of the town
experienced, to include more aspects of opinion and to assess the extent to which the city
lived up to its reputation as a ‘resisting city’ and a ‘bulwark of Christianity.’ A study
such as this helps contribute to the ongoing efforts of historians to achieve a more well
rounded picture of life in the Third Reich and to assess the attitudes of the bulk of the
population. The case of Rottenburg in particular offers the possibility to examine a city
with a strong Catholic majority, thus adding to the ongoing debate regarding Nazism and
the support or resistance of the Catholic population. In addition, it provides a unique
opportunity to look at a city which was also the head of a diocese, ironically situated in a
highly Protestant area and in close proximity to the university city of Tübingen which
moved towards Nazism at a relatively early date.

Before beginning any investigation involving opinion or dissent it is important to

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1For information on Eberle see StAR 329 Ausstellung des Stadtarchivs Josef
Eberle 1991; Schiller Nationalmuseum/Deutsche Literatur Archiv, Marbach a.N.
(SN/DLA) Josef Eberle collection and Karlheinz Geppert (ed), Noch Johr ond
Tag...Sebastian Blau alias Josef Eberle (1901-1986) (Rottenburg am Neckar: Stadtarchiv
be aware of the large and often overwhelming historiography of resistance. Evaluations of German opinion and resistance in the immediate postwar period were heavily conditioned by moral and political judgements rather than careful historical analysis. It was a widespread sentiment in the West that the German people as a whole were implicated in Nazi criminality, based on the assumption of profound nazification of society under the Third Reich. Some historians identified a deformity in German history, arguing that the German people as a whole shared the perverted goals of Nazism. Others have referred to a tradition of abstention from politics on the part of a large segment of the population which opened the way to authoritarianism.

Challenging these notions, other writers have talked about the terroristic controls on the German public in the Nazi period and the forcible association of the German people and the ideals of the Third Reich. Many claimed that ordinary Germans could not be blamed for anything that happened after 1933 and that it should not be assumed that they endorsed Hitler's repressive apparatus. Some historians have even refuted the idea of studying public opinion under these circumstances, denying that one could ever know what the German people thought within these conditions.

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5 The best introduction to the topic of resistance and the difficulties surrounding it is chapter 8 of Ian Kershaw's, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*. 3rd ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1993).


One of the earliest studies of opposition to the Nazi dictatorship was published in the United States in 1948 by German historian Hans Rothfels.\footnote{Hans Rothfels, \textit{The German Opposition to Hitler: An Appraisal} (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1963).} Aiming his conclusions at an American audience, Rothfels stressed that he did not want to deny all responsibility of the German people, but that he sought to show that there had been an 'other Germany' which had opposed National Socialism in various ways. Largely because of the postwar mentality of collective German guilt, Rothfels' arguments fell on deaf ears. Not only were Americans unreceptive to this idea, but they prohibited it from being addressed in Germany. Allied censorship in occupied Germany from 1945 to 1949 would not permit any publications dealing with resistance during the Third Reich and it was only after 1949 that any began to appear.\footnote{Francis R. Nicosia, "Introduction: Resistance to National Socialism in the Work of Peter Hoffmann," in (eds) Francis R. Nicosia and Lawrence D. Stokes, \textit{Germans Against Nazism: Nonconformity, Opposition and Resistance in the Third Reich. Essays in Honour of Peter Hoffmann} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 4.}

Although more critical and nuanced examinations of German resistance did not appear until the late 1960s, a few pioneering studies were published in the \textit{Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte} during the late 1950s.\footnote{For more information on these foundational studies, see: David Clay Large, "Introduction," in (ed) David Clay Large, \textit{Contending With Hitler: Varieties of German Resistance in the Third Reich.} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2-3.} These and other early studies were written under difficult circumstances. Not only was the opposition dismissed as either nonexistent or hopeless, many important primary sources were not yet available and early writers felt compelled to defend their subject. The result was that most early studies of the German resistance tended to focus on the conspiracy of the 20th of July.
1944, this being the single identifiable instance of resistance.

Due largely to the questioning of the theories of fascism and totalitarianism, the advent of social history and the discovery of new sources, resistance historiography began to take a new turn in the 1960s and 1970s. Many scholars today suggest that the influence of the concept of totalitarianism on Western thought, which severely questioned the existence and role of independent attitudes under a totalitarian regime, contributed to the belated and uneven state of research on public opinion and resistance. Along with this decreased focus on totalitarianism came an increased interest in the social history of Germany during the Nazi period. Before the mid-1970s the social history of the Third Reich had been seen as secondary to studies concerned with politics or economics. At this time scholars began to investigate the nature of German society, and to show interest in daily relations between people and their personal experience of the regime. This new interest in social history has even been called one of “the most important substantive and methodological departures” in research on National Socialism. In addition, new sources, in the form of secret Nazi opinion reports (which will be discussed at length later


\[1^{12}\text{Childers and Caplan, 4.} \]
in this chapter), were discovered in archives and were made public for the first time.

Scholarly endeavours were helped tremendously by the availability of these sources which helped to create a more complete picture of the shades of opinion which had existed during the Nazi period.\(^{13}\)

Using these new sources and approaches several important studies were published throughout the 1960s and 1970s which paved the way for more recent research and led historians to see the Third Reich as a more multifaceted society. David Schoenbaum’s pioneering work, *Hitler’s Social Revolution* (1966), proposed a new agenda for research on Nazi society:

> That the Third Reich was “dynamic” has been part of the conventional wisdom of historians since the beginning. But until the implications of this dynamism have been further examined with respect to social groups and individuals in their social roles, new answers are unlikely.\(^{14}\)

Schoenbaum challenged historians to examine the impact of National Socialism “not on German thought and statecraft, but on German society.”\(^{15}\) Published at roughly the same time was William S. Allen’s classic study of a single town. The first of its kind, it provided a model for local and regional study and changed the way in which public

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\(^{15}\)Schoenbaum, xvii.
reactions to Nazi rule were studied by presenting a more balanced assessment of society in the Third Reich. Another early attempt at a comprehensive study of German society was Richard Grunberger's *The 12-Year Reich*. First published in 1971, this work examined different aspects of the Reich and various elements of the population in an attempt to explore the ways in which people responded to the Nazi regime. Dealing explicitly with the topic of resistance, Peter Hoffmann published his landmark study of German resistance in 1969. In the foreword to his work, Hoffmann admitted that increased willingness of witnesses to share their experiences, a greater availability of sources and a 'calmer atmosphere' than that which had existed in the postwar period aided in the research and writing of what is seen as the first comprehensive study of the theory and practice of resistance on the level of conspiracy, assassination and coup. Another important initial contribution was Marlis Steinert’s work on public opinion in Germany during World War II. Not only was this one of the first systematic examinations of opinion in the Third Reich which made extensive use of the newly uncovered documents, it took a step forward by asserting that independent opinion during the Nazi regime did exist, had been recorded and could be assessed through various

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means. Thus, it was only in the late 1970s and early 1980s that historians, using these initial studies as examples, began to truly encounter the 'other Germany' which Rothfels had proposed in 1948.

From the 1980s to the present, historians of the Third Reich have taken the study of German society to new levels through the development of Alltagsgeschichte. Meaning literally the 'history of everyday life,' this kind of scholarship has tended to concentrate on day-to-day experiences, attitudes and moods of individuals and small groups in a variety of regions and localities. There has been an emphasis placed on the continuities and persistence of traditional social and moral values in German society. In consequence, the effect of the Volksgemeinschaft in bringing about a kind of social revolution, or even the perception of one, has tended to be denied or de-emphasized. This fundamental reorientation of thinking has led to a further reduction of the notion of a Germany locked in the grip of one party and its leader, and the acknowledgment that there was a spectrum of activity existing in the Third Reich which ranged from open support and active consent to accommodation, non-conformity and active resistance. In addition, this approach has been used in other fields of German history where emphasis on regional history has served as a corrective to older and frequently Prusso-centric approaches.

This approach is not without drawbacks, as Richard Bessel accurately points out:

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21 See especially Peukert.
this new interest brings with it the danger of getting lost in the minutiae of day-to-day life in one local community after another—of a narrow antiquarianism and a myopic concentration on ‘ordinary’ concerns, losing sight of the fact that the Third Reich was in a perpetual state of emergency and that people’s everyday experiences were shaped by a political system which murdered millions of people. In short, there is a danger of trivialising the subject, and accusations that historians trivialise their subject have a particularly bitter ring when that subject is Nazi Germany.22

Historians, using approaches of Alltagsgeschichte and those embarking on local studies, must be careful to use these new perspectives to open up larger questions so that both the complexity of the structures of people’s lives are appreciated and analytical goals are maintained. When used in this way local histories of everyday lives can greatly contribute to our understanding of recent German history and help to either substantiate or revise earlier interpretations.23

As a result of these new approaches, the 1980s saw a veritable boom of national and international conferences and a multitude of publications encompassing a wide range of resistance activities.24 Moreover, many recent studies have not only yielded a more

24For more information regarding these and other more recent trends in resistance historiography see, Michael Geyer and John W. Boyer, “Introduction: Resistance against the Third Reich as Intercultural Knowledge” in (eds) Michael Geyer and John Boyer, Resistance Against the Third Reich 1933-1990 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For examples see also, Nicosia and Stokes (eds), Germans Against Nazism; Large(ed), Contending with Hitler.
sophisticated understanding of the nature and concept of resistance, but have gone far to enrich our knowledge of conformity and complicity. The work of the massive ‘Bayern-Projekt’ headed by Martin Broszat, along with the groundbreaking works of Ian Kershaw and Detlev Peukert, set the standard for current research and paved the way to broadening historical understanding of the complex choices faced by the average German in the society of the Third Reich. More recently the works of Omer Bartov and Christopher Browning have led us to a greater understanding of the complicity of the men involved in killing squads, as well as members of the army. The works of Claudia Koonz illuminated for the first time the role of women in the Nazi state and their involvement in Nazi eugenics and sterilization practices. Finally, recent work on the Gestapo, particularly that of Robert Gellately, revealed that Hitler’s dictatorship was dependent on information that was volunteered or otherwise solicited from the population at large. In many cases these newer works have moved away from trying to establish black and white understanding of reality and have instead attempted to integrate both black and white understanding of reality and have instead attempted to integrate both


aspects of dissidence and collaboration, leading to a more realistic picture of the society of the Third Reich.

One of the most recent developments which has influenced the historiography of resistance to the Third Reich was the publication in 1996 of a very controversial work by Harvard scholar Daniel J. Goldhagen.\textsuperscript{27} By looking at the complicity of ordinary Germans through their antisemitic attitudes and participation in killing squads, Goldhagen once again raised the issue of collective German guilt. This book unleashed a storm of controversy and precipitated the publication of many articles and books addressing his thesis, many of them highly critical.\textsuperscript{28} If anything, this book stimulated anew historians’ interest in the opinions and attitudes of the average German, particularly with regard to the Final Solution.

Definitions of the terms ‘resistance’ and ‘opinion’ are necessary before any discussion of these issues can proceed. It has been said that perhaps one of the most difficult problems confronting students of German resistance is the definition of their subject. Fifty years ago this was clearly defined as the actions of highly motivated political activists who intended to overthrow the regime, the 20 July 1944 conspiracy being the most obvious example. However, as the years passed and historians applied new methodologies to the study of resistance, the definition itself has fractured, creating a debate among historians which virtually constitutes a historiography in and of itself. An


\textsuperscript{28}For a selection of responses to this controversy see, Robert R. Shandley (ed), \textit{Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).
early and very broad definition of resistance was put forward by historian H.A. Jacobsen: "the concept of resistance must comprise all that was done despite the terror of the Third Reich, despite the suffering and martyrdom, for the sake of humanity, for the aid of the persecuted. And the word resistance in some cases applies, too, to certain forms of standing aside in silence." Jacobsen's definition saw resistance as anything at all which showed that the German people wanted to dissociate themselves from the crimes that were being committed by the regime regardless of whether the action was directly subversive. Another broad approach was taken by Martin Broszat of the 'Bayern-Projekt' which defined resistance as, "every form of active or passive behaviour which allows recognition of the rejection of the National Socialist regime or of a partial area of National Socialist ideology and was bound up with certain risks." Broszat tended to stress what was verifiable, that is to say, what was accomplished and not just what was desired or intended. As such he acknowledges that "forms of resistance, often neglected in traditional histories of Widerstand, in fact were types of subversion more capable of undermining the totalitarian dictatorship than efforts at fundamental opposition."

Other historians have argued that the meaning of resistance will become diluted if every dissenting thought and deed is classified as resistance, and that there is a need for categorization. German historian Detlev Peukert developed a set of concepts, which he expressed in graph form, ranging from nonconformist behaviour to refusals, protest and

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30Quoted in Kershaw, Popular Opinion and Political Dissent, note 7, 3.
31Martin Broszat, "A Social and Historical Typology of the German Opposition to Hitler" in (ed) D. Large, Contending With Hitler, 25-33, 30.
finally resistance, defined as "those forms of behaviour which were rejections of the Nazi regime as a whole and were attempts, varying with the opportunities available to the individuals concerned, to help bring about the regime's overthrow." Because of his concern with everyday life, Peukert took into consideration the fact that the average German would not have been in a position to participate in a conspiracy. Along similar lines, although he makes no particular reference to opportunity, British historian Ian Kershaw suggests that the term resistance should be restricted to "organized attempts to work against the regime with the conscious aim of undermining it." He further subdivides the concept to include opposition, which is defined as "many forms of action with partial aims, not directed against Nazism as a system and in fact sometimes stemming from individuals or groups broadly sympathetic towards the regime and its ideology." In addition, he identifies the separate idea of dissent as "the voicing of attitudes frequently spontaneous and often unrelated to any intended action, which in any way whatsoever ran counter to or were critical of Nazism." According to this scheme, 'dissent' could become 'opposition', but did not necessarily do so. For the purposes of this study, Kershaw's definition of dissent will be adopted as being most appropriate for the situation which existed in Rottenburg. With some exceptions, the type of opinion which existed in this community was expressed spontaneously and certainly without any relation to action intended to work against or overthrow the regime.

The concept of public or 'popular' opinion presents nearly as many problems as

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32 Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany*, 84.
that of resistance. When studying past public opinion many crucial questions need to be considered: What is 'public opinion'? Can contemporary researchers study past public opinion? What degree of constraint makes it impossible for public opinion to be genuinely independent? Among those who study public opinion there is little consensus with regard to its definition, in fact it is a concept which has provoked debate for about two hundred years. It has been defined more narrowly as referring to “the shared opinions and attitudes of large groups of people (sometimes called “publics”) who have particular characteristics in common,” or very broadly as “the study of collections of individual opinions wherever they may be found.” If there is no clear definition with respect to public opinion in a present day democracy, then there are obviously far greater problems in relation to its nature in a past authoritarian regime. As previously stated, some scholars have argued that it is futile to explore this topic in reference to dictatorships, either because public opinion did not exist or because it was manipulated to the point where it had no independent existence. Marlis Steinert was one of the first historians to explore these questions with regard to the Third Reich in her work *Hitler's War and the Germans*. Steinert not only concluded that independent opinion existed within the Third Reich, but that “indications and communications concerning the public mood were also collected from the most varied organizations and institutions and

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transmitted through numerous channels.” Thus, not only did the Nazis have many means of collecting opinion, but much of it has survived and, as Steinert states, these archival materials are “more vast and informative than are usually available to the historian of other periods and subjects.” So if in fact we accept the suggestion that independent opinion did exist in the Third Reich, and that it is possible to study it through various preserved sources, only the problem of definition remains. Steinert made use of the ‘terminology of the period in question’ with the dual concept of ‘mood and attitude’ (Stimmung und Haltung), stating that “it has the advantage of incorporating both the emotional, spontaneous, often short-lived opinion and the lasting frame of mind determined by character, education, and experience, representing the actual starting point of all assessments and expressions of opinions.” Ian Kershaw also discusses opinion in the Third Reich, calling it “an inchoate ground-swell of spontaneous, unorchestrated attitudes beneath the surface of the apparently monolithic unity, which was the regime’s propagated image.” He goes on to suggest that these “unquantifiable, often unspecific, diffuse, and ill-coordinated” attitudes and responses “held by large if indeterminate sections of society even though not normally publicly articulated” would be best described as ‘popular opinion.’ Incorporating the idea of spontaneity which appears in both descriptions, along with Steinert’s concept of ‘the lasting frame of mind determined by character, education, and experience’, a combination of these two definitions will be

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36 Steinert, 2.
37 Steinert, 2.
38 Steinert, 5-6.
used to describe what will be called ‘popular opinion’ for the purposes of this study.

Obviously under an ideological dictatorship and terroristic police state one cannot expect to find ample evidence of open ‘first-hand’ comments adverse to the regime. Thus, studies of opinion during the Third Reich must rely for the most part on ‘reported’ opinion. Because of the repression and fear involved, most people kept their opinions to themselves, so in all likelihood the reported opinion which was hostile to the regime was merely ‘the tip of the iceberg’. Nevertheless we have to face the fact there is no possibility of quantification of opinion and that “popular attitudes towards Nazism can only be reconstructed impressionistically”, and that conclusions “must remain, for the most part, tentative and suggestive.” If the existing documents are used in a critical manner, however, they can provide insight into popular opinion and dissent even if it is reflected through the distorting mirror of the records themselves.

