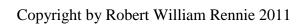
## THE PROBLEM OF ERNST HEINKEL: NATIONALISM AND STATE POWER IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY GERMAN AVIATION

A Thesis by ROBERT WILLIAM RENNIE

Submitted to the Graduate School
Appalachian State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTERS OF ARTS

May 2011 Department of History



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# A Thesis by ROBERT WILLIAM RENNIE May 2011

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### **ABSTRACT**

### THE PROBLEM OF ERNST HEINKEL: NATIONALISM AND STATE POWER IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY GERMAN AVIATION

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The thesis examines the changing power structure between Ernst Heinkel's private aviation business and the German government during the first half of the twentieth century. The newly born aviation industry felt the power struggle between government control and self-determination more sharply than any other. Indeed, aviation witnessed remarkable progress and turmoil as Germany transitioned from a wartime economy, through the disorder of the Weimar Republic, and then back into a militaristic dictatorship and the destruction of the Second World War. Born in 1888, Ernst Heinkel was an aircraft designer and businessman during both the First and Second World Wars. His experience within this power structure provide first-hand knowledge of the conflicting needs of aviation's inherently internationalist existence, and the nationalistic desire of the German government to control the growth of this new industry. Heinkel designed and constructed remarkable aircraft in both the civilian and military markets, and his work on jet aircraft was truly ahead of his own time. Heinkel was a pioneer, but he was also a victim of the long reach of the Third Reich; his life and his business were both dramatically transformed by the experience.

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The question of state power and its relationship to aviation has not yet been addressed through the eyes of Ernst Heinkel. He published his autobiography, entitled *Stürmisches*Leben in 1956. While extensive research has been published on the mechanical engineering of his remarkable aeronautical designs, there has been no published research on the man himself. Historiographically speaking, the only work that comes close to discussing Heinkel is Peter Fritzsche's book *A Nation of Fliers*. Fritzsche's thesis is intriguing: linking the world of aviation to ideas of national identity and ultimately, nationalism itself. But Fritzsche only mentions Heinkel once and never delves into the details of Heinkel's life or business practices.

Utilizing Heinkel's autobiography and its subsequent translations, as well as other primary source material, this thesis will address the following historical concerns: What can we learn about Heinkel's role in an air minded Germany? Was Heinkel a proud nationalist who viewed aviation as a part of German identity and his work as inherently German? Heinkel's actions tell a different story. He frequently worked with countries far outside of Germany, and even out-sourced production of several designs to countries like Sweden. His writings denote a man who comprehended the transformational power of aviation. Yet Heinkel's company was also complicit in the use of SS-acquired slave labor during the Second World War. This thesis will investigate the question of Heinkel utilizing several important historical methodologies including traditional structuralist methods as well as economic and intellectual theory. The application of all three fields fully analyzes the question of aviation, state power, and nationalism, as well as Heinkel's place in this complex struggle for self-determination.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Lastly, this work is dedicated to my family and friends, who have given so much for so many years. Words of thanks are inadequate, but I hope they will suffice.

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### INTRODUCTION

"The Blue Ribbon is more important for Germany's prestige than your flight." These words, bellowed from the angry captain of the German passenger liner, the *Bremen*, left an ambitious Ernst Heinkel with a sense of dread. His aircraft, the He 12, a lightweight monoplane equipped for water landings with two large pontoons fastened under its wings, sat on the *Bremen's* deck, attached to a rudimentary catapult, awaiting its first sea-launch. In this one moment, competing national interests and technologies collided. The motivation behind the *Bremen's* voyage to New York was to set a new speed record for sea travel across the Atlantic. Ernst Heinkel, the young, ambitious business man and aviation pioneer, had his motivations as well. No plane had ever been launched from the deck of a ship while at sea. If the He 12 could successfully launch from the *Bremen*, another new world record was his. It was an intersection of nineteenth and twentieth century technologies; each vying for relevance in a modernizing world, with national pride on a global stage at stake for both.

