1 INTRODUCTION: THE GERMAN HOME FRONT IN EAST ASIA

This chapter examines how the Nazi Party influenced German colonies in East Asia during the Third Reich, and the National Socialist regime’s process of coordinating political and other activities, known as Gleichschaltung. In Germany this process was symbolized by centralized control over the regional state governments through the appointment of an official known as the Reichsstatthalter (Reich governor), who exercised supremacy and eliminated local independence. A similar system of
coordinated control was adopted over most domestic social movements to eradicate dissent. Non-Nazi parties were formally dissolved, the labour movement was radically restructured, youth were drafted into loyal organizations, and traditional social milieus were despised.

The Nazi designs for Gleichschaltung assumed that abolishing local and individual characteristics was possible. Through mergers and restructuring, political and social organizations were to carry out Party commands with complete loyalty. In their pursuit of Gleichschaltung, the Nazi Party also targeted Germans living abroad. To what extent the Nazi Party really succeeded in total domestic control has been a subject of a lively debate. But discussions and analysis on the mechanism of control over German groups living abroad has received little attention. Had the Nazi Party succeeded in the creation of a new, strong and totally loyal front for the Third Reich in East Asia? This chapter will attempt to provide some answers.

First, I will provide some notes on the research literature and other materials available on this topic. Many materials exist on the pre-war and wartime life in the German colonies abroad. However, there is a blank page in documentation about the four months in the spring and summer of 1945 – from when Germany surrendered to the Allied forces until after the defeat of Japan. It is quite possible that Nazi organizations, and their members in Japan and other countries still at war, destroyed official documents and records to avoid being indicted for war crimes after Japan’s expected capitulation. It is striking how little has been done to examine the role of the Nazi Party and affiliate organizations in East Asia and their influence on German colonies.

The most useful materials include official records of the foreign organization (Auslands-Organisation, hereafter AO) of the Nazi Party. These incorporate, for example, records on personnel and Party members abroad. The Allies seized these records after the war to determine the origins of the Nazi Party and its organizational framework in East Asia. In addition, the country group of the Nazi Party (Landesgruppe) in Shanghai published a magazine titled Ostasiatischer Beobachter (hereafter OAB) to spread the Nazi Party’s message. However, this magazine concealed the dark side of Gleichschaltung, such as terrorism and suppression, because its function was to spread the Party propaganda. No articles criticizing the Nazi Party or its ideology appeared in it.

The second group of valuable materials consists of domestic reports developed by the Japanese Foreign Affairs Police (Gaiji keisatsu) under the supervision of the Home Ministry (Naimu-shō), which secretly observed foreign residents in Japan. Contemporary Japanese publications like Gaiji Keisatsu Gaikyō (The Survey of Foreign Affairs) and Gaiji Geppo (Monthly Report of Foreign Affairs) are most useful in providing evidence and information about the period in question. The former was an annual report first edited in 1935, while the latter was a monthly report. Each issue was divided roughly into foreign circumstances, internal conditions, research materials, personnel movements, miscellaneous news, and information collected by secret inquiries and through informants.