The two main types of source material which are generally used for investigations of this nature are the confidential reports on opinion and morale compiled by agencies of the regime (Party, State, Police, Justice, SD etc) and the Sopade reports published by the German Social Democratic Party in exile. The Lageberichte (situation reports) and the Stimmungsberichte (reports on the public mood) submitted by the Nazi authorities themselves are, despite a number of problems, a very significant source. One of the main

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40 Kershaw, Popular Opinion and Political Dissent, 5-6.
41 For an assessment of these types of sources see Kershaw, Popular Opinion and Political Dissent, 6-10; Steinert, 14-18; Bankier, 4-13; Unger, “The Public Opinion Reports of the Nazi Party.”
problems with these sources is their uneven survival, some areas being better covered than others. In addition, there is the obvious problem of subjectivity and bias of the report compilers. Although many of these reports generally imply conformity and support for the regime, they can frequently be cross checked to assess reliability: SD reports tended to mirror the ups and downs of popular feeling more plausibly. In any case it is wrong to dismiss reports which lack cold objectivity, as they can still tell us a great deal about the society they are depicting. For the most part the Sopade reports complement and corroborate the findings in the Nazi documents, but they necessarily tend to stress opposition and rejection of the regime. Nevertheless, they have been called “a most nuanced assessment of the patterns of popular opinion in the Third Reich.”^43^ Other possible sources include newspapers, letters by anonymous writers, memoirs, church documents, contemporary eye-witness reports, proceedings of court cases and finally oral sources in the form of interviews with those who lived through the Third Reich.

For this study of Rottenburg a variety of these sources has been used in order to achieve a well-rounded picture of not only what happened in this town between 1933 and 1938, but also of how the town’s inhabitants responded to it. The town directory, the minutes of town council meetings, the local newspaper and regional statistics books were used to create a portrait of the town on the eve of the Third Reich, as well as to document events up to 1938. The body of source material reflecting popular opinion is naturally impressionistic. These sources include some published compilations of documents such

as Kopf and Miller’s *Die Vertreibung von Bischof Joannes Baptista Sproll von Rottenburg*. This and other collections of documents include letters and reports by local Nazi authorities and the SD, but other than the few documents which were available here, no other major source of situation reports or SD reports was found for the town of Rottenburg. The same is true of the Sopade reports which usually include regional generalizations highlighted by local incidents; unfortunately no such incidents were reported for this town. In addition, miscellaneous files on the political reliability of persons, victims of National Socialism and personal files regarding individuals in the community were found in the *Staatsarchiv Sigmaringen* and the *Stadtarchiv Rottenburg*. The only full length memoir which was used selectively was that of a town resident written about his boyhood during the Third Reich. These sources were examined with an awareness of the biases inherent in each and the best attempts were made to cross check between various sources wherever possible.

Methodologically, perhaps the most problematic source was a series of interviews with local residents. Until recently oral history was not very highly regarded in the study of modern German history, but in the last decade or so a valuable body of literature has been published based partly on oral sources. It has been primarily used by practitioners of *Alltagsgeschichte* in the attempt to recreate the history of everyday life or

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the history of experience. By definition an oral source is merely reported evidence which is communicated orally in retrospect. Diaries and letters also fall into the category of subjective personal evidence, with the difference being that they are contemporary. These sources, as well as memoirs, are all reported evidence and are subject to the same pitfalls as oral evidence, thus to use these other sorts of evidence while levelling criticism at oral history "is, to say the least, idiosyncratic." Nevertheless many historians who use other kinds of reported evidence still feel wary about the use of oral evidence. Using oral sources has its drawbacks such as, the unreliability of memory, variation of assessment over time, influence of hindsight, oversimplification on the part of the interviewee, unrepresentative sampling, biased questioning on the part of the interviewer and the dependence on using survivors and those who agree to be interviewed. Taking all the disadvantages into consideration, the positive outweighs the negative, especially in a study whose aim is to assess the experiences and attitudes of ordinary people for whom documentary evidence is usually sparse. Furthermore, oral sources are invaluable to the study of life under an authoritarian regime because freely expressed opinion is less likely to be found elsewhere and clandestine actions were surely kept secret. Oral sources also have the advantage of getting information not recorded in traditional documents, provide

48For a more in-depth discussion of the criticisms of oral history, see: Seldon and Pappworth, 16-35; also, K.Y. Ball-Kaduri, "Evidence of Witnesses, its Value and Limitations" Yad Vashem Studies 3 (1959), 79-90.
a different interpretation of personalities and events, can serve as a reinforcement or cross-check for documentary evidence, they enrich understanding and add a colourful dimension to the history.40 This study would have been at a great disadvantage without the benefit of the life stories provided by these oral sources.

With all this in mind it is important to be aware of the nature and purpose of the interviews, particularly since they came from an oral archive and were not conducted by the current researcher. The original interviews were done in late 1986 and early 1987 by students of the University of Tübingen who were working on a local history project which used the ideas of Alltagsgeschichte as guiding principles. The collection of nineteen interviews were first tape recorded and then transcribed. They are stored in the Kreisarchiv Tübingen and permission must be obtained in order to see them as identities of the interviewees are to remain confidential. The majority of the interviews were individual and a few were done in pairs and small groups. In total eight men and nine women, ranging in age from fifty-seven to ninety-three, participated in the process. Most of the participants were adolescents or young adults during the early years of the Third Reich and approximately four were employed adults at the time of the seizure of power. Ten of those interviewed were Catholic and not surprisingly came from a conservative Centre Party political orientation. Only three of those interviewed were Protestants, one of whom came from a social democratic background, the other a communist family and the last claimed to have no political interest. One man admitted to having voted for the

40 On the benefits of oral history see Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) and Seldon and Pappworth, 36-52.
NSDAP, however, neither he nor any of the other informants were convinced followers of the Nazis. The interviews were generally conducted in the homes of the interviewees and an explanation of the project, as well as assurance that their identities would be protected, were given at the beginning of each session. The format of the interviews was rather unstructured and open. Informants were instructed to talk freely about the years of the Third Reich and to discuss what they remembered and believed to be most important to them. This was usually followed up with a few questions by the interviewer for purposes of clarification. Not surprisingly, as found in other studies of this sort, interviewees tended to discuss their youth, family, occupational life and the personal hardships of war. Politics and city administration were topics which came up only infrequently or on the periphery of personal topics. The demonstrations against Bishop Sroll and his subsequent ban from his diocese were the only topics which appeared in all of the interviews, of both Catholics and Protestants. Specific observations on Sroll will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter four. Now that a profile of these particular interviews has been established, there are some specific concerns which should be addressed in more detail.

Although oral sources are an integral part of this study, these particular interviews are prey to some of the afore mentioned drawbacks and awareness of these is crucial to analysis. Firstly, there is the question of unrepresentativeness of the sample and having addresses.

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relied on available witnesses who were willing to participate. All those who participated in the interviews were either recommended by officials of the city or named by acquaintances. During the original interview process the students had hoped to obtain more names of potential interviewees, through a sort of ‘snowball effect’ by asking those who were already being interviewed. This did not happen however, due to the fact that the city’s people were reluctant to name other individuals. In addition, despite the fact the identities were being kept confidential, several informants decided not to participate after having already agreed to do so.\textsuperscript{51} One interviewee mentioned that his wife would not do an interview because she found it too painful to talk about and she preferred to forget.\textsuperscript{52} Perhaps it was fear or maybe it was merely a desire to forget, whatever the cause, the project group ended up with a limited selection of participants from the city. In terms of sheer numbers this is not a problem, however the majority of the participants were strict conservative Catholics coming from a Centre Party background, thus it was mainly a ‘Catholic opinion’ which was expressed. Considering the overwhelming majority of the population at the time was Catholic, this group’s opinion is significant, but it is important to recognize the potential bias. The viewpoint of the Protestants and other political groups was minimal by comparison, however it adds some essential insights and should not be ignored. Secondly, the fact that the interviews were done by others could be seen as a potential source of difficulty. The interviews, however, were not done by native Rottenburgers and they had no interest in perpetuating local myths.

\textsuperscript{51}LUI 107, Zwischenbericht über den Stand der Forschung.
\textsuperscript{52}LUI 89, Kneipeninterview “Zu Eintracht” 10.02.1987.
Moreover, it is likely that the interviewees were more candid with a native German than they would have been with a foreigner, especially when dealing with such a sensitive topic. Finding potential interviewees could have been an insurmountable task for this researcher, thus the existence of the oral archive proved invaluable. Unreliability of memory is a major concern for anyone using oral sources. The overall impression one gets from these interviews is that the participants discussed what was important to them at the time and as such has made a distinct impression on their memories. Although they may not know the exact dates of political events, they seem certain of the relative chronology of the events of their own lives. As Paul Thompson put it "most people are less interested in calendar years than themselves, and do not arrange their memories with dates as markers." Furthermore, most interviewees readily admitted when they did not remember dates, names or events. The oral sources used for this study were assessed with all these cautions in mind and in some cases descriptions of events corroborated the narrative provided by the SD reports and that of other personal recollections.

This thesis is organized into three main chapters, followed by a conclusion. Chapter two provides a profile of both the region and the town on the eve of the Third Reich, including a brief historical development along with an assessment of socio-economic, denominational and political structures. This chapter suggests that it was the town's Catholic character which inhibited the rise of Nazism. Chapters three and four will address the specific topics of popular opinion and dissent while discussing the major events which impacted the town during of the period 1933 to 1938. The third chapter

53 Thompson, The Voice of the Past, 135-136.
begins with response to the seizure of power and the major subsequent developments
under the strengthening of Nazi rule within the city. Chapter four deals strictly with the
Church-State conflict and how this directly impacted the town’s inhabitants. Particular
focus is placed on discussion of Bishop Sproll, the demonstrations against him and the
reaction of the town’s Catholic population.

This study will suggest that although the inhabitants of Rottenburg for the most
part did not have a favourable opinion of the regime, they chose not to speak or act out,
but took instead the path of accommodation or indifference like the majority of citizens in
the rest of the Reich. It was only when the Nazis made serious threats against their
Catholic faith and the traditional way of life associated with that, that the Rottenburgers
dissented and even performed acts of open opposition.
Chapter 2:
A Typical Swabian Town?

Throughout the history of the Weimar Republic, the former Oberamtsstadt Rottenburg remained what it had been for much of its previous history—a small Swabian town shaped by its medieval heritage and relatively untouched by industry. Located on the river Neckar, about 100 kilometres from its source in the southwest corner of Germany, and about twelve kilometres from the university city of Tübingen, Rottenburg was a small city of less than 8,000 people which was both an administrative centre and the seat of the Catholic diocese.¹

The city itself was built on ancient foundations first laid by the Celts in the 7th century BC. Their market settlement known as Sumelocenna was followed by about three centuries of Roman rule which ended in 260 AD with the invasion of Germanic tribes. From this point, the settlement largely disappeared from history until the founding of the present city in the late thirteenth century by the Counts of Hohenberg. The rule of the Hohenbergs was rather short lived, however, and ended in 1381 with the sale of both the city and the county to Austria. During the ensuing four hundred years of Austrian

¹See appendices A and B, pages 121-122, for the location of Württemberg and the county of Rottenburg.
rule, the city enjoyed a prominent position as the administrative centre for the county of Hohenberg, but also endured much tragedy and tumult. During the sixteenth century, the city suffered through witch trials and the plague, only to be decimated and plundered by Swedish troops during the Thirty Years War. This devastation, along with three great fires in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, left the city's small population in a state of poverty until the end of Austrian rule.

The city underwent substantial changes after the Preßburger peace of 1805 which made the city a part of the kingdom of Württemberg. It was in the initial years of this rule that the two institutions which would characterize the further development of Rottenburg into the twentieth century were established. In 1817 Württemberg was divided into counties and Rottenburg once again regained its position as the centre of county administration. Its administrative duties were enlarged when the city became the seat of the diocese serving Württemberg in 1821. Further developments over the course of the nineteenth century included enhancement of the infrastructure of the city. The founding of a postal station, a city newspaper, a telegraph station, a train station, a sewage system and the first large factory, served to modernize Rottenburg for the first time. However, by the end of the First World War, Rottenburg was like many other Swabian towns: situated in an agrarian district, showing few signs of industrialization, and still largely characterized by its medieval heritage. The soldiers returning from the war found the city in much the same state in which they had left it.²

²Sources for Rottenburg city history include: Dieter Manz, Kleine Rottenburger Stadtgeschichte (Rottenburg a.N.: Rottenburger Druckerei, 1988) and Rottenburg am Neckar: Bilder einer Stadt (Anton H. Konrad, 1974); Karlheinz Geppert (ed),
The main part of the city at that time still fell within the boundaries of the old medieval town which was partly surrounded by its walls and few remaining towers. The centre of the city, to the north of the river, was dominated by the large marketplace on which stood both the city hall and the Cathedral. Leading off the marketplace was the largest street of the old city, Königstraße, a wide business street filled with shops. Also dominating this side of the river were the immense Bishop's palace and the seminary located in the impressive former edifice of the Carmelite cloister near the banks of the river. To the right of the river lay the part of the city known as Ehingen, where both the city's only Protestant church and the more recently acquired train station had been erected.¹ (See city maps, appendices C and D, pages 123-124)

Within the walls on both sides of the river were winding alleys and a maze of old red roofed houses where the majority of the inhabitants resided well into the twentieth century. While many other cities in Württemberg had as much as doubled their population in the late nineteenth century, Rottenburg had seen only a 24% increase between 1871 and 1910, reaching a total population of merely 7,654 in 1933.² Some settlement had taken place outside the walls during the nineteenth century, but it was

¹Kreisbeschreibung, Band III, 422-424; Ulmer, 7-8.
²Häusser et al, 3-6.
concentrated on the eastern side of the city where the only major factory was also situated. This lack of immigration and settlement left a large core of 'old' inhabitants of the city who lived in the houses of the city centre, which had in many cases belonged to their ancestors for generations. This common history and close living conditions gave the Rottenburgers a feeling of togetherness (zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl) which was peculiar to the city in the early part of the century. This close knit community feeling is also mentioned by several interviewees who attest to the fact that relations between Rottenburgers at the time were more like those in a village (dörflicher).

Not only were the Rottenburgers of common origin, they were also united by religion. Due to strong Catholic tradition and lack of substantial immigration, Rottenburg had retained its distinctive Catholic character into the Weimar period. According to the 1925 census, 85.9% of the population were Catholic and only 13.7% belonged to the Protestant faith. This Catholic heritage had a history which began even before that of the city itself. In 1209 the Counts of Hohenberg had begun to build the St. Moriz church and later that same century land was donated for the erection of a Carmelite cloister. The first threat to this tradition occurred during the time of Austrian rule, as the presence of converts of the Reformation and the religious conflict which ensued is in evidence from 1523 to the end of that century. Despite this, Rottenburg remained solely Catholic, with a

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5 Kreisbeschreibung, Band III, 420.
6 Kreisarchiv Tübingen (KrT), Materialien des Projekts "Heimatkunden des Nationalsozialismus im Landkreis Tübingen" Projektgruppe des Ludwig-Uhland-Instituts für Kulturwissenschaft der Universität Tübingen, LUI 70 Interview with Herr and Frau H and Frau V. 28.08.86 and LUI 71 Interview with Frau K. 03.09.86.
7 Der Landkreis Tübingen: Amtliche Kreisbeschreibung, Band I (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967), Tabellenanhang.
Capuchin monastery being founded in 1624 and for a time a Jesuit college existed in what is now the Bishop’s palace. Thus, Rottenburg was a thriving and purely Catholic community until it became part of the kingdom of Württemberg in 1806 and Protestant soldiers and civil servants settled in the town for the first time. Both cloisters were promptly closed by the authorities and in 1811 the Protestants were given permission to use the St. Moriz church to hold their services. The Protestant population, however, grew rather slowly and remained at around only one thousand well into the twentieth century.

Despite the presence of the Protestants, the Catholic tradition of the city was further strengthened in 1821 when Rottenburg became the seat of the diocese for Württemberg and the first Bishop was enthroned in 1828. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the Weimar Republic, Rottenburg’s Catholics created a strong ‘Catholic milieu’ into

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9This move did not happen without some disagreement. The Catholic hierarchy of the state felt that there were more appropriate places where the Bishop’s seat could have been located, such as Rottweil or some other more Catholic area. For the most part they resented the government for choosing Rottenburg only because of its proximity to Stuttgart from where they could keep better control of Catholic affairs. For this controversy see: Reinhardt, 367-372 and David Blackbourn, Class, Religion and Local Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Centre Party in Württemberg before 1914 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 71.

10Oded Heilbronner describes this concept of a ‘Catholic milieu’ as “the patterns of cultural, socioeconomic, and political behavior often found among the Catholic inhabitants in various regions of Germany, especially the rural regions. These patterns bore the authoritative hallmark of the Catholic Church, the Zentrum, and the Catholic unions and Vereine.” Oded Heilbronner, Catholicism, Political Culture and the Countryside: A Social History of the Nazi Party in South Germany (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 165-166.
which virtually the entire population was integrated. Being the seat of the diocese lent both administrative prominence and prestige to the otherwise insignificant town. The strong presence of the bishop, the existence of the Catholic press and participation in a plethora of Catholic associations, brought the city's population together in a way that no other single integrating factor could or did. This type of 'cultural hegemony' allowed the city’s Catholics to essentially remain the dominant group which had "the ability to determine the local norms of behavior, values, beliefs, and mentalities, and even to influence voting patterns."\(^{11}\)

The overwhelming proportion of Catholics within the city was distinctive in the Protestant dominated state of Württemberg. As in the Reich as a whole, the Catholics of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Rottenburg</th>
<th>Oberamt</th>
<th>Württemberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>7652(^{12})</td>
<td>29 706</td>
<td>2 696 324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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\(^{11}\)Heilbronner, *Catholicism, Political Culture and the Countryside*, 166.

\(^{12}\)Population differs from previously given figures because data on denominational structure of the city was taken from the 1925 census, *Kreisbeschreibung*, Band III, Tabellenanhang.
Württemberg constituted a minority of approximately one third of the population and lived in clearly defined areas within the state. The most substantial group were situated in Oberschwaben in the lower southeastern part of the state, south of the Danube. Two smaller pockets of Catholics were located in the Jagstkreis in the area of Ellwangen, Aalen and Gmünd and in the Schwarzwaldkreis around Spaichingen, Rottweil and Rottenburg.¹³ The Oberamt of Rottenburg was situated in a relatively Protestant area, for the most part surrounded by predominantly non-Catholic districts.¹⁴ As Table I demonstrates, even the Oberamt of which Rottenburg was the administrative seat, had a substantially lower Catholic population than the city itself. The distinctly Catholic character of the city would later be the most important factor in determining political allegiances and particularly in shaping the relationship with the National Socialist regime.

In terms of economic development, Rottenburg mirrored to a great extent the situation in Württemberg as whole during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Württemberg was a relatively poor state comprised of villages and small towns, the only large city being Stuttgart. As a whole, the state remained economically backward and overwhelmingly agricultural until the middle of the century. This backwardness was partially the result of the state’s natural and geographical disadvantages. Württemberg lacked mineral deposits and, excluding the Neckar, all rivers were unnavigable. In addition, the state was handicapped by its position on the fringes of the German trade area, with only a small number of roads.

¹³Blackbourn, 61-62 and 242.
linking it to the more prosperous Baden in the west.15 Even after industrialization began, small to middle sized family farms dominated. There were also a great number of holdings of less than two hectares which supplemented the wages of industrial workers or craftsmen. Particularly characteristic of Württemberg were numerous industries which employed a small number of highly skilled workers and produced high quality goods such as musical and surgical instruments, clocks, gold and silverware and leather or cotton goods.16 Between 1870 and 1914 industrial production, particularly in the machine and textile industries, had greatly increased and the population had almost doubled. Despite this increase, production was mostly centred on the Neckar River Valley from Reutlingen to Stuttgart, downstream in Heilbronn and in the Black Forest and therefore did little to alter the foundations of the social structure of the state.17 The characteristic small craft production and the importance of independent artisans led to a tendency of decentralization within the state, allowing it to remain rather agricultural and rural past the turn of the century. In fact, as late as 1910, about one half of the population lived in communities of less than two thousand inhabitants.18

Agriculture was one of the most important factors in the economic development

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15 For further discussion of the causes of late industrialization in Württemberg see Blackbourn, 62-67, who also discusses the particular problems facing the Catholics of the state; and Thomas Schnabel, ""Warum geht es in Schwaben besser?" Württemberg in der Weltwirtschaftskrise 1928-1933,"" in (ed) Schnabel, Machtsgreifung, 184-218.

16 James Clark Hunt, The People's Party in Württemberg and Southern Germany, 1890-1914 (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1975), 21; Blackbourn, 63.


18 Hunt, 21.
of Rottenburg. When it became part of Württemberg it was an impoverished city, but in the mid-nineteenth century the cultivation of hops brought the city to above average levels of prosperity which lasted until the end of the century. Unfortunately, this concentration on agriculture led the city to develop extremely late in terms of industry. Moreover, due to a lack of railroad connections before 1861 the city was in a state of relative geographic isolation. The first major factory, the machine factory of Fouquet and Frauz, was founded only in 1873 and was largely ignored during the hop boom of the 1890s. Around the turn of the century a few other small industries were founded, but there remained comparatively few examples of the transition from handicrafts to middle industry.

The distinctive economic features of Rottenburg during the Weimar Republic were the relative predominance of agriculture, the below average industrial production and a large number of civil servants. In 1933, 12.4% of the city's population relied on agriculture as their sole source of livelihood and 568 people listed it as their second occupation. These figures are relatively high considering that it was a city (see table II). Only 31.4% of the population of Rottenburg, as compared to 40.3% for the state, was dependent on industry and craft for a living, and many of these dependent on industry were master craftsmen who practised the medieval trades passed down through

\[19\] Häsesser et al, 5; Kreisbeschreibung Band III, 351-355.

\[20\] For more detail about the specific economic and industrial development of the city see: Kreisbeschreibung Band III, 360-362; Manz, Kleine Rottenburger Stadt Geschichte, 106-111 and 113-115 and Von Eberhard Naujoks, "Die Industrialisierung des oberen Neckarraumes," in (ed) Franz Quarthal, Zwischen Schwarzwald und Schwäbischer Alb, 515-540.
Table II: Total Population Distribution into Main Economic Sectors 1933
(as a percentage of total population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Sector</th>
<th>Rottenburg</th>
<th>Oberamt</th>
<th>Württemberg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Forestry</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry and Crafts</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and Commerce</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public &amp; Private Services; Domestic Service</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-dependants without occupation</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>n/a²¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>7654</td>
<td>29706</td>
<td>2 696 324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Generations. Those who were involved in industry often possessed small agricultural properties and these so-called 'Feierabendbauern' worked as farmers on nights and weekends in order to supplement their income.²² The predominance of agriculture in this area was even more pronounced when one considers the Oberamt as a whole, in which 43.3% of the population were involved in agriculture and only 26.6% in industry. The relatively large number of civil servants within the city should not be overlooked. The presence of the state prison, as well as the administration of both the diocese and

²¹In the statistics available for the state the total number of unemployed persons does not appear because they were counted in the census according to what occupation they last held.

²²Ulmer, 9-10; LUI 71 Interview with Frau K. 03.09.86 and LUI 79 Interview with Frau G. 22.10.86.
Oberamt necessitated a proportion of civil servants which was above average for a small city the size of Rottenburg. These occupational patterns, along with the predominant Catholic character helped to shape the political tendencies of the city.

The particular denominational structure of the city definitely influenced political participation during Weimar, however there were three main blocks of the voting population which represented the city as a whole before the advent of the Nazis in 1928: the Catholic Centre Party, the socialist and communist Left and a group of 'bourgeois' and 'interest-group' parties. Of this last group, the 'liberal' DDP and DVP captured only a very small percentage of the vote in the elections between 1919 and 1928. They stagnated between a high of 8.8% and a low of 6.2%, in both the Reichstag and Landtag elections, before dropping off substantially after 1930. The scene was hardly more promising at the level of the state where they reached a combined high of 16.7% in 1924, after which they fell into continual decline. The conservative DNVP made their first appearance in Rottenburg in the 1920 Reichstag election, obtaining 2.9% of the vote.

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23 Because the official statistics grouped public, private and domestic service into one category, it was not possible to cite the exact number of civil servants resident in the city.

24 These parties included the 'liberal' Deutsche Demokratische Partei (DDP) and the Deutsche Volkspartei (DVP); the conservative Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP); economic interest parties such as the Bauer-und Weingärtner Bund (BWB) and the Wirtschaftspartei (WP) and splinter parties including at varying times the Christlich-sozialer Volksdienst, Christlich-soziale Reichspartei, Volksrechtspartei, Völkisch-sozialer Block, Völkisch-nationaler Block and Vaterländischer-völkischer Rechtsblock. These parties have been grouped together because, for the most part, they were targeting approximately the same class of the electorate and their individual proportions of the vote are so small as to make it difficult to observe trends.

25 When not otherwise specified, please see Appendix E, page 125 for details regarding election results for both Rottenburg and Württemberg.
Despite a few fluctuations they stayed at about this level for the entire time of the Republic. The DNVP fared a bit better in Württemberg as a whole where they captured 14.1% of the votes in the first national election; however, they steadily declined thereafter. The main economic party, the Bauer-und Weingärtner Bund (BWB) had great success at the state level, winning between 17 and 20% of the vote until 1928;

**Table III: Reichstag Elections In Rottenburg, 1924-1933 (in percentage)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>May 1924</th>
<th>Dec 1924</th>
<th>May 1928</th>
<th>Sep 1930</th>
<th>Jul 1932</th>
<th>Nov 1932</th>
<th>Mar 1933</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic (Centre)</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bour. &amp; Econo.</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSDAP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part. 26</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Rottenburger Zeitung und Neckar Bote, 1924, 1928, 1930, 1932 and 1933.*

presumably because of the support of farmers from the many agricultural districts of the land. In Rottenburg itself the BWB only once gained more than 2% of the vote and all but disappeared after 1930; in all likelihood their portion of the electorate became Nazi voters.\(^27\) In both the state and the city the NSDAP clearly gained from the collapse of

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\(^{26}\)For the city of Rottenburg all 'participation' was calculated from the number of valid votes rather than the number of votes cast, as the latter number was not always available.

\(^{27}\)The comparatively minimal support for the BWB within the city can likely be explained by the strong position of the Centre Party (who will discussed later) who responded to the same agricultural concerns.
these bourgeois and economic interest parties.²⁸ (see Table III and Appendix E)

The parties of the Left (KPD, SPD, USPD)²⁹ made only modest gains within the city, but were better at maintaining their proportion of the vote in the face of the National Socialist threat. The relatively low level of industry within the city was reflected in the vote for the Left. As Table III demonstrates, these parties gained only 14.3% of the 1924 vote, rose to a high of 21.9% during the Depression, and fell back to 14.1% in 1933.³⁰ For the most part, these proportions were about half of what they were for the state and were well below the Reich average.³¹ The results for the city show that any votes lost by the SPD were usually gained by the KPD, especially during the crisis time of the Depression. In fact, there was a virtual reversal of votes between the two parties from the 1928 election to that of 1930. On the whole, the Left proved more resistant to the pull of Nazism than any other group except the Catholic Centre Party.

The Catholic Centre Party was formed on a national level in 1870 and came into

²⁸All election statistics for Rottenburg are taken from the Rottenburger Zeitung und Neckar Bote and those for Württemberg are taken from Schnabel, Machtergreifung, 312-313.

²⁹Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD), the German Communist Party; Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD), the German Social Democratic Party; Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (USPD), the independent left wing of the SPD, which ceased to exist after 1922.

³⁰It should be noted however, that the election of 1933 is not an entirely accurate indication of support for the Left, as its adherents were under extreme pressure and subject to the political violence of the NSDAP. On the struggle of the Left see Eve Rosenhaft, Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence 1929-1933 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Donna Harsch, German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

existence on a local level in Württemberg in 1894. The prime motivation of the Centre was to respond to pressing economic and social concerns on the part of the Catholic electorate. Despite the minority of Catholics within the state, the party managed to capture almost 20% of the vote in Württemberg in every election until the end of 1932 and formed a part of every coalition within the Landtag until the seizure of power. In Rottenburg, as in many other Catholic towns, the Centre Party claimed the overwhelming majority of the votes and remained the strongest bulwark against National Socialism. Between 1919 and 1928 they consistently won at least 65% of the votes, their highest percentage being reached in 1920 and 1924, with 71%. Although the Centre stayed relatively stable in terms of actual number of voters, they began to lose out in proportion of votes beginning in 1930. Despite this downward trend, the Centre still won an absolute majority of 56.9% in 1933.

In both Rottenburg and at the state level, the National Socialists made no significant gains before 1930. Nazi support was first apparent in Rottenburg in 1928, where they won a measly 0.7% in the Reichstag election and an even more dismal 0.3%

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32 For more information on the formation and role of the Centre Party as well as the specific Catholic concerns (with a strong agricultural component) which they addressed, see Blackbourn, Class, Religion and Local Politics.
33 Schnabel, Machtergreifung, 312 and Gönner, Baden-Württemberg, 100-101.
in the Landtag election that same month. In Württemberg as a whole, the Nazis had made their first minor gains in May 1924, but then sank to less than half their former strength by the time of the Landtag elections of 1928 (see Table IV). Presumably their

**Table IV: NSDAP Proportion of Total Vote in Reichstag and Württemberg Landtag Elections, 1924-1933 (in percent)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Rottenburg</th>
<th>Württemberg</th>
<th>Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RT May 1924</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.2&lt;sup&gt;36&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT May 1924</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.0&lt;sup&gt;37&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT Dec 1924</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT May 1928</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT May 1928</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT Sept 1930</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT Apr 1932</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT Jul 1932</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT Nov 1932</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT Mar 1933</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Rottenburger Zeitung und Neckar Bote, Schnabel, Machtergreifung, 312-313 and Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?*, 476.

_initial success was largely due to protest votes in response to economic conditions, as demonstrated by their drop off during the elections held during more stable economic conditions of late 1924 and 1928.<sup>38</sup>

The September 1930 election has been seen as particularly significant on the

<sup>36</sup>In the May 1924 Reichstag they ran as the *Deutsche-Völkische Freiheitspartei*.  
<sup>37</sup>Nazi party was not actually reconstituted in Württemberg until 1925. May 1924 Landtag they ran as *Völkisch-Sozialer Block*. (Schnabel, *Machtergreifung*, 50).  
Reich level, as support for the Nazis jumped from 2.6% to 18.3%.\(^3^9\) To a far lesser extent the NSDAP also made their first electoral gains in Württemberg and in Rottenburg at this time. At the state level they won only half as many votes as in the Reich and in the city itself they rose to only 6.8%. Though in the following elections the National Socialists certainly made gains in both the state and in Rottenburg, as Table IV demonstrates, they always stayed below the Reich average, in some cases significantly so.

Why this lack of appeal in Württemberg? It has been postulated that a combination of economic and political factors worked to diminish support for the Nazis at the state level. The Depression affected Württemberg as a whole to a far lesser extent than the Reich or even neighbouring Baden. Peculiarities of its economic development worked to shield the state from the crisis (at least until the end of 1932), and in many cases the number of unemployed per one thousand persons was less than half of what it was for the Reich.\(^4^0\) Furthermore, the NSDAP in Württemberg was weakly organized, plagued by internal personal disputes and troubled by financial problems. This resulted in difficulty recruiting party members and mustering the support of the voters.\(^4^1\) Taking into consideration the relative weakness of the NSDAP within the state context, combined with the already demonstrated strength of political Catholicism in Rottenburg, it does not

\(^{3^9}\text{Hamilton, 476.}\)

\(^{4^0}\text{For reasons why Württemberg fared better during the Depression see, Schnabel, "Warum geht es in Schwaben besser?", esp. 208-209; for unemployment statistics see Schnabel, }\textit{Machtergreifung, 323-325}.\)

\(^{4^1}\text{For the history and problems of the NSDAP in Württemberg see, Thomas Schnabel, "Die NSDAP in Württemberg 1928-1933: Die Schwäche einer regionalen Parteiorganisation," in Schnabel (ed), }\textit{Machtergreifung, 49-81}.\)
seem surprising that National Socialism also failed to make serious inroads within the city electorate.

"We conquered the city halls!" This was the cry of the NSDAP in Württemberg following the municipal elections of December 1931 in which they began to acquire stronger support and in some cases win over towns on the local level.\(^ {42}\) In Rottenburg, they far from conquered, but it was the first time that they appeared on the local scene. Until this time the city councillors came exclusively from the parties of the Weimar coalition (SPD, DDP and Centre Party) and from the Bürgervereinigung, a coalition of the middle class DNVP, DVP and BWB. Going into the election the council had an overwhelming majority of thirteen Centre Party representatives, one from the middle class coalition, three Social Democrats and one member of the DDP.\(^ {43}\) In this election of December 1931, the former DDP councillor ran as a representative for a group called the ‘Ueberparteiliche Wählervereinigung’ and won a seat on the city council.\(^ {44}\) Although they did not run under the name NSDAP, this group was in fact representing the Nazis and the local Rottenburger Zeitung acknowledged that this election had been a certain success for the National socialists.\(^ {45}\) For the first time a member of the radical Right sat on the city council. Together with worsening economic conditions, this development may have influenced the presidential elections early the next year.

In 1932 five major elections occurred, beginning with the presidential elections of

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\(^ {42}\) For details see, Schnabel, “Die NSDAP in Württemberg,” 63-64.

\(^ {43}\) Gemeinderatsprotokoll, Rottenburg a.N., Band 60 (1929-1931), 2.

\(^ {44}\) Rottenburger Zeitung und Neckar Bote, Extrablatt (08.12.1931)

\(^ {45}\) Rottenburger Zeitung (09.12.1931). For more details on the candidates of this election and its outcome see Ulmer, 20-21.
March and April. In Rottenburg, not surprisingly, Hindenburg (who was backed by the SPD, Centre, DVP and DDP) won the overwhelming majority of the votes in both elections (see Table V). More alarming, however, was the fact that Hitler won 14.1% in

Table V: Presidential Elections-Rottenburg (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Hitler (NSDAP)</th>
<th>Duesterberg (DNVP)</th>
<th>Hindenburg (SPD+)</th>
<th>Thälmann (KPD)</th>
<th>Winter (Other)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 March 1932</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 April 1932</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Rottenburger Zeitung und Neckar Bote

the March election, a 10% increase over the 1930 election. It was in the second presidential election that Hitler received the highest proportion of the vote that the NSDAP would ever achieve in Rottenburg before 1933.

The Landtag election that same month and the Reichstag elections later that year saw fewer gains for the NSDAP in the city, but provoked the hostility of the populace nonetheless. In Rottenburg, the Nazis had already reached the peak of their support in the second presidential election and declined steadily throughout the year. The April Landtag vote resulted in 16.8% for the National Socialists, but this fell to 13.5% by November. Despite the rather low Nazi vote, the hostility to the Nazi presence in Rottenburg was high, as is seen through an interesting incident which took place on the night of the July election. On this particular evening, SPD city councilor Hahn had appeared three times in a drunken state before the NSDAP headquarters, where 60 members of the SA from Tübingen had been assembled for the protection of the local group, and shouted that the
The Nazi flag should be removed from the building. The local police chief believed that this action had endangered the peace of the city and resulted in the councilor receiving a fine.

