

invented by liberalism. Behind its concept of the sovereignty of the people hide the most corrupt rogues, who do not want to be recognized.”<sup>19</sup>

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler agreed entirely: “There must be no majority decisions.” Instead, “*the decisions will be made by one man.*”<sup>20</sup> So, Goebbels continued, “We shall create a power-group with which we can conquer this state. And then ruthlessly and brutally, using the State’s prerogatives, we shall enforce our will and our programme.” Again from Goebbels:

History has seen repeatedly how a young, determined minority has overthrown the rule of a corrupt and rotten majority, and then used for a time the State and its means of power in order to bring about by dictatorship ... and force the conditions necessary to complete the conquest and to impose new ideas.<sup>21</sup>

The Nazis were very clear from the outset what they were in favor of, what they opposed, and how they planned to exercise power once they achieved it: socialism, nationalism, racial identity and purification—and a strong, centralized power to make it happen.

## **11. Idealism, not politics as usual**

It is important to emphasize that the Nazis put their program forward forthrightly and as a noble—even spiritual—ideal to achieve. They promised not merely another political platform, but a whole philosophy of life that, as they and their followers believed, promised renewal. And they called upon Germans to exercise the highest virtues of altruism and self-sacrifice for the good of society to bring about that renewal.

Program point 10 urges individuals to put the common good of Germany before their self interest. Point 24 repeats it.

<sup>19</sup> Goebbels 1929, in Mosse ed., 1966, p. 105.

<sup>20</sup> Hitler 1925, p. 449.

<sup>21</sup> Goebbels 1927, quoted in Irving 1999, p. 117.

Hitler and Goebbels repeatedly urge Nazism as a spiritual and ideal vision in contrast to the usual power-grubbing politics of the day.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler insisted that “All force which does not spring from a firm spiritual foundation will be hesitating and uncertain. It lacks the stability which can only rest on a fanatical view of life.”<sup>22</sup>

He called upon individuals not to be egoistic but be willing to sacrifice: “the preservation of the existence of a species presupposes a spirit of sacrifice in the individual.”<sup>23</sup>

In Goebbels’s autobiographical novel, *Michael*, a book that sold out of seventeen editions, the leading character is explicitly likened to Jesus Christ: Michael is the ‘Christ-socialist’ who sacrifices himself out of love for mankind—and Goebbels urges that noble Germans be willing to do the same.<sup>24</sup> A widely-used Nazi poster featured a religiously spiritual figure with its arm encircling a young Nazi soldier.



Hitler regularly praised Germans for their spirit of altruism: “this state of mind, which subordinates the interests of the ego to the conservation of the community, is really the first premise for every truly human culture.”<sup>25</sup> Altruism, he believed, is a trait more pronounced in Germans than in any

<sup>22</sup> Hitler 1925, p. 222.

<sup>23</sup> Hitler 1925, p. 151.

<sup>24</sup> Goebbels 1929, in Mosse ed., 1966, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> Hitler 1925, 298. Hitler distinguishes altruism from “egoism and selfishness” and also labels it “Idealism. By this we understand only the individual’s capacity to make sacrifices for the community” (1925, p. 28). Egoism and the pursuit of happiness he sees as the great threat: “As soon as egoism becomes the ruler of a people, the bonds of order are loosened and in the chase after their own happiness men fall from heaven into a real hell” (1925, p. 300).

other culture, which is why he claimed to be so optimistic about Germany's future.

This message of National Socialism as a moral ideal and a spiritual crusade was appealing to many, many Germans—and especially the young. By 1925 the party membership in the north was mostly young: two-thirds of the members were under thirty years of age, and in a few years the Nazis had attracted a large following among university students.

Goebbels especially called out to the idealistic young to be the heart of the Nazi future in Germany:

The old ones don't even want to understand that we young people even exist. They defend their power to the last. But one day they will be defeated after all. Youth finally must be victorious. We young ones, we shall attack. The attacker is always stronger than the defender. If we free ourselves, we can also liberate the whole working class. And the liberated working class will release the Fatherland from its chains.<sup>26</sup>

## *12. Nazi democratic success*

For the Nazis, the clear, firm, and passionate advocacy of their political goals, along with efficient organization and propaganda, brought them increasing democratic success in Germany.

After years of work, by 1928 the party had only twelve seats in the Reichstag, Germany's national parliament. But in the election of September 1930, they increased that number to 107 seats. Less than two years later, in the election of July 1932, they increased that number dramatically to 230 seats. A few months later they lost thirty-four seats in a November election and now had 196. But in January of 1933, Hitler was

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<sup>26</sup> Goebbels 1929, p. 111.