The efforts of the *Bremen* to break the Atlantic speed record had not gone unnoticed by the ships passengers. Heinkel first experienced the urgency of the *Bremen's* captain to win the Blue Ribbon a few nights earlier, while dining with his wife and a liaison from Lufthansa's Transocean Unit, a man Heinkel referred to as Captain Schiller. While enjoying fine wine, conversation, and an expensive meal, flakes of ceiling plaster began to fall from above. Captain Schiller noted, "The old tub's shaking her timbers. She's doing a steady

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Ernst Heinkel, *Stormy Life: Memoirs of a Pioneer of the Air Age*. (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc, 1956), 100.

twenty-nine knots and more." It was clear in an instant that Heinkel was not the only man aboard the *Bremen* who aspired to a world record. Now as the argument between the *Bremen's* captain and Heinkel's entourage subsided, an uneasy peace was reached: Heinkel's plane would take off when the *Bremen* was 180 miles from New York. As a result, the *Bremen* was guaranteed the Blue Ribbon and Heinkel's He 12 was assured its maiden flight.<sup>3</sup>

An uneasy agreement it was, for earlier in the voyage, Heinkel's entourage discovered signs of foul play on the catapult system designed to launch the He 12. The catapult system failed to hold any air and, as a result, it simply refused to pressurize. As a consequence, the He 12 was incapable of launching from the *Bremen*. Heinkel's mechanics followed the *Bremen's* air pressure system down into the bowels of the ship. Wearing an asbestos suit, his mechanic eventually emerged and reported that "a screw joint had been undone." <sup>4</sup> It was immediately clear that the problem was not an accident but a rather an act of sabotage. Heinkel asked, "How did it come loose – by itself?" Heinkel's mechanic replied "I think that's absolutely out of the question." <sup>5</sup> If the He 12 could not take off, the crew of the *Bremen* need not yield in their quest for the Blue Ribbon to the quirky aviator and his pilots. Heinkel's men eventually repaired the damage and the He 12's take off plan continued on schedule, much to the consternation of the *Bremen's* captain.

A few hours later, Heinkel's crew, two men named Studnitz and Kirchhoff, climbed into the He 12. Heinkel's mechanics checked over their catapult system, named the K 1, and gave the He 12 permission to take off. The *Bremen's* deck was flooded with eager onlookers; passengers who, whether they realized it or not, were about to witness history. The catapult

<sup>2</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 97.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 100.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid

pressurized, and once released, emitted a great hissing sound as the He 12 launched at high speed along the runway. The crowd gasped as the plane hurled by, lifted off, and disappeared into the afternoon sky. Heinkel's take off at sea was a success. Now, would the nimble He 12 actually arrive at its destination?

A little under an hour later, the crew radioed the *Bremen* to announce the good news: they had arrived in New York. With both goals now reached, the captain of the *Bremen* struck a more conciliatory note with the aviation genius. "I hope that you will never be in such a quandary as I have been during the past few days. I am sure you understand…" By 3:45 PM, the *Bremen* made port in New York Harbor. The celebration of both accomplishments began in short order.

America, too, welcomed the German ocean liner and the determined German aviators who flew the He 12. Heinkel recalled, "We were received with a deafening concert of whistles and sirens from all the ships at anchor. Police were needed to keep the crowd under control. Newspapers reported the first catapult mail flight had been successful." He was right. Americans hailed the German aviation pioneer and his crew. The American government took notice, as well. Heinkel's company wrote a message that was subsequently published in the New York Times in August 1929, a month following the successful voyages of the *Bremen* and the He 12. In his letter, Heinkel acknowledged and appreciated the attention he received by the Americans:

We desire [...] to express our heartiest thanks to you and your readers for the magnificent reception accorded to our catapult pilots, von Studnitz and Kirchhoff, on the occasion of their first catapult flight to America made with our Heinkel low-winged plane. The