Nazi gains may have produced bad feelings in Rottenburg, but they had more devastating effects on the state. The April win was the most significant because the Nazis, with only 26.4%, had won the largest proportion of the votes in the Landtag. This resulted in a National Socialist becoming president and the former Centre Party government continuing as ministers until after the 1933 vote. Despite this new status for the NSDAP, after an increase to 30.5% in July, the Nazi vote fell back to 26.5% in November, about 7% below the Reich average.

After Hitler was named chancellor in January 1933, the National Socialists had the press and the police largely under their control. Thus, it is clear that the March election was far from a free contest. Nevertheless, the Nazis fell short of their desired majority winning only 43.9% of the vote nationally. Württemberg still fell slightly short of the national average with 42% and in Rottenburg the NSDAP won only 24%. Though the percentage of the Nazi vote was far below the state level, it had almost doubled since November. As mentioned earlier, many of the Nazi votes in earlier elections had come from the demise of the bourgeois parties and this trend was still in evidence in this election. In addition, the Left lost over two hundred votes, the majority of those coming from the KPD. Perhaps Hitler’s appeal to the workers had won the Nazis some votes, more likely however, the violence and intimidation aimed at the Left had had some effect.

\(^{46}\) Stadtarchiv Rottenburg am Neckar, A80 6210 (Politische Parteien, Organe und Betätigung, nach ihren Bezeichnungen)

\(^{47}\) Gönner, Baden-Württemberg, 100-101.
on voting behaviour. It seems that the remainder of the National Socialist vote was likely gained from previous non-voters rather than from the Centre. As Table III demonstrates, the Catholic party had lost voters gradually, perhaps to the Left and the Right, but their increase in actual number of votes in 1933 suggests that the aggressive Nazi campaign to win over the Catholics of the city had failed.

The continued support of the Centre Party in the face of growing Nazi strength was not a phenomenon unique to Rottenburg. As others have observed, the NSDAP was never able to undermine the solid foundation of Catholic support for the Centre. Thomas Schnabel, studying the state of Württemberg as a whole, found that Catholic districts maintained support for the Centre Party and that Nazi votes came primarily from previous non-voters. Geoffrey Pridham, in his study of Bavaria, also notes the lack of support for the Nazis within Catholic districts. The works of Grill and Faris dealing with Baden, corroborate these studies, also finding that Nazi support was low in areas of high Catholic concentration where the vote for the Centre party remained strong. Even the work of Oded Heilbronner, which is aimed at showing the grassroots support for the Nazis in small Catholic communities of under 2,000 inhabitants, acknowledges that at the macro

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48 For details on the Nazi appeal to the workers in the later elections, see Childers, 243-257. For the difficulties facing the Left see note 29 above.
49 Details of the NSDAP election campaign can be found in Ulmer, 28-29.
50 Thomas Schnabel, "Das Wahlverhalten der Katholiken in Württemberg 1928-1933."
level German Catholics did not tend to support the Nazis. Thus, Catholicism "continued to act as a serious impediment to the rising tide of Nazi electoral success."

Whatever gains were made by the NSDAP in the March election in Rottenburg were clearly superficial as is revealed by the history and membership of the party within the city. The first attempt to found a local group in Rottenburg was actually made in 1926 by two students from the neighbouring city of Tübingen. Two local Social Democrats got word that these students were planning to hold a meeting in Rottenburg to gain support for the founding of a group in the city and decided to meet them on the train platform. When the two students stepped off the train they were so badly beaten by the local men that they had to leave on the next train. This action was seen as setting an example and no further attempts were made to found a local group until several years.

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53 Heilbronner, Catholicism, Political Culture and the Countryside and Oded Heilbronner and Detlef Mühlberger, "The Achilles Heel of German Catholicism: 'Who Voted for Hitler?' Revisited" in European History Quarterly, 27 (2), 1997, 221-249.
54 Childers, 260.
55 Details of the founding of a local group in Rottenburg and their membership are taken from Ulmer, Aufstieg und Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus in Rottenburg 1919-1933 (Zulassungsarbeit, 1967). Because the author was able to do interviews with several individuals, including members of the former leadership of the local NSDAP group, this source is particularly good for illuminating details and giving facts that were not otherwise available. It has to be used with caution however, as several methodological problems exist. The author himself recognized the problem of sources inherent in such a study (all files regarding membership and activities of the NSDAP in Rottenburg were destroyed just before the invasion of the French in 1945) and he also mentioned the issues associated with the evidence of interviews and stated that he attempted to cross check wherever possible. Nevertheless, footnoting is rather inadequate and in many places the reader is left wondering where the information came from. As he explains in note 35, his method for determining party membership was to survey the local residents and then do a cross check with the former treasurer of the local group. He also recounts anecdotes about the founding of the local group which came from interviews with the former group leader. This source is used with these reservations in mind.
56 Ulmer, 40.
later. In 1931, when party membership in the Reich was rapidly beginning to increase, a local group was finally established in Rottenburg.\(^{57}\) The first leader of the group was one of the secretaries of the *Oberamt*, but due to the instigation of the Centre Party he was transferred in 1932. At this point, the fifteen man group was taken over by twenty-four year old Walter Hesse who would remain the group leader (*Ortsgruppenleiter*) until 1945. Under his leadership the local group membership grew to just over fifty members by January 1933 and it was only after the seizure of power that membership increased more substantially. In early spring and summer of 1933 many people, particularly civil servants, felt they needed to join the party in order protect their jobs.\(^{58}\) At this time the leaders of the local group left many applications unprocessed or even rejected them because of suspicions of political unreliability and the desire to restrict the membership to true believers.\(^{59}\) Clearly, the Nazis did not have either a large or strong foothold in Rottenburg at the time of the *Machtergreifung*.

Despite this lack of support in Rottenburg, the *Gleichschaltung* took place in much the same manner as it did in the rest of the Reich.\(^{60}\) Over the course of the first year, the leaders and authorities of the city were replaced with loyal Nazis or those in the existing positions joined the party. The most conspicuous example of this was the replacement of the city's mayor by a National Socialist mayor from another part of the

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\(^{58}\) LUI 88 Interview with Herr A. 28.01.1987.

\(^{59}\) Ulmer, 41 & 44.

\(^{60}\) For an example of the *Gleichschaltung* in another community of approximately the same size see William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*. 
state. In addition, the city's clubs were amalgamated or eliminated, causing the number of such organizations in the city to drop from over eighty to less than fifty. There was also a considerable shrinking process within the remaining clubs. For example, the singing club lost 150 members after being taken over by the National Socialist mayor. Nazi administration and organizations, including the SA, HJ, NS-Frauenschaft, Deutsche Arbeitsfront, Kraft durch Freude and NS-Volkshofahl, rapidly filled the gaps. The Rottenburger Nachrichten appeared in October 1933 as the National Socialist counterpart to the formerly Centre Party oriented Rottenburger Zeitung and in 1938 took over as the city's only official newspaper. The assault on religion reached a high point in 1936 when the denominational schools were dissolved and replaced with a 'Deutsche Volksschule,' and ended with the Bishop being driven out of the city in 1938.

The Nazis themselves admitted that in the beginning few Rottenburgers had believed in the 'idea of National Socialism' and that this 'Hochburg des Zentrums' had not been easy to win over, but in 1938 they claimed that "after five years of work, Rottenburg stands as a part of the united Volk true to its Führer." To what extent was this statement true? How did this solid Catholic town respond to the Nazi administration and the changes following the take over of power? In particular, how did they respond to

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64 "Rottenburg im Dritten Reich," in Einwohnerbuch 1938/39, V-VI.
the attack on their religion and their traditional Catholic way of life? These will be the questions which form the basis for examination in the following two chapters.
This original Rottenburg expression exemplified the population’s basic attitude toward the seizure of power by the National Socialist regime. They felt that they could do nothing to stop the Nazis and feared for their personal well being, therefore the majority withdrew into the private sphere and made no outright attempts to resist. This did not mean total compliance, however, and the Nazis were not fully successful in their attempts to integrate the inhabitants into their ideal of a Volksgecneinschaft. Firmly entrenched ideologies and the adherence to the customary way of life in the town served to hinder the Nazi ambitions and limit the extent to which indoctrination was possible. In the years following the Machtregriigung, several examples serve to show that the population of Rottenburg did not accept these changes without challenging them, that previous convictions and ideologies tended to win out and that the prevailing mood of the

1"Fool, you can do nothing/ before you look around/ you are in the slaughterhouse/ so, hold your tongue/ and take part in what is most important." This is an original Rottenburg expression which was communicated by Landrat Friedrich Haugg to Ulmer, Aufstieg und Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus in Rottenburg 1919-1938 (Zulassungsarbeit, 1967),33.
inhabitants was one ranging from dissent to grudging acceptance and indifference.

After briefly examining Nazi goals and the means by which they hoped to achieve them, we will return to Rottenburg as it stood in the early part of 1933 and proceed to look at how the take over of power was achieved and how the population responded to it. As some of the earliest victims of Nazi terror, the reaction of the communists and socialists will be considered. Moreover, the Nazis' infiltration of the town council and the deposition of the mayor offer revealing examples of the durability of existing convictions and perhaps the naivety of the Centre party politicians. The coordination of existing social groups and clubs, along with the creation of Nazi organizations formed an important part of the Nazi program in Rottenburg. A look at a 1934 rally organized by the SA, however, gives us an idea of the lack of support on the part of the Rottenburgers and the seeming failure of the Nazis in coordinating the social sphere of the city. Lastly, the inhabitants' attitudes toward the Jews and measures taken against them give an indication that in some cases mere indifference to or disapproval of Nazi measures could nevertheless be fatal to the 'enemies' of the state.

The Nazis saw their Machtergreifung as more than just a change of government, but rather the beginning of a revolution that would transform German society along the lines of their racially centred ideology. Through the use of pseudo-legal manoeuvres to gain control of the state and its machinery, widespread use of terror and the intense use of propaganda, the Nazis hoped to achieve their goal of the Volksgemeinschaft. Thus, their

2 For a brief review of Nazi aims and ideology see: David Welch, "Manufacturing a Consensus: Nazi Propaganda and the Building of a 'National Community'," "Contemporary European History, 2:1 (1993), 1-15 and Welch,
central goal was "radically to restructure German society so that the prevailing class, religious and sectional loyalties would be replaced by a new heightened national awareness." They hoped to achieve this goal by "the obligatory assimilation within the state of all political, economic and cultural activities," in a process known as Gleichschaltung or coordination. Although propaganda presented an image of a successful 'national community,' recent scholarship has suggested that this was far from the reality. The alleged Volksgemeinschaft failed to break down societal divisions or even the awareness of them. Nazi attempts were particularly ineffective in the face of strong counter opinion, such as among Catholics and industrial workers. Such was the case in Rottenburg, where we noted in the previous chapter that by the spring of 1933, the Nazis had failed to win over the majority of the population of the city. This would continue in Rottenburg throughout the take over of power and indeed, throughout the entire period of the Third Reich. We will return now to the early stages of the


For examples of this see, Welch, "Manufacturing a Consensus"; Ian Kershaw, "How Effective was Nazi Propaganda?" in ed. David Welch, Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 180-205 and Kershaw, Popular Opinion and Political Dissent.

STAR 9980 contains a list of persons from Rottenburg who were imprisoned by the Nazis, the reasons why they were arrested and the dates of incarceration. Evidence from this list suggests that Rottenburgers continued to maintain their dissenting stance throughout the entire period of the Third Reich. Reasons for arrest included: sermons against the Nazis; smuggling of treasonous writings; subversion of the army (zersetzung der Wehrkraft); harbouring a Canadian fighter pilot; insulting the Reich propaganda minister; alleged high treason; uttering disapproving comments about the regime and
Machtergreifung in Rottenburg and attempt to assess the reactions of the population to the changes imposed by Nazi rule.

That day in late January 1933, when Hitler was named chancellor, seemed unremarkable to most and came as a surprise to even the local NSDAP in Rottenburg. There was no torch light parade, no evidence or feeling of revolution and the local group was satisfied to mark the occasion with a few small political meetings over the next few days. The only signs of uproar were a few nights when some young Nazis assembled outside the houses of well known Centre party adherents and demanded admission. Because of good community relations, however, no violent scenes ensued at that point or any other time before the final election in March 1933. It has been reported that the election day was calm as the inhabitants eagerly awaited the results of the vote. It was only after the results were in that the Nazis of Rottenburg began to take action against their political enemies, and like the rest of Germany, the socialists and communists were some of the first on the list.

Aside from the Centre Party, the parties of the Left were the other major political force in Rottenburg and consistently beat the NSDAP in every election until March 1933 (see Appendix E). Thus, it would be negligent to fail to consider their fate and their attitudes toward the regime. The evidence regarding their activities following the takeover of power, however, is very sparse and vague at best. There are at least two reasons for this lack of information. First, because the parties of the Left were a major

listening to forbidden foreign radio broadcasts.

7Ulmer, 33; LUI 86 Interview with Herr U. 19.11.1986.
8Ulmer, 29.
political target of the Nazis, any resistance activity undertaken by these individuals was done underground and records were either not kept, were destroyed or were well hidden. Thus, the only time their activities or dissent were apparent was when they had to face punishment for misdeeds and it was recorded in government records. Second, of the twenty interviews which were originally recorded for the *Heimatkunde*, only two were with individuals whose families had been part of the Left. Hence, what little can be gleaned from the existing documents is rather subjective, however, undoubtedly suggestive of the atmosphere following the *Machtergreifung*.

In most areas of Germany the final election campaign involved a large amount of political violence, focussed specifically at the KPD and SPD with the aim of hindering their campaigns. Perhaps because of the focus on capturing Centre party votes, the NSDAP in Rottenburg did not focus as strongly on the Left. The steep decline in the number of votes for the Left in the final elections leaves no doubt that there was pressure applied to both the communists and socialists by the local Nazis in either the form of propaganda or intimidation, but local inhabitants recollect no instances of violence.

Community relations, once again most likely had an effect on the level of political

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10LUI 79 Interview with Frau G. 22.10.86, whose father had been a member of the KPD; LUI 80 Interview with Herr K. 6.11.86, whose father had been a member of the SPD.
violence at the early stages. As opposed to the NSDAP who were seen by the local inhabitants as outsiders who had only recently become a part of the city (Hereingeschmeckte), the Communists were people who had lived in the city for generations, were either Catholic or Protestant and were seen to be hardworking (schaffige) and orderly people in the eyes of the Rottenburgers. Thus, it was only after the Nazis had 'legally' come to power in Rottenburg that they felt able to take action against the Left.

In other communities, such as Allen’s Northeim for example, the SPD, while retaining their inner convictions, had shown signs of giving in to the Nazi persecution even before the election. It was only after the election that the socialists of Rottenburg began to take precautions to prevent themselves from coming under attack. Herr K. relates a story from his childhood which indicates that although the SPD avoided open acts of resistance, individual members remained critical of the regime and through small measures of dissent displayed their former convictions. Because Herr K. had come from a strictly socialist background, he distinctly remembers, even as a thirteen year old boy, the significance of the day Hitler became chancellor. Moreover, he remembers the official banning of the SPD and how his father responded to it. His family had many socialist pamphlets and leaflets, as well as paraphernalia from May 1st that his father felt should be destroyed and he said: “So boy, come now, we’re going to burn it all, everything from the attic to the basement and down in the wash basin, so that they don’t

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13 Ulmer, 19; StAR F27.3/8 Interview with Ursula Kuttler-Merz. 10.03.1997.
14 Allen, chapter 10, esp. 155-156.
find any traces when they come.” Herr K., not wanting to let go of everything and assuming that no one would find it, took his father’s SPD badge and a Reichsbanner song book and hid them behind the electric meter on the house. The authorities did come to search the house and found nothing. After the war, Herr K. retrieved his mementos and still had the song book at the time of the interview.

The interview with Herr K. also gives evidence that his father exhibited his dissent through the voicing of critical comments and jokes about the regime. Once again, community and personal relations seemed to be stronger than political associations. Herr K. indicates that few communists and socialists from Rottenburg were imprisoned\textsuperscript{16}, either because they went underground with their activities or because there was a certain sympathy towards them among the town’s people, even throughout the entire war. He states that this was particularly true of those Centre Party adherents who also remained true to their views. In one instance, his father had to appear before the district court for making disparaging remarks about the Nazis and was aided by a lawyer who was a Centre party loyal and knew his father. In this case, Herr K’s father was found innocent by claiming that he had a head injury from the first World War, that he did not know what he was talking about and that he would have been normal had they not sent him to the war in the first place. This excuse appeared to work again when his father made a joke about a

\textsuperscript{16}StAR A80 9880 (Wiedergutmachung nat. Soz. Unrechts Allgemeines, Opfer des Nationalsozialismus Organisationen). Based on a list of persons from Rottenburg who were jailed or sent to concentration camps, none were labelled specifically as adherents of the SPD or KPD.
Nazi official at the watch factory in which he worked.\textsuperscript{17} A higher Nazi functionary was present that day and when Herr K. was reported for having made the comment, the higher official merely responded by saying: “Leave that man in peace, he has a head injury from the war! He fulfilled his duty, he was there for the Fatherland!” It is likely that this Nazi official knew the man and presumably he wanted to just let the remark pass rather than make a legal issue out of it.

