

# The Origins and Conceptualization of Nazi Figures after the First World War

## The Utopian Typology of a Nazi State and Its Citizens

### *The Program of the National Socialist German Workers' Party*

The program of the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) of 1920 defined the German nation (*Volk*) and the ideal Nazi in national and racial terms without the specificity provided by Nazi propaganda. Still, the Party Program associated Germanness with particular virtues and traits and prescribed patriarchy as the social norm. These identity issues were presented alongside a program of action that sought to revise the political developments since the First World War. The program called for the unity between all Germans across the political factions of the Weimar Republic and demanded equal standing for Germany in the international arena. An important unifying issue was the widely unpopular Peace Treaty of Versailles, which political conservatives and the extreme right wing considered a humiliation. The NSDAP program called for annulment of the conditions of the treaty and dismantling of the postwar republic.

The Nazi concept of German citizenship as being limited to *Volksgenossen* (German nationals) defined by race precludes democratic structures and diversity. The term “*Volk*” itself reverberates with Romantic notions of premodern conditions and simple country folk. At the same time, it invokes Socialist anti-elitism and holds out to Germans who might be receptive to a socialist model with a national emphasis the opportunity to change affiliations and embrace National Socialism.

The concept of the nation and the *ius sanguinis*—nationality according to lineage and language—in contrast to the *ius soli*, which defines citizenship in terms of the country of birth, was thoroughly ingrained in German thought and upheld in the Weimar constitution. As a result, the Nazis' racial imperative did not seem far-fetched. Point Four of the Nazi Party Program confirmed the notion of homogeneity: „Volksgenosse kann nur sein, wer deutschen Blutes ist, ohne Rücksichtnahme auf Konfession.“<sup>1</sup> This key statement prioritizes race

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1 Brubaker, *Citizenship*, 186; “None but those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation.” Rabinbach and Gilman, *Third Reich Sourcebook*, 12. (All excerpts from this source were translated by Lilian M. Friedberg).

over religion and individual preference. It makes national identity an unalterable fact and a status that cannot be renounced or acquired. In addition, the concept of race-based German citizenship inherently classifies Jews as an alien race within the German boundaries. The discourse of *Rassenkunde* (racial science), firmly established at the end of the First World War, lends itself to legitimize the shift in the Party Program from the traditional religious definition of Jewishness to a racial definition. Contrary to the religious paradigm, which allows for conversion, the racial paradigm ultimately eradicates the concept of the individual. The assertion „Kein Jude kann daher Volksgenosse sein“ derives from a model of biological determinism.<sup>2</sup>

In Point Four, the Program specified that, for an individual to qualify as German, positive attributes are as important as the distinction from the negative construct of the Jew, and the phrasing left room for the later exclusion of additional undesirable ethnicities. By making a German lineage the primary qualifier for citizenship in the projected Nazi state, the Program disqualifies Jews, including German citizens of Jewish ancestry, from being citizens. The use of the singular for the positive insider, *Volksgenosse*, and the negative outsider, *kein Jude*, establishes the two collectives as opposites and enemies. The undercurrent of the rhetoric of national competition, which had served as a tool to mobilize the German military in 1914, continued to fuel nationalist resentments after 1918.

Point Five, „Wer nicht Staatsbürger ist, soll nur als Gast in Deutschland leben können und muß unter Fremden-Gesetzgebung stehen,“ reiterated the distinction between nationals and aliens and assigned the concepts of citizen and *Gast* (guest) a specific ideological meaning that modified the terms of the constitution of the *Deutsches Reich* (*Weimarer Reichsverfassung*) of 1919.<sup>3</sup> The term “citizen” in Point Five carried the racial implications articulated earlier, in contrast to the neutral concept of *Staatsangehöriger* (member of the state) according to the Weimar constitution, which emphasized gender equality and freedom of religion, and based the legal concept of German citizenship upon provincial affiliation, thereby upholding the identity paradigm of the German federation. The concept of a *Volk* implied a normative national identity and a levelling of regional particularity. Superficially, the Nazi phraseology echoed the preamble of the Weimar constitution. However, upon closer examination, the differences are significant. The constitution of 1919 proclaimed the political

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2 Frederickson, *Racism*, 89; “No Jew therefore may be a member of the nation.” Rabinbach and Gilman, *Third Reich Sourcebook*, 12.

3 “Anyone who is not a citizen of the state may live in Germany only as a guest and must be regarded as being subject to foreign law,” Rabinbach and Gilman, *Third Reich Sourcebook*, 12; DocumentArchiv.de, *Weimarer Reichsverfassung*.