Thus, it was only in these small ways that the former members of the SPD could show their views of the regime: hiding forbidden material and making disparaging, but humorous comments. Herr K. states that in Rottenburg the socialists stuck together more and were stronger, but he gives no further indication of their activities as such. Similarly, Allen found that the SPD of Northeim “did remain loyal to their ideals,” but that “flight, internal conviction, irony or little triumphs” were the only alternatives left open by the end of the first six months of Nazi rule.\textsuperscript{18} In his ‘history of everyday life,’ German scholar, Detlev Peukert, also noted that although only a minority of workers could participate in underground activities of the former workers’ parties, “the politically passive majority was not readily reconciled to the National Socialist regime.” He went further to state that “those who did not bow to the pressure and make their peace with fascism still had to split every aspect of their day-to-day behaviour into inner reservation and outward loyalty.”\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17}The joke was as follows: “Ihr habt nur braune Hemden an, daß, wenn Ihr die Hose verscheiBt, daß man’s nicht so sieht!”
\textsuperscript{18}Allen, 191 and 200.
The communists of Rottenburg were faced with much the same options as the Social Democrats and the evidence of their activities is just as sketchy. As previously stated, the communists had a relatively good reputation within the city and enjoyed the sympathies of the population. Because it was a small town and because their numbers were relatively few, everyone knew who was a communist, and this was even acknowledged by a Catholic interviewee.²⁰ Frau G., the daughter of a KPD member, related that the community knew who the communists were and that they still maintained their political beliefs, and those inhabitants who had a problem with that merely avoided contact with them. She witnessed this in the case of her father’s store, where after 1933 some customers just did not come in anymore. Frau G. also recounts that the KPD was forced underground in 1933 and that they still continued to meet and create illegal pamphlets for distribution. She also mentions that her father’s friend Herr Bohnenberger was taken away to a concentration camp for his part in delivering the leaflets.²¹ Although there is no documentary evidence to corroborate Frau G’s story, there were other indications that the communists were definitely not won over by the regime. For example, Herr H. Knapp, the owner of a plant nursery, was taken into custody for three months in 1935/36 and again for eight months in 1937/38 for making disparaging remarks about the Third Reich. In his first offence he had shouted “Heil Moskau!” in the marketplace (an offense which seemed to be known to the people of the city²²) and the

²¹LU 79 Interview with Frau G. 22.10.1986.
second time he was detained for commenting that nothing was going any better in the Third Reich than it had in the second. The following story of Herr K. Diebold is also representative of the fate of political opponents during the seizure of power and the strength with which many maintained their beliefs and values.

On 7 April 1933, the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service was passed which made possible the dismissal of employees (among several other reasons) on the basis that "their former political activities did not offer the assurance that they supported the national state without reservations." The true purpose of the law was not to restore the civil service but rather to exact political levelling, intimidate potential dissenters and punish enemies. In Rottenburg, civil servants were forced to enter the party under the threat that they would lose their jobs. Although some of the local inhabitants viewed government employees as mere followers, a former city postal worker maintained that a significant proportion of the civil employees (especially those who had been loyal to the Centre party) only joined the NSDAP in order to save their jobs and that they never became convinced Nazis. This same worker went on to state that this option was not open to communists, who were promptly dismissed from their positions. Herr K. Diebold, an employee at the city electrical works and a known communist, suffered this fate in late 1933. Presumably at the instigation of the municipal government, an investigation into the political reliability of Diebold was begun in

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23 StAR A80 9880. Herr Knapp (b. 8.1.1897) was imprisoned from 20.12.1935 to 11.3.1936 and from 25.11.1937 to 27.7.1938.
24 Bracher, 213.
25 LUI 78 Interview with Herr U. 16.10.86.
26 LUI 88 Interview with Herr A. 28.1.87.
autumn of that year. A report by a police officer (*Hilfspolizeiwachtmeister*), dated 13 October 1933, stated that Diebold had been a recurring problem in terms of reliability. It stated further that Diebold had been a member of the Communist party until its dissolution, that he had refused to raise the swastika flag on the slaughterhouse on 5 March 1933 despite orders to do so, that he had been denounced by a coworker for having made anti-regime remarks and finally, that he had failed to give the required German greeting to the police officer while on his rounds through the city. A further report by a senior police officer assessed Diebold as a dedicated communist. This letter went further to say that he had been denounced by coworker R. Birlinger as having declared: “I’m not like the others, I won’t give in. I would rather shoot myself than become a National Socialist. I will remain true to my party and I won’t give in like a sack; for such people you must have respect. I am a communist and I will remain a communist and National Socialism will pop like a soap bubble.” Curiously, the police chief goes on to mention that Diebold had never been violent towards them during the time of struggle and that he was considered by the SA to be cowardly and underhanded. On the basis of these reports, the mayor’s office declared that Diebold was still a convinced communist, thus posing a threat to the national rebuilding and was forthwith removed from his position with the city.²⁷ Because this action took place so long after the take over of power and because Diebold was not promptly taken into custody, one may question the effectiveness of the town’s Nazis in effecting their ‘revolution.’ Although this may have in fact been a factor,

²⁷Sig. Wü65/29, Acc26/1961, 81 (*Durchführung des Gesetzes zur Widerherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*).
it can more likely be attributed to the chaos in municipal administration which ensued during the spring and summer of 1933 (these events will be discussed in the following section). The loss of his job was not enough to dampen Diebold's convictions, however, as he was taken into custody for several days in late 1939 and again for almost a month in 1945. Thus, Diebold’s story is an example of the strength of conviction of the city’s communists. Despite the loss of his job and repeated imprisonment, he made it through the war, his beliefs intact and was honoured in his city as a victim of National Socialism.

Along with systematically destroying the KPD and SPD as political opponents, one of the other most significant steps in the consolidation of Nazi power on a local level was the infiltration of the city council. Rottenburg, known for its Catholic character, had been under Centre party direction for the duration of the Weimar Republic. At the time of the Machtergreifung Rottenburg’s city council had a Centre party majority of ten members, two from the Christliche Gewerkschaften, two from the middle class coalition, three Social Democrats and one NSDAP representative, who had been elected in the December 1931 election. Josef Schneider, mayor and supporter of the Centre party, was held in high esteem by the city’s inhabitants and had been at the head of the city council for ten years. The story of what happened to Bürgermeister Schneider is typical of the Nazi Gleichschaltung of city councils.

28StAR S80 9880. Herr Diebold (b. 19.3.1890) was in custody from 18.9.1939 to 22.9.1939 and from 27.3.45 to 17.4.1945.
30StAR, Gemeinderatsprotokoll, Rottenburg a.N., Band 61 (1932-1933), 1-2.
The son of a Rottenburger businessman, Schneider began his legal studies in 1912 in both Tübingen and Berlin. After service in the first World War, he completed his studies in 1923. Shortly afterwards, at the age of only thirty years, the young lawyer was elected mayor of his home town of Rottenburg. Schneider successfully steered the town through the difficult time of inflation and then completed such projects as the development of an agricultural school, the building of a new bridge, the laying of a sewage system and the development of industrial land. The mayor had had the confidence of about 90% of the town’s population for a decade at the time the Nazis took power.  

The direction of Schneider’s political sympathies was never a secret. Even on 11 March 1933, the Rottenburger Zeitung published a telegram expressing the town’s loyalty and devotion, which Schneider had sent to former state president and resident of Rottenburg, Eugen Bolz. This showed the mayor to be a courageous man, but it also labelled him as an enemy of the state. After less than a month of attempting to work with the Nazis, Schneider was warned by the county administrator that they were about to have him imprisoned, so on 2 June 1933 the mayor resigned from his position. At the town council meeting he stated that: “After ten years in office, I think I should be allowed to decide my own personal fate.” Schneider then began service as a financial officer for the administration of the diocese and further fought the Nazis by defending the church throughout difficult tax trials which threatened its existence. He showed his loyalty and

32Jeggle (ed), Eine Heimatkunde, 284.  
courage once again in April 1938 when following a demonstration he was attacked and beaten by sixteen Nazis for having tried to defend the Bishop. The Gestapo attempted to arrest him later that month, but he fled the city and returned only months later. Finally, shortly before the end of the war when the local battalion commander Schuhmacher decided to have Schneider hanged, he was saved by the warning of a local farmer.

Following the war Schneider worked diligently for the rebuilding of the city and the state. In 1947-1948 he was awarded the post of honourary mayor, from 1946 to 1952 he was a member of the Landtag and in 1949 he was named as an honourary citizen (Ehrenbürger) of the city. Schneider was one of the citizens of Rottenburg who truly exhibited that he had maintained his convictions and was viewed with respect by the citizens as a true Nazi resister. The Nazi who replaced him, however, was not held in high regard by the citizens, but rather viewed with contempt for the duration of the regime.

Wilhelm Seeger was the man who was chosen by the Ministry of the Interior to replace Bürgermeister Schneider. Apparently the state felt it necessary to appoint someone from outside of Rottenburg, someone they felt they could trust. Thus, on 18 September 1933 Seeger was sworn in as mayor of Rottenburg. The irony of the

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34StaR D11. Josef Schneider.
35Gemeinderatsprotokolle, Rottenburg a.N. Band 61 (1932-1933), 291. It is significant that the Nazis made a conscious decision to remove the former Centre Party oriented mayor and have him replaced by someone who was at least nominally party loyal. In a comparative situation in Catholic Eichstaett in Bavaria, the former BVP (Bavarian People’s Party-the Bavaria equivalent of the Centre Party) loyal mayor was left in office for several years because no one was qualified to take his place. See Peterson, 300. In the case of Rottenburg, local Nazis obviously felt threatened enough by Schneider and the power of the Centre party to take the initiative to seek out a new mayor.
situation was that Seeger had only become a party member on 1 May 1933. Moreover, he had been relieved of his position as mayor of Isny in Allgäu on 1 July of that year because he was found to be politically unreliable and an opponent of the Nazis who would thus endanger the town. Seeger was seen by the inhabitants of Rottenburg for what he was: a Nazi who was hired to be reliable. By some he was seen as ‘150%’ loyal and extremely fanatical, but most others saw him as a coward (Angsthasge) who was afraid for his life and his position. Regardless of which position was taken, the bottom line was that Seeger was an outsider who could never measure up to Schneider and he never gained the respect or confidence of the city’s people.

Not only was the mayor driven from his post, but the remainder of the city council was also slowly infiltrated by Nazis as well. After the Gleichschaltung law of 31 March 1933 which dissolved the city councils of the country, a new election was held in the city on 26 April 1933. Obviously the town had not been won over by the Nazis as only four representatives of the NSDAP were elected and the remaining ten were all Centre Party oriented men. In contrast with the scene that ensued in other localities, the opening meeting of the new city council took place in a very civil manner. The chairman gave a report on the economic situation followed by a greeting to the new National Socialist faction in which he stressed the desire of the Centre Party faction to work towards the

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36StAR D11 Wilhelm Seeger.
38This was a comparatively late date for taking over the city council. Compare to Eichstätt where the council was also taken over very late: 4 May 1933. Peterson, 300.
39Allen, chapter 11.
happiness of the city in the spirit of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Evidently these pledges of loyalty meant little to the Nazis who slowly forced the resignation of five of the Centre Party faction over the course of the year. Anton Bader, who had served on the council since at least 1929, suddenly decided for reasons of age and health to apply for release from his duties as a councillor on 23 June 1933. Wilhelm Held and Karl Saile, who had also been councillors as early as 1929, decided to leave the council in August and September due to constraints on their time in their professional lives. They were followed in November by Wilhelm Saile and Karl Ulmer who gave no reason for leaving.  

Five new NSDAP members were quickly added and by the end of 1933 only five former Centre Party representatives remained. Strangely, the council was not entirely purged and four of these former Centre Party men were still listed as members of the council in 1935.  

It is difficult to assess the reasons for these exceptions. Perhaps these councillors had become true National Socialists or perhaps they had made adequate pledges of loyalty in order to remain on the council in hopes of helping the Catholic cause from within.

Not only did the newly appointed Nazis attempt to get rid of the actual Centre Party members, but they attempted to completely eliminate all vestiges of Centre Party influence through a petition to remove the honourary citizen status of Eugen Bolz. Eugen Bolz, born in Rottenburg in 1881, went on to become an elected member of the Landtag and state president of Württemberg. Throughout the years, Bolz had kept close relations

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40 *Gemeinderatsprotokolle*, Rottenburg a.N. Band 60 (1929-1931) and Band 61 (1932-1933).  
41 Sig. Wü65/29 Acc26/1961, 75. (*Verzeichnis der Gemeinderatsmitglieder*)
with his home town and on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday in 1931 Rottenburg decided to make him an honourary citizen of the town.\(^2\) On 23 June 1933 the National Socialist representatives on the city council introduced a petition to strip Bolz of his status based on the fact that he had allegedly shown himself to be a traitor to the people of Germany.\(^3\) The Centre Party faction managed to forestall the decision by virtue of the fact that they still had a majority over the NSDAP on the council. Nevertheless, the subject was raised again at the 13 July 1933 session where the National Socialists withdrew their petition on the grounds that the Centre Party had been dissolved in the meantime. Presumably they felt secure once they had been legally declared the only party in the state and raised the issue again only to point out their own victory without the necessity of approval from the council.

This narrative of what transpired in 1933 with regard to the city council shows that Rottenburg was not easily Nazified. Firstly, Rottenburgers had remained true to the Centre party in the final election of March 1933. Moreover, even after the Nazis were clearly in power, the Centre Party representatives were reappointed in April and attempts were made to try and work with the Nazis. Further, it is clear that mayor Josef Schneider


\(^3\)Bolz’s traitorous actions were in connection with a speech he had made in Austria to the Christlich-Sozialen Partei.
had not changed his political outlook and had maintained an oppositional outlook with regard to National Socialism. Finally, the actual failure of the attack on Bolz represents the continued attachment to the values of political Catholicism on the part of the representatives. Despite this obvious non-conformist attitude, in the final analysis there was nothing that could be done to stop the Nazi infiltration of local politics. After the political sphere of the town was firmly in the grip of the new rulers, they then moved on to the levelling of the social and cultural life.

The dissolution of social organizations such as clubs and associations was high on the Nazi list of priorities in terms of social levelling. That way people could be more easily observed, old ties would be broken making it more difficult to spread dissent and by giving a Nazi cast to all organizations, the inhabitants would become involved in the Nazi system. As in most other German communities, clubs, guilds and associations were of central importance to the cultural life of Rottenburg. Prior to the takeover of power there were no less than eighty such organizations with a combined membership of approximately 7,000. These included seventeen guilds and professional associations, two singing clubs, more than five sports clubs, sixteen groups for hobbies and special interests, four patriotic societies, several political associations and more than twenty-five religious and charitable organizations. One local resident reported that after the Machtergreifung all the associations and clubs were dissolved suddenly, almost overnight. They were told that they could reestablish new groups, but only according to Nazi rules, laws and

\[4^{43}\text{Allen, 222.}
\[4^{45}\text{Ulmer, 10; Einwohnerbuch 1930/31.}\]
demands. This, he claimed, opened the eyes of some residents who were not fully aware of the implications of National Socialist rule.\textsuperscript{46} Political associations, such as the socialist Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold were completely banned, other cultural and social groups were recombined and amalgamated. This led to a considerable shrinking process in the number of groups, as well as their membership numbers. For example, after being taken over by Bürgermeister Seeger the main singing group lost 150 members. Although the religious organizations survived this first Nazi assault, they came under great threat in later years and were forced to struggle for survival, as will be discussed further in the following chapter concerning the overall church struggle. All guilds and professional associations were brought under Nazi control or were recreated, as was the case with the teachers’ and lawyers’ associations. In addition, new Nazi organizations were founded in the city and residents were expected to participate. Within the first year, a division of the SA was established, along with a training school just outside the city. Organizations such as the Hitler Youth, the BdM, the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF) and the NS-Frauenschaft popped up as rapidly as the former organizations had been dissolved.\textsuperscript{47}

One would assume that such a shake up of society would incite resistance, but as Allen also found in Northeim, “the enormous social reshuffle took place without overt resistance.”\textsuperscript{48} In fact, the dissolution of associations and participation in Nazi organizations is rarely mentioned in any of the interviews. One man stated that some

\textsuperscript{46}LUI 67 Interview with Herr BR. 9.9.1986.
\textsuperscript{47}Ulmer, 33-34; Einwohnerbuch 1935/36.
\textsuperscript{48}Allen, 223; In his study of Körle, Wilke also saw no significant resistance in response to the Gleichschaltung, “Village Life in Nazi Germany,” 20.
young men, even Catholics, joined the SA as a source of employment, which was the case with his brother. He went on to stress, however, that his brother had never advocated NS ideas while at home. Another interviewee mentioned that he had to join the Deutsche Arbeitsfront because he opened a store, but otherwise he participated in no other organizations and was never forced to enter the party. Otherwise, only the HJ (Hitler Jugend) and BdM (Bund deutscher Mädel) were mentioned, in most cases only briefly. Most interviewees stressed that they had not wanted to join the organization, but were forced to do so by Nazi leaders or teachers. One man referred to it as a 'voluntary must' that all boys enter the HJ, thus some youngsters managed to get away with never joining youth organizations at all. A few stressed the continuity with former youth organizations and the normality of the group activities in which they participated. For example, it was observed that as a rule HJ leaders had formerly been boy scout leaders and that the NS ideology was not reinforced by them. One man even pointed out that Ortsgruppenleiter Hesse had gone from being the leader of a boy scout troop to being the local Nazi leader. In another interview with three people who had been young Catholics at the time the continuity of the leadership and the lack of ideological indoctrination was also stressed. They claimed that the youth groups were not political and had nothing to do with party politics. They also revealed that they had wanted to join the youth

51LUI 79 Frau G 22.10.1986.
52LUI 77 Interview with Herr GR. 14.8.1986; LUI 72 Interview with Frau Schl. 5.9.1986.
organizations because they liked the sports and amusement and liked to share in the fellowship of the other young people.\footnote{LUI 70 Interview with Herr und Frau H und Frau V. 28.8.1986.} Perhaps, as one man suggested, it had all happened too soon after the \textit{Machtergreifung} for everyone to realize what the Nazis intended, hence it was over before they were able to even consider resistance. Afterwards they showed their opinions by refusing to join NS organizations or joined them only when required or as a source of employment, while still maintaining their stand against NS ideology.

Next to radio and film, the daily press was the most important propaganda instrument by which the Nazis could disseminate their ideology. In Rottenburg, however, the struggle to win over the local press was not an easy one. The \textit{Rottenburger Zeitung} (RZ), originally founded in 1888, was the city’s only daily newspaper and was known to support the Catholic Centre party.\footnote{Utz Jeggle, “Zeitungswesen,” in \textit{Der Landkreis Tübingen: Amtliche Kreisbeschreibung}. Band I. Staatlichen Archivverwaltung Baden-Württemberg. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967), 644-650.} During the final two weeks before the March 1933 elections, the \textit{Rottenburger Zeitung} under editor Fritz Kiefer, began a public attack on the National Socialists. They accused the Nazis of lying about the lowering of taxes and interest rates, saying that they were hollow words used to gain voters. Furthermore, on 25 February 1933 the paper declared the city’s open support for the democracy of Weimar saying: “We declare support for a Christian people’s state. On the basis of equal rights we demand the liveliest participation of each citizen in the interests of the state. Equal rights and duties for everyone! We condemn any forcible attempts to overthrow the
Weimar Republic and we demand the most severe punishment for those who violate the constitution, whether they come from the right or the left...\footnote{Jeggle (ed), \textit{Heimatkunde}, 286.}

The paper then declared on 27 February that the NSDAP and their supporters were responsible for the seventy people in Germany who had died for political reasons during the previous month. In light of the racist and antisemitic tone of the Nazis, the paper published a question to the government asking them to address their position on foreign Jews. Finally, the paper lent its unconditional support to the Centre Party during the final stages of the election campaign.

On the basis of his open and courageous campaign against the Nazis, Herr Kiefer was taken into protective custody on the day after the election. After ten days of imprisonment the editor returned to his post for three weeks. By this point, life in Rottenburg had become unbearable for him and his family. He was constantly being harassed by SA men who stood outside his window and called him a 'black dog.' (\textit{Schwarzen Hund}). In light of this torment Kiefer and his family emigrated to Brazil in the summer of 1933.

The position of editor was taken over by Alfred Schwenger and the paper was forced to tow the party line in order to avoid being completely banned. Despite this change of administrative staff, the paper soon found itself in trouble again in early 1934. After printing the official newsletter of the diocese which contained a controversial pastoral letter written by the Bishop, the offices of the paper were raided and all copies were seized. The paper was forbidden to reprint the letter in either the newspaper or a
special edition. Again in 1938 the offices of the paper were raided in order to seize a diocesan newsletter which had been banned. In order to counter the effects of the Rottenburger Zeitung, which was seen as a middle-class, democratic, Centre newspaper, the Nazis established the Rottenburger Nachrichten (RN) as the official party newspaper on 1 September 1933. This publication, however, did not enjoy much popularity as the local inhabitants remained loyal to the RZ. In fact, in early 1934 the RN called upon the town council to regulate what was allowed to be printed in the RZ in order to help minimize competition between the two papers. Due to increased party pressure over the years the RZ was forced to abandon its formerly oppositional position and by 1938 it could barely be distinguished from the Nazi paper. Thereafter the Rottenburger Nachrichten ceased to exist and the Rottenburger Zeitung was labelled as the official newspaper and party organ of National Socialism. In 1939 the paper was dissolved completely (the Tübinger Chronik became the official newspaper of the district) and one man reported that the printing machines were smashed in order to prevent further publication of diocesan material. In the final analysis, the local press demonstrated a sizeable amount of both open opposition leading up to the Machtergreifung and attempted covert dissent once the Nazis were in power. Perhaps the opposition of the

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59 LUI 77 Interview with Herr GR. 14.8.1986. Herr G. was an employee of the newspaper during the 1930s.
60 Jeggle (ed), Heimatkunde, 286; Gemeinderatsprotokolle, Rottenburg a.N. Band 61 (1932-1933), 288.
press mirrored the general attitude of the city's population which was reflected by a demonstration against the city by students from the nearby SA training school.

Typically all the obvious changes that had taken place in 1933 were the result of Nazi action and had not come spontaneously from the Rottenburgers.\(^{63}\) This apathy towards the movement was the cause of the 'Rottenburger Revolution' which was initiated once again by non-Rottenburgers. In early May of 1934 the teachers from the nearby SA training school at the Schadenweilerhof organized a rally in the marketplace. The *Rottenburger Nachrichten* reported the details on 4 May 1934 in an article entitled "Rottenburg Witnesses its Late Revolution: the SA clears away the backward Centre Party adherents."\(^{64}\) The demonstration began with a march of the SA students into the marketplace and one of the teachers jumping on to the edge of the fountain to give a speech regarding their concern for the NS movement in Rottenburg. He began by saying that the teachers had come from all parts of Germany in order to teach students at the Schadenweilerhof and in doing so had gotten to know the city of Rottenburg, thus their reason for planning this rally. He stated that: "In Rottenburg things are not as they should be!" This he felt confident in saying after having lived near the city for only two weeks.

He went on to say that Rottenburgers claimed that they were National Socialists, but that there were no deeds to back up the claim: "in Rottenburg there are absolutely no National Socialist actions to be seen." He claimed to be aware that the Rottenburgers had not been

\(^{63}\) This was also true of Catholic Eichstaett where Peterson noted that the NS power seizure was external to the city, 299. This can be contrasted with Allen who found substantial grassroots support for NS within Northeim.

\(^{64}\) *Rottenburger Nachrichten*, 4.5.1934.
supporting the *Rottenburger Nachrichten* and that "real National Socialists, the kind the Führer needs, must have the will and the courage to show support for the Nazi press."

Further, he stated, "in the so called Rottenburger local library there is no National Socialist literature to be spoken of. After one year of National Socialist rule it is the disgrace of Rottenburg." He closed by attacking political Catholicism or the ‘schwarze Reaktion’ as he called it, shouting: "Down with the reaction! Down with the black dogs! Heil Hitler!" This was met with a ‘Seig Heil’ from all the National Socialists who were present followed by the burning of Mathias Erzberger’s book, *Erinnerungen*, which had been taken from the town library. Did this open demonstration and these slanderous remarks incite the population to resist? Just the opposite, there were no signs of indignation or outright resistance on the part of the inhabitants. Rather, they were silent, distanced themselves further from Nazi deeds and withdrew into the private sphere of their homes. The average citizens were not resistance fighters; they merely wanted to be left alone to live their lives in peace. Thus, at best it was this kind of indifference, rather than ideological conformity and full support which was achieved by the regime in Rottenburg. However, in many instances and particularly in the case of Jews, passive indifference was all the Nazis needed in order to carry out their desires. As one writer put it: "For the Nazi state to thrive, its citizens had to do no more than go along, maintaining a clear sense of their own interests and a profound indifference to the suffering of others."65

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It would be going too far to say that the Rottenburgers were profoundly indifferent to the suffering of the Jews, but it is significant that they did not exhibit dissent with regard to Jewish measures to the same extent which they had fought to save their city council, or as we shall see, the denominational schools. Further, the Jews do not seem to hold a significant place in the memory of Rottenburgers, some claimed even at the time of the interview that they were unaware of what had become of the Jews of the city. This could be due to the fact that there were very few Jewish residents in the city and also to the attempt on the part of local residents to forget Nazi terror. The modern Jewish community in Rottenburg was settled in the 1880s when R. Horkheimer established a business dealing in hops, shirts and cotton. His son Ferdinand founded a Putzwollfabrik which he operated until its Aryanization by the Nazis. The modern Jewish community had reached its highest number with 32 members in 1885 and by 1933 only eleven remained. There was no synagogue or other specifically Jewish establishments in Rottenburg, thus the Jews of Rottenburg travelled to Tübingen to worship. By 1933 the Jewish community of Rottenburg consisted of two families, the Horkheimers and the Berlitzheimers. They were considered to be truly Rottenburgers and were fully integrated

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67Kreisbeschreibung, Band III, 1972, 362.


69Joachim Hahn, Erinnerungen und Zeugnisse jüdischer Geschichte in Baden-Württemberg (Stuttgart; Konrad Theiss Verlag, 1988), 546.
into the life of the community. Albert Horkheimer had been decorated for his service in the war and he and his wife Rosa were the co-founders of the tennis club in the city. The Berlitzheimers, men's clothing store owners, had also lost a son in the war. There were no overt signs of antisemitism and local cattle dealers from the surrounding area were seen as absolutely essential to the economic well being of the community. In fact there is evidence that Jewish cattle dealers were still taking part in the weekly markets in late 1937. Despite the violence that occurred throughout other parts of Württemberg, particularly in nearby Tübingen, Rottenburg was untouched by both the boycott of 1 April 1933 and the Kristallnacht in 1938. Nevertheless, the property and businesses of the local Jews were taken over by the local government and sold to ‘Aryans’ in 1938. The


71For general accounts of Nazi persecution of Jews see among others, Hermann Graml, Antisemitism in the Third Reich (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1992); Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For an account of the Kristallnacht in Württemberg see, Harmut Metzer, Kristallnacht: Dokumente von gestern zum Gedenken heute (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1978). On Tübingen see, Zerstörte Hoffnungen: Wege der Tübinger Juden (Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss Verlag, 1995); StAR A80 9880 a postwar questionnaire suggests that there had been good community relations between Jews and non-Jews and that there had been no anti-Jewish violence throughout the Third Reich. The LUI interviews also give no suggestions of violence or antisemitism on the part of the population. It has also been noted that antisemitic propaganda was not a significant feature of the Nazi party in Württemberg. See Oded Heilbronner, “The Role of Nazi Antisemitism in the Nazi Party’s Activity and Propaganda: A Regional Historiographical Study,” in Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook, 35 (1990), 397-439.

son and daughter of the Horkheimers managed to emigrate to America in 1939, but the five remaining Jewish citizens were deported. The only remaining Berlitzheimer, Sophie, died in Riga in late 1941. The two elderly Horkheimer couples were deported in 1942—Albert and Rosa died in Auschwitz and Ferdinand and Jenny died in Theresienstadt.\(^73\)

How did the inhabitants of Rottenburg react to the measures which were taken against the Jewish residents of the town? It seems significant to note that the interviewees did not spontaneously bring up the topic of the Jews, but were willing to provide some limited information when questioned about it. Overall, the interviews do not give much indication of the reaction on the part of the population, but rather stress the friendly relations between the Jews and the town’s people and also the ignorance of the inhabitants with regard to the deportation.\(^74\) One woman related that the Jews had been very charitable people and how they had helped out very much after the war. She went on to tell how her father had risked his life to give food to the Jews and also how they had hidden the Jewish wife of Josef Eberle in their basement for a time.\(^75\) The primary

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\(^74\)Much has been written which contradicts the idea that Germany’s population was unaware of what was happening to the Jews. See for example Lawrence D. Stokes, “The German People and the Destruction of the European Jews,” *Central European History* 6(1973), 167-191; Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm, “The Holocaust in National-Socialist Rhetoric and Writings: Some Evidence against the Thesis that before 1945 Nothing was Known about the ‘Final Solution,’” *Yad Vashem Studies* 16 (1984), 95-127; David Bankier, “The Germans and the Holocaust: What Did They Know?” *Yad Vashem Studies* 20 (1988), 69-98; Ian Kershaw, “German Popular Opinion During the “Final Solution”: Information, Comprehension, Reactions” in (eds) Asher Cohen et.al., *Comprehending the Holocaust* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989). 145-158.

\(^75\)LUI 76 Interview with Frau B. 29.9.1986.
memory on the part of the Rottenburgers was the shock that they felt when they found out at the end of the war what had happened to the Jews. They claimed that suddenly the Jews of the town had disappeared and that they only had a vague idea about resettlement in the east or that they may have been sent to concentration camps. One man, who was a child at the time, distinctly remembers his teacher telling the only Jewish child at the school that she could no longer talk to the other students during breaks. He recalls that his main reaction was one of confusion. One wonders how the population could witness these increasing restrictions placed upon Jews and yet claim they were unaware of their fate. The interviews give the impression that the Rottenburgers did perform acts of kindness and that they were not entirely indifferent to the fate of their Jewish neighbours. Most likely, however, they were concerned with providing for and protecting their families, especially during wartime. In any case, it seems that the fate of the Jews did not rank as a high priority in the eyes of the Rottenburgers.

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76 For examples of this see: LUI 72 Frau Schl. 5.9.1986; LUI 73 Interview with Frau Sch. 11.9.1986; LUI 77 Interview with Herr GR 14.8.1986; LUI 79 Frau G. 22.10.1986.

77 Otto Kaltenmark, Und ein Kreig dazwischen (Berlin: Frieling, 1994), 95.

In sum, we have seen that the population of Rottenburg was not won over by the Nazis. Centre party representatives struggled to maintain their position on the city council and successfully protected the honourary citizenship of Eugen Bolz. Although the Catholic oriented Rottenburger Zeitung was quite quickly forced to tow the party line, its staff continued with covert acts of dissent and the population made their statement by refusing to read the Nazi party paper. The rally in 1934 shows that the NS measures to that point had failed to make an impression on the population and the interviews suggest that Catholics, communists and socialists retained their inner convictions to the greatest extent possible during the course of the regime. At best the population of Rottenburg was indifferent or passively compliant to the Nazi regime, however in the case of the Jews this proved deadly. As we shall see in the final chapter, their relative lack of concern for the Jewish citizens stands in contrast to the zeal with which they defended their Catholic way of life.
Chapter 4: State vs. the Church

In competition for the hearts and minds of German Catholics, the Nazis met with opposition from both Church leaders and their followers. In their quest to perfect the Volksgemeinschaft, the National Socialist regime sought to 'coordinate' the churches and bring believers in line with their Weltanschauung. Both the Church and the Nazis sought to permeate all aspects of the lives of the people and this brought them into particularly intense conflict after the Machtergreifung in 1933. From the struggle to conclude a Concordat with Rome in 1933 to the subsequent dissolution of Catholic organizations and denominational schools and finally to the position of the Church on Nazi policies of euthanasia and genocide, the conflict between the Nazis and the church has been both well documented and hotly debated.¹ As a predominantly Catholic town, Rottenburg was

also affected by the measures taken against the Church, but in the face of such measures maintained a great degree of social and spiritual integrity. As previously mentioned, the Rottenburgers were far from being Nazi supporters, the majority still voting for the Centre Party in 1933. Moreover, the spiritual and social cohesion of the community, exemplified through their Catholic ‘way of life’ and the influence of the bishop in the town, all worked to oppose the Nazi attempts at the Gleichschaltung of the church. Although the primary goal of this thesis is to assess the attitudes of the ‘ordinary’ people, in the case of the Church struggle in Württemberg it would be erroneous to omit or gloss over the role of the Bishop, Joannes Baptista Sproll. Though conservative in outlook and rather conciliatory during the early years of Nazi rule, Bishop Sproll soon showed his negative attitude towards the regime. Beginning with Sproll’s protests against Nazi measures regarding youth organizations and denominational schools, the conflict escalated, culminating in his refusal to vote in the 10 April 1938 election, which led to his expulsion from his diocese for the remainder of Nazi rule. After assessing the background of the Catholic church in the Weimar republic, this chapter will go on to examine the events of the church conflict and the role which the bishop played in both Württemberg and Rottenburg. With particular reference to the actions against the youth

organizations, the confessional schools issue and finally the Nazi demonstrations against
the bishop, the attitude and reaction of the Rottenburg population will be assessed.

Catholic institutions and religious life from the time of the founding of the
German Empire to the rise of National Socialism were characterized by a strong degree of
cohesion and vigour which reached its peak during the Weimar Republic. The experience
of Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s and the sense of being second class citizens
contributed to the solidification of Catholic identity into something akin to a subculture.
The Catholic Church prospered under the republic and Catholic identity was further
strengthened. The Weimar constitution removed all remaining restrictive legislation left
over from the *Kulturkampf* and guaranteed free exercise of religion. The Catholic Church
was organized into twenty-five dioceses and by the end of the 1920s,
20 000 priests served a population of twenty million Catholics, as opposed to the 16 000
pastors for forty million Protestants. New monasteries were built, religious orders were
founded, schools were established and Catholic organizations multiplied and flourished.
The *Katholische Jugend Deutschlands*, for example, had by 1933 a membership of over
1 500 000 in thirty-three subsidiary societies. The Catholic daily press grew stronger and
Catholic political influence was strengthened through the Centre Party.2 It has been
noted that ideologically the main point was defence of Catholic faith and institutions
against encroachments of the state, but also the threats of socialism, liberalism and
atheistic materialism.3 Thus, the integration of Catholicism into German society

2Lewy, 4-5.
continued unabated.

The Catholics of Rottenburg also prospered during Weimar. Though Württemberg's Catholics were a minority overall, the state experienced nothing like the Rhineland or Baden form of the Kulturkampf. In fact, during this period Württemberg has been described as an 'oasis of peace'. Thus, Rottenburger Catholics had been free to pursue their religious interests more or less unhindered by the foundation of the Empire. The Catholics of Rottenburg had their own school board which administered the Catholic Volksschule. In addition, the Bischofliches Priesterseminar had continued since its reestablishment in 1817, the Töchterinstitut St. Klara was founded in 1898 and a Catholic boys boarding school known as 'Martinihaus' was established in 1867. The two Catholic congregations of the city continued to flourish and in 1919 a Franciscan cloister was founded. From young to old, Catholics were involved in a plethora of confessional organizations: the Catholic Workers Association, the Catholic German Women's Association, the Catholic Youth and Young Men's Association, the Kolpingsfamilie and the Mother's Associations of St. Martin and St. Moriz, were just a few examples of the rich organizational life of the city's Catholics. Located in the seat of the Diocese, the diocesan press exerted much influence in the form of the monthly Kirchlichen Amtsblatt

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4Blackbourn, 62.
5Manz, Kleine Rottenburger Stadtgeschichte, 118; Einwohnerbuch für Stadt und Kreis Rottenburg a.N. Ausgabe 1935/36 and 1938/39.
6The Kolpingsfamilie, formerly known as the Katholischen Gesellenverein (Catholic Journeymen's Association) was founded in 1859 and the Rottenburg branch was the third oldest in the Diocese, Manz, Kleine Rottenburger Stadtgeschichte, 103. LUI 74, Interview with Herrn. V. 23.9.86, in particular, attests to the importance of this association as a centre of Catholic solidarity.
and pastoral letters of the Bishop. Although there was no purely Catholic daily newspaper, the Rottenburger Zeitung supported the Centre Party which exerted the most political influence in the city. Several church celebrations during the second half of the 1920s remain unforgettable to the oldest Rottenburgers. In 1925, Bishop Dr. Keppler celebrated a double jubilee: fifty years as a priest and twenty-five years as bishop. After Bishop Keppler's death in 1926, Bishop Dr. Joannes Baptista Sproll was enthroned just in time for the 100th anniversary celebration of the Diocese in 1928.8

Together with this organizational solidarity was a strong unity of Catholic belief, which involved traditions and customs as well as a deep love and respect for the bishop. The Catholics saw themselves as strict and conservative, and even the Protestants testified to the significance of Catholic traditions, particularly the yearly Fronleichnam (Corpus Christi) procession9 and the Fastnacht tradition, which had been practiced since the Austrian rule in the fifteenth century.10 The importance that Catholicism held for the believers is reflected in the passion with which they describe their activities and the great detail in which they recount certain events. For example, Herr V's description of the construction of the Kolpingshaus and the function it had for the city's young men, gives the reader a glimpse of the kind of togetherness and community that was felt among Catholics in Rottenburg.11 The bishop's image was definitely unsurpassed in the eyes of

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8Manz, Kleine Rottenburger Stadtgeschichte, 119-121.
9LUI interviews, especially LUI 72, Interview with Frau Schl. 5.9.1986; LUI 71, Interview with Frau K. 3.9.1986; LUI 70, Interview with Herrn.&Frau H. und Frau V. 28.8.1986.
10Manz, Kleine Rottenburger Stadtgeschichte, 101.
11LUI 74, Interview with Herrn V. 23.9.86.
Rottenburg’s Catholic population, as witnesses gave a distinct sense of the respect and admiration they had for him. When recounting the events of the Nazi demonstrations against Sproll, many were allegedly moved to tears. Moreover, the youth of the time held the bishop in high regard and saw him as a sort of father figure. One man testified that during the hard times of the Great Depression, the bishop would invite the children of the poor to lunch and sit with them and discuss their day. It was the power of these feelings and the organizational integrity of the Church which the Nazis sought to destroy and it was this threat which Catholics feared above anything else.

Although very little has been published regarding the city of Rottenburg or its population during the Third Reich, beginning with the diocesan publication of the pamphlet *Der Bischof ist wieder da* in 1945, a veritable mythology has developed surrounding the relationship between the bishop and the Nazis. Studies written by contemporaries of the bishop, Catholic priests or theologians and published by the

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12LUI 75, Interview with Herrn V. 24.9.86.
13Aside from studies which address happenings at the end of the war, such as Karlheinz Geppert’s contribution to Wolfgang Sannwald (ed), *Einmarsch, Umsturz, Befreiung: Das Kreigsende im Landkreis Tübingen Frühjahr 1945* (Tübingen: Schwäbisches Tagblatt, 1995), the happenings in the town and the attitude of the population towards the regime are only mentioned in passing in short histories of Rottenburg such as Manz, *Kleine Rottenburger Stadtgeschichte*, in the *Amtliche Kreisbeschreibung* and in documents related to the expulsion of the Bishop. The only real attempts to look at Rottenburg during the Third Reich were in brief, yet innovative articles in Utz Jeggle (ed), *Nationalsozialismus im Landkreis Tübingen: Eine Heimatkunde* (Tübingen: Tübinger Chronik, 1989) and Martin Ulmer’s Zulassungsarbeit, *Aufsteig und Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus in Rottenburg 1919-1938*, which addresses only the period before the war and was never published.
Church press, have tended to overemphasize the resisting role of the bishop. General studies about Württemberg and the Rottenburg diocese during the Third Reich invariably mention the bishop’s conflict with the Nazis, but usually take the form of straight narrative of events. Still others, including American historian Guenter Lewy, have come to more negative conclusions about the bishop’s role as a resister. It has been argued by scholars such as Lewy and Oded Heilbrunner that the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Third Reich had been for many years ‘obscured in extensive mythology’

and that it had been the agenda of the 'German Catholic research establishment' to maintain the Catholic image of resistance to the regime.\textsuperscript{16} On one hand, this seems to be largely the case when dealing with Bishop Sproll: arguably the bishop’s only act of resistance was his refusal to vote in the 1938 plebiscite. It can, however, also be argued that Sproll had made clear his position regarding the regime long before this. Although he was a traditional conservative, who at first attempted to comply with Nazi demands and greeted the Concordat with pleasure, both documentary evidence and the content of the bishop’s sermons demonstrate that he was not a supporter of the regime. It is true that the Bishop did not speak out in large measure in response to Hitler’s internal and external policies, other than those which directly related to church affairs. Nevertheless, the stand he took on Church issues such as the preservation of denominational schools and Catholic organizations and the opposition he voiced with regard to other anti-church policies was substantial. As already stated, much has been written about the bishop’s encounter with the Nazi regime, but no studies have taken the inhabitants of Rottenburg and their attitude towards the regime as their focus. Thus, the particular focus of this thesis will be the Rottenburgers themselves who took the bishop as an example of spiritual integrity and did their best to resist Nazi measures. For the most part this amounted to inner spiritual resistance, random acts of non-conformity and in the case of the demonstrations against the bishop, open condemnation of and opposition to the regime.

Before 1933, the Catholic Church demonstrated a certain ambivalence in

\textsuperscript{16}Lewy, xi; Oded Heilbronner, "Catholic Resistance during the Third Reich?" in \textit{Contemporary European History} 7, 3 (1998), 409-414.
evaluating Nazism. On one hand, they had pointed out the anti-Christian aspects of National Socialist ideology and declared them incompatible with Catholicism. Thus, they recognized the threat the Nazis posed and had taken a rather negative attitude towards them. In many dioceses priests were forbidden to take part in the Nazi movement, Nazi flags were prohibited at church services and in some cases sacraments were denied to adherents of the NSDAP. On 19 March 1931 the bishops of the Upper Rhenish church province (Freiburg, Mainz and Rottenburg) warned their believers against Nazism, stating that it was incompatible with Catholic teachings. Yet the episcopate had acknowledged a ‘healthy core’ in Nazism which was to be appreciated, including its assertion of love for the fatherland and its position as a strong bulwark against atheistic Bolshevism. The political outlook of the bishops had been formed by life in Imperial Germany, thus most were still convinced monarchists, all were conservative in outlook and were distrustful of liberalism and democracy. This lack of democratic conviction clouded the judgment of the hierarchy and prevented them from realizing the true character of Nazism in time to mount a concerted opposition.

After the Machtergreifung, Hitler saw that the churches, like all other independent bodies in Germany, would have to incorporated into the state. In his first few weeks in power he began the process of Gleichschaltung or coordination, by which he hoped to

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17 For a discussion of the historical and theological conditioning which caused this ambivalence see: Conway, “National Socialism and the Christian Churches during the Weimar Republic,” in (ed) Stachura, The Nazi Machtergreifung, 124-145.
19 Lewy, 12-18.
“convert the constituent forces of national life into loyal, supporting pillars within the new regime, or at least neutral flying buttresses.” The leaders of the Catholic church understood the dangers this could pose to them and sought to accommodate the Nazis, to attempt to bridge the gap in order to protect Church interests. This “coming to terms was facilitated by the ambivalence which had characterized the hierarchy’s opposition to National Socialism.”

Bishop Sproll also made attempts at accommodation with the Nazis in the early part of the regime. On 26 April 1933 he advised his followers to “take a level-headed and conciliatory attitude and avoid anything with regard to the regime which could lead to a misunderstanding.” In an official visit to State President Murr and Minister of Education and Arts Mergenthaler on 5 May 1933, Sproll gave his recognition for what the new state had already done against such things as Bolshevism, Marxism, godlessness and public immorality. In May the bishop allowed the Nazi flag in processions and in the church and by the end of July he also allowed them to be hung on the priests’ houses.

Despite a few minor incidents, the attitude of the regime towards the Church was one of peaceful coexistence, thus the Church saw no reason to alter its conciliatory

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21This was a strategy which was also employed in part by the Protestant church, see Shelley Baranowski, “Consent and Dissent: The Confessing Church and Conservative Opposition to National Socialism,” Journal of Modern History 59 (March 1987), 53-78.
22Lewy, 24.
24Köhler, 39.
instance. The episcopate failed to understand the true nature of the Nazi regime and they did not suspect that the Nazis were only maintaining civil relations in order to conclude the Concordat with Rome which was made official on 20 July 1933. On paper the Concordat ensured the freedom to practice the Catholic religion, the right to freely publish ordinances, the maintenance and establishment of confessional schools and the protection of Catholic organizations. The Church felt reassured that their institutions would be protected and believed that the Concordat created a legal basis for protest against any hostile measures the regime may take. It was also a coup for the regime as it not only increased Hitler’s prestige around the world, but officially excluded clergy from political participation. The pact also put the church under a certain obligation to the regime which facilitated a policy of caution when a more vigorous opposition would be called for in the future. Thus, the Concordat had results for the church which were unintended and likely unforeseen.  

Bishop Sproll was not specifically concerned with National Socialism as a political movement, rather with its attacks on Christianity and the Church. Thus, even before the conclusion of the Concordat, Bishop Sproll was concerned about the preservation of the Catholic youth organizations and denominational schools. When the first encroachments on the Catholic youth groups took place in early May 1933, the bishop wrote to state president Murr with statements of loyalty in order to protest the situation without upsetting relations with the state, but when actions intensified, the

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26 Sauer, 184.
bishop took a stronger course of action. The attacks by the Hitler Youth on the diocese wide meeting of the Catholic young Men's Association in Ulm on the 27/28 May 1933, were merely examples of wider action which was to start in June throughout the whole country. On 30 June 1933 the minister of the interior for the state announced that the National Socialist youth groups alone were the priority of the state and any groups which did not fall under this category were banned from wearing uniforms and certain Catholic associations were also to be banned. Sroll was moved to protest to the highest authorities of the state and the country. On July 4 he sent a protest telegram to Hindenburg and to Hitler and on July 3 and 5 he wrote letters of protest to state president Murr and vice chancellor Franz von Papen. Perhaps only because his protests coincided with the signing of the Concordat, were Württembergs Catholic associations saved from dissolution for the time being.  

Although the Protestant youth groups had been successfully united with the Hitler Youth early in 1934, the Catholic youth organizations remained a thorn in the side of the regime. Continued harassment of the Catholic youth caused the bishop to make a public statement at a mass demonstration in Stuttgart on 16 December 1934. In this he admitted that he was ready to accept the amalgamation of the Catholic youth into a uniform German youth organization, but not if the Reich youth leader Baldur von Schirach continued to show “the Rosenberg way...as the way of German youth.”  

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27 Köhler, 40-42.

28 Hagen, 146. Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi ideologue and author of Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts, caused major concern with regard to the regime on the part of the Church. His 'neopaganistic' views, anchored in the myth of the Nordic blood were seen as incompatible to church teachings and in 1934, the Holy office in Rome announced that it
defended the independence of the Catholic youth groups and pointed out that they had been guaranteed by the Concordat and the word of the Führer. In 1935 and 1936, the attack on Catholic organizations was intensified. Throughout Württemberg, Catholic youths were subjected to insults such as ‘traitors of the state and fatherland,’ ‘second class citizens’ and ‘dishonourable youth.’ These verbal and sometimes physical attacks on the Catholic youth culminated in the decree of 1 December 1936 which provided for the organization of all German youth into the Hitler Youth, which was now the only official state sponsored organization. Despite this law, many youth organizations continued to be active until their ultimate dissolution in early 1939. Even then some continued to meet illegally. The fate of the Catholic youth associations is just one example of the Nazi ‘coordination’ of Catholic organizations, thus ‘by the time the war broke out in September the Nazi State had succeeded in fully destroying the once so powerful network of Catholic organizations.”

Despite the intricate network of Catholic organizations which existed in Rottenburg before the seizure of power, evidence regarding reaction to their dissolution is sketchy at best. The Einwohnerbuch of 1938-39 shows that all previously existing

had placed Rosenberg’s book on the Index of Forbidden books. Much to the dismay of Catholics, Rosenberg had been appointed deputy for supervision of spiritual and ideological training of the NS party. Sroll saw Rosenberg as a particular enemy of the church and singled him out for attack on several occasions. For details on Rosenberg and this ideological conflict see, Lewy, 151-159.

39Köpf and Miller, 21.


31Lewy, 132.
Catholic organizations were still functioning at this time, however, little other
documentary evidence exists to help assess the actual state of affairs. One writer states
that the Nazis tried to dissolve the religious groups through harassment, house searches
and intimidation of the members to hinder them in their public work. The statements of
contemporaries do little to enlarge this picture. Some testify to the fact that they freely
entered Nazi youth groups and saw in them no political significance, merely a chance to
share time with other youth and to take part in recreational activities. Others claimed
they had adamantly opposed Nazism and refused to enter Nazi groups even under
personal threat. Another interviewee claimed that the Catholic Young Men's
Association had done everything to resist and had then continued illegally following the
dissolution. This claim is supported by a Rottenburger who as a boy attended Catholic
‘Gruppenabende,’ and describes an incident in which their meeting was almost
discovered by the Gestapo. Apparently, some parents refused to register their children
in the HJ or BdM even when ordered to do so by the Ortsgruppenleiter. Other Catholic
areas appear to have taken a stronger stance in the protection of the Catholic youth
groups. Grill, in his study of Baden, observes that Nazi action against the Catholic Youth
was reported to have created ill feeling among the population. For example, in the village

32 Ulmer, 34.
33 LUI 70, Interview with Herrn and Frau H and Frau V. 28.8.1986.
34 LUI 72, Interview with Frau Schl. 5.9.1986.
35 LUI 86, Interview with Herrn U. 19.11.1986. The anecdote about the Gestapo
comes from Kaltenmark, Und ein Kreig dazwischen, 76-82.
of Oberschopfheim the local propaganda leader was stoned by Catholic activists. In the Bavarian town of Eichstaett a conflict between the Catholic youth and the HJ over stolen banners led to public demonstrations which had to be stopped by the police and were followed by the arrest of a priest. Thus it seems that dissent regarding this issue was commonplace among Catholics, the reactions of Rottenburgers mild in comparison to many. In contrast to this was the more contentious issue of the denominational schools, in which both the bishop and the Catholic parents of Rottenburg made their opinions known.

The Nazi attack on Church education was at the very centre of their struggle to achieve ideological dominance and was taken very seriously by Rottenburg's Catholics and was openly condemned by the bishop. Although the Concordat of 1933 had guaranteed the continuation of denominational schools, the Nazis sought, especially between 1936 and 1938, to get rid of them and to make German school education non-denominational. Bishop Sroll, who had been increasingly involved in disputes with the state government, declared in a sermon on 19 September 1937 that teachers should refuse to give religious instruction in the spirit of National Socialism. He called for parents to remove their children from state sponsored religious instruction and to stand

\bibitem{Kershaw} Kershaw, \textit{Popular Opinion and Political Dissent}, 209.
\bibitem{Sauer} For details of the increasing ideological conflict between Sroll and the regime see especially, Sauer, 199-202.}
together in the face of threats as the first Christians had done.\textsuperscript{41} Following these statements the \textit{Flammenzeichen}, the main Nazi press organ in Stuttgart, began attacks on the bishop, misinterpreting what he had said and identifying him as an enemy.\textsuperscript{42}

Meanwhile in Rottenburg, local Nazis had carried out a campaign within the city to create a ‘German School.’ On 11 May 1936, at the instigation of school rector Wetzel, students were given an announcement and form entitled ‘Call for the Creation of a German School in Rottenburg,’ which parents were to sign and return, thus giving their support to the idea (see Appendix F).\textsuperscript{43} The form explained that in almost all the cities of the state, the Catholic and Protestant churches had been discussing the establishment of German ‘Volksschule’ for the beginning of the new school year. It continued on to say that this important step towards the \textit{Volksgemeinschaft} resulted from the requests of parents and guardians who had expressed their one hundred percent support for the idea. This clearly proved, it was claimed, that the need to create a German school was at hand. The document went on to explain that the existing confessional schools were only apparently such. It stressed that they were organized by National Socialism and were thus practically community schools as it was. After further arguments in this line, the authorities assured that religious instruction would continue to be given in the German School and that adequate time would be given for completion of religious duties. It closed by demanding that the parents vote ‘yes’ and asked them to return their ‘vote’ by

\textsuperscript{41}Kopf and Miller 130-131.
\textsuperscript{42}Sauer, 203.
\textsuperscript{43}Copy can be found in Stadtarchiv Rottenburg am Neckar, D11 Files on persons: Eugen Bolz. For discussion of the issue see Ulmer 48-51.
early Wednesday of that week. Because very few parents had returned their answers by the required deadline, the need for the creation of a non-denominational school clearly did not arise from requests of the parents of Rottenburg as the Nazis had stressed it had in other areas of the state. Over the next week, parents were 'convinced,' through a variety of means to show their support. In the days following the deadline, hesitant and dissenting parents were invited before the school rector, the teachers and a variety of party functionaries and reproached for their ambivalence. The Rottenburger Nachrichten of 14 May 1936 even supplied arguments in support of the plan in an article entitled ‘Your Child also belongs in a German School.” When still little response was shown on the part of parents, measures became more serious. The SA were employed to ‘visit’ parents in attempts to change their minds, parents who worked in the city’s biggest factory were pressured by the owner and civil servants were threatened with the loss of their jobs. Even the teachers participated in the intimidation, telling those students whose parents had not agreed that they would be victimized and in the case of one teacher, even assigned more homework to these students. Under this immense pressure, the parents were finally worn down and the newspaper could then claim on 19 May that the result of the vote had been an “unequivocal admission of the majority of parents in support of the German Schools.” It was kept a secret under what circumstances this ‘poll’ was undertaken and the force which was used to obtain the results. Among the parents, Catholics proved more resistant to Nazi threats: 346 out of 412 Catholic parents (84%) finally agreed to support the idea, in comparison with the one hundred percent support shown by the sixty-two Protestant families. In the face of such threats several Catholic
parents stood strong as the Bishop advised, even when serious consequences could be expected. For example, Karl Vollmer spoke out actively on the school issue and this was later cited as one reason why the state decided to deny his 1939 application for financial support for his five children.\textsuperscript{44} Thus, when direct attacks were made specifically on Rottenburg’s Catholic school in an attempt to actively secularize the community, this distinct focus put the parents in a position to take a stronger stand in opposing the local Nazis. Rottenburg’s Catholics were certainly not alone in opposing the creation of community schools. In his study of Bavaria, Ian Kershaw observed that massive amounts of intimidation and ‘chicanery’ of the voting were needed to finally obtain consent from the Catholic parents of the state. In fact, the efforts of the population of Eichstaett successfully saved its Catholic girls school and they continued to hire non-NS teachers.\textsuperscript{45}

Perhaps the most dramatic example of dissent on the part of Rottenburg’s Catholics was seen in connection with the bishop’s famous abstention from the vote on 10 April 1938. In this instance, the bishop did in fact “function as the symbol of traditional values” and the relationship between the people and their faith seemed to have been further strengthened by the episode.\textsuperscript{46} In this vote, the people of Germany were to give their support to the Anschluß of Austria and also vote for a new Reichstag. Although Bishop Sproll warmly greeted the annexation of Austria, he could not express his confidence in men that were fundamentally hostile to the Catholic Church. The day after the election the \textit{Rottenburger Zeitung} reported that only 4 767 of an eligible 4 768

\textsuperscript{44}Kopf, \textit{Leben und Wirken}, 189.
\textsuperscript{45}Peterson, 308.
\textsuperscript{46}Kershaw, \textit{Popular Opinion and Political Dissent}, 194.
had participated: the bishop had not gone to the polls.\textsuperscript{47} In fact, Sproll was the only official of the entire church hierarchy to not vote ‘yes’ in this plebescite. His personal protest was not meant as a collective or organized resistance of the church community, in fact on the day of the election he encouraged his chauffeur to go to the polls.\textsuperscript{48} Nevertheless, his actions led the faithful into broader conflict with the regime.

The story of the persecution and expulsion of the bishop is substantiated by reports of church and police officials and by the collective memory of Rottenburg’s Catholic population.\textsuperscript{49} On the day of the election itself party officials were already discussing how something ‘must happen’ with regard to the Sproll situation and radical elements planned a demonstration for the following night. Sproll, who had been warned of the demonstration by true Catholics, had left and gone to Freiburg. The SA marched to the bishop’s palace and while yelling such things as “Traitor, get out and go straight to Moskau!” they incited children to throw rocks at the windows and attempted to break down the door. After removing the party flag from the palace the demonstration ended, but was followed by five similar demonstrations in the following weeks, the final and most spectacular on 23 July.

The demonstration of July 23, which was effectively organized by state president Murr, produced the greatest reaction on the part of Rottenburg’s population.

\textsuperscript{47} Rottenburger Zeitung, 11 April 1938.
\textsuperscript{49} Kopf and Miller contains many reports of the various demonstrations against the Bishop: a very good account by Josef Sedelmaier, former chief of police is found in Kopf, Leben und Wirken, 185-189; a similar account of the demonstration on 23 July 1938 is found in almost every interview (LUI).
Approximately 3,000 SA, SS and party members who had been assembled from the surrounding areas of the state, marched to the palace and screamed “Put the Blacks on the wall,” “Hang the Jews and put the Bishop on the wall,” “to Moskau,” “to Dachau,” among other things. Amid sirens, screaming and small explosions, four hundred of the demonstrators stormed into the palace which was ransacked from attic to basement.

Witnesses recount the damage to doors, windows, even jars of jam and particularly a burning bed which was thrown from a second story window. During the demonstrations a diocesan administrator and former mayor, Josef Schneider, was attacked and received head injuries. Moreover, in conjunction with this demonstration, Konrad Kiesel and Ludwig Sambeth, both employees of the diocese, were taken into protective custody for eight days after being labelled as ‘Nazigegner.’

That night the bishop fled to Freiburg and on 24 August 1938 he was officially banned from the diocese by the Gestapo and had to spend the remainder of the regime in exile in Bavaria.

These direct attacks against the bishop caused dramatic reactions on the part of Rottenburgers. As already stated the demonstrators had been brought in from outside the town and of those few from Rottenburg who were in attendance, active participation was not observed. The Stuttgarter Gestapo reported to the secret police in Berlin on 25 July 1938 that the population of Rottenburg had taken a “hostile attitude towards the demonstrators.” They stated that the Landrat of Rottenburg was openly accosted in the street and such statements as “How can the police allow this to happen, that a building

could be stormed and demolished?" were heard amongst the townsfolk. As the buses carrying the demonstrators left the city, they were pelted with rocks in the outlying villages. Following this, 200 to 300 citizens assembled in front of the palace, some crying, and helped to clear away the mess created by the storming of the demonstrators. Former police chief Sedelmaier testified to the fact that there were about four hundred party members in Rottenburg at the time of the demonstration, but that it would be false to say that all were in agreement with the demonstrations against the bishop. He was of the opinion that it was small number of radicals who had incited the actions, but that a good number of party members at the demonstration were not participating in the shouting and destruction of the palace and that they condemned these scandalous actions. This is reaffirmed by Herr A. who maintains that as a postal worker he was required to become a party member, nevertheless he remained strictly 'Black' in terms of politics and did not take part in the demonstration although he was present. The day after the demonstration, the Rottenburgers showed their solidarity and support for the bishop. Following the morning mass, 300 to 500 worshippers left the cathedral and assembled in front of the palace in a demonstration which lasted for about ten minutes. After singing a hymn they began chanting such things as "We want to see our Bishop," "Bishop give us your blessings," and "We will come back." Although these acts had no actual effect in terms of changing the course of actions against the bishop, they did make the authorities aware of the dangers still posed by the church-going population and they

51 Sedelmaier in Kopf, Leben und Wirken, 188.
acted symbolically to unite the people and strengthen their spiritual resistance. Contemporaries testified to the fact that Rottenburg never became ‘brown’, that strict Catholicism was always maintained and that after the incidents of 1938 “Rottenburg became even more Catholic.” The bishop had acted as the ultimate symbol around which the Catholic population could articulate their displeasure with the Nazi regime. They saw the attack on their bishop as an attack against their town, their religion and themselves.

Clearly the Nazis failed to gain the support of a substantial proportion of the Rottenburg population. The strong Catholic basis of the town in terms of organization, Catholic ‘way of life’ and admiration for Sroll served to effectively limit the extent to which the Nazis could win over the faithful. As the Nazi persecution of the churches continued to escalate from 1933 to 1938, Rottenburgers continued to identify with the struggle of the Bishop and their dissent became more distinct as the direction of Nazi attacks became more focussed. Starting with a rather uncertain position regarding the Catholic organizations, the population moved to a more visible non-conformity in response to the confessional schools issue and finally showed open disapproval of the regime in relation to attacks on the Bishop. Though Nazi attacks on the church certainly alienated the Catholic population of Germany, for the most part the faithful merely acted to protect their own institutions and practices and did not sincerely pose a wider threat in terms of political issues. Rottenburg was not the exception. It can be argued that the Catholics of Rottenburg definitely made their views known in terms of anti-church issues,

53LUI 72. Interview with Frau Schl. 5.9.1986.
but when it came to issues of racism for example, barely a word was spoken and very few memories seem to remain.
Few governments have placed as much emphasis on the manipulation of opinion as did the Nazi regime. Yet, despite the highly polished image of an obedient and uniform citizenry provided by official propaganda, there existed beneath the surface a popular opinion among the German people. Although this opinion was usually expressed through small covert acts and minor grumbling, in a state which sought to politicize all aspects of the lives of individuals, these became punishable crimes and therefore forms of resistance. If these somewhat minor offenses can be seen as resistance, then how do we classify more obvious forms of resistance, such as the attempted assassination of Hitler or the hiding of Jews in a basement?

The main goal of this thesis has been to demonstrate the problems associated with defining resistance to the Third Reich and use the example of one town to illuminate the 'other Germany' beneath that facade of the Volksgemeinschaft. Ordinary Germans were faced with complex choices which make it impossible to neatly divide the population into pro and anti-Nazi camps. In their everyday lives average Germans were in no position to commit assassinations or wage an underground war against the Nazis, but this did not mean that they wholeheartedly supported them either. Because their acts were small and on a local level does not make them any less important and they can very rightly be considered political dissent. In recent years scholars have been making substantial
contributions to the study of everyday life and, through the use of new methods and sources, they have significantly enlarged the literature of resistance. Local and regional studies, based in large part on oral history, have the advantage of revealing new dimensions in the study of resistance. This thesis is a contribution to this growing literature and debate regarding the climate of resistance among ordinary Germans.

Chapter two demonstrated the importance of the context in which dissent was exhibited. Rottenburg was a predominantly Catholic city with a strong sense of community spirit. The social institutions of the Catholic church provided the framework for the lives of the majority of the townspeople. The Catholic church, or 'Catholic milieu,' was an integrating factor which brought the inhabitants together more than any other single factor. Added to this were related economic and political factors which helped create the natural climate for dissent. As a region, Württemberg was not as badly affected by the Depression as the rest of Germany. It has been suggested that this relatively positive economic situation was a factor which inhibited the rise of Nazism within the state. Within this context, Rottenburg was still a mainly agricultural city with few signs of industrialization. Small agricultural plots helped provide additional food for the people of the city and thus shielded them from the most devastating effects of the economic crisis. In addition, the overwhelming power of the Catholic Centre Party within the city was a strong deterrent to the growth of National Socialism. The election results of March 1933 more than adequately demonstrate that the Nazis did not have an overwhelmingly strong foothold in Rottenburg at the time of the seizure of power. Thus, the nature of Rottenburg as a community created an atmosphere in which dissent could
flourish.

The reaction to the seizure of power and the further consolidation of Nazi power was the subject of chapter three. Through the reliance on oral sources we are able to construct the more complex reality in which Rottenburgers lived and to better understand the climate of dissent. The case of Rottenburg is not one of grassroots support, but instead an example of the imposition of Nazism from above. The first victims of Nazi oppression were the communists and social democrats. Despite harsh repression and their small number within the city, testimony here demonstrates that members of the Left maintained their former convictions and were never convinced supporters of the regime. The replacement of the city mayor, and the slow dismantling of the former Centre-dominated city council, illustrate the fact that popular support from within the city was not forthcoming. The city’s clubs and associations, as well as the newspaper, were probably the most effectively coordinated institutions by the Nazis. Their coordination took place without an outstanding amount of dissent, but the Rottenburgers continued to show their attitude towards the regime by refusing to do such things as participate in Nazi social groups or read the Nazi paper. The unenthusiastic mood of the town was highlighted by the ‘Rottenburger Revolution’ in 1934. The only area of opinion where the inhabitants seemed more ambivalent was with regard to the Jewish question. The interviews suggest that some aid was offered, but the overwhelming impression is that this issue was not of great significance for many of the townspeople.

The relative ambivalence on the Jewish issue contrasts starkly with the way in which the Rottenburgers defended their Catholic faith. With regard to Rottenburg, as was
the case in many Catholic areas, "no single aspect of Nazism created so much hostility or shaped attitudes towards the regime as decisively as the attack on the Christian Churches." Though many studies of the Catholic church hierarchy have stressed the lack of resistance on the part of the establishment, a focus on the Catholic faithful reveals a different picture. As was the case in many Catholic regions of the Reich, Rottenburg's Catholics stood together in defence of their organizations, confessional schools and their priests. As we have seen, Rottenburg's Catholics actively struggled to preserve Catholic youth organizations and made a particular statement in defence of the Catholic primary school. The most dramatic instance of opposition was in relation to the Nazi demonstrations against Bishop Sproll in 1938. In this instance Sproll acted as a symbol of Catholic resistance to which the faithful could rally. The overwhelming conclusion of the chapter was that there was an absolute unwillingness on the part of the inhabitants to accept the suppression of their Catholic institutions.

In the final analysis, does Rottenburg deserve its reputation as a 'resisting' town? Was it the 'solid bulwark of Christianity' that the city's mayor claimed it was in 1946? Whether it was created consciously or unconsciously, the myth of resistance has grown in Rottenburg over the years. Although it would be valid to say that it was a 'bulwark of Christianity', it would also be appropriate to note that Catholic resistance in Rottenburg was comparable to that seen in other regions of the Reich, particularly Baden and Bavaria. By focusing on the ordinary German and using oral sources, however, it becomes clear that, although there were no major acts of resistance, a distinct climate of

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1Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent*, 376.
dissent existed within the city. The inhabitants of Rottenburg, like many other average Germans, were not effectively integrated into the *Volksgemeinschaft*, they did retain their religious allegiances and former convictions, and remained a part of the 'other Germany' which it has taken scholars so long to discover beneath the monolithic propaganda facade which was the Third Reich.
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Wilhelm Seeger

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Appendix A: Germany 1918-1935

Source: Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter*
(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983)
Appendix B: Württemberg

Appendix C: Rottenburg am Neckar c.1935

Source: Einwohnerbuch für Stadt und Kreis Rottenburg a. N. Ausgabe 1935-1936
Legend
1. Bishop’s Palace
2. State Prison
3. Cathedral
4. City Hall and Market Place
5. Martinihaus – Catholic boy’s school
6. Seminary
7. St. Moritz Church
8. Train Station

Source: Einwohnerbuch für Stadt und Kreis Rottenburg a. N. Ausgabe 1935-1936

Appendix D: City Centre – Rottenburg am Neckar c.1935
Appendix E: Reichstag and Landtag Elections, 1919-1933

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Auszug zur Schaffung der Deutschen Schule in Rottenburg

Liedwerte Eltern!

In Stuttgart, Ulm, Heilbronn, Schwäb. Gmünd, Heidenheim, Chingen a. L., Rottweil und in fast allen übrigen Städten des Landes, die bisher katholische oder evangelische Volkschulen unterhalten haben, ist mit Beginn des neuen Schuljahres die Deutsche Volksschule eingerichtet worden. Dieser wichtige Schritt zur Völker gemeinschaft hin erfolgte überall auf Grund einer Besprechung der Erziehungsberechtigten, die sich mit überaus erhöhter Mehrheit — teilweise mit bis zu 100 Prozent — für die Deutsche Schule ausgesprochen haben. Dies beweist mit aller Deutlichkeit, daß ein wirtschaftliches Bedürfnis für die Schaffung einer einheitlichen Volksschule vorhanden ist.


„Um das Gewissens und der Seele Eurer Kinder willen“ füg. Ihr, deutsche Eltern, ruhig Eure Buben und Mädchen der Deutschen Volksschule anvertrauen! Die religiöse Erziehung ist gemäß der Kunst wie je, die Religionsunterricht wird im gleichen Umfange wie an der Oberschule noch Lehrerminister getrennt erse, und für die Erziehung konfessionell religiöser Verpflichtungen (Schülergottesdienst u.w.) wird die nötige Zeit gewährt werden. Der Unterricht in allen anderen Fächern aber ist gemeinsam.

Die Schule der Völker gemeinschaft kann und muß auch in Rottenburg verwirklicht werden! Durch Eure Ja für die Deutsche Volksschule bekunden, deutsche Eltern, ehrlich, was Ihr am 29. März dieses Jahres durch die Abstimmung so herzlich zum Ausdruck gebracht habt: den Willen zur deutschen Völker- gemeinschaft!


Der Kreisleiter der NSDAP
Schweitz.

Der Ortsgruppenleiter der NSDAP
Hesse

Der Bürgermeister
Seeger

Source: Stadtarchiv Rottenburg am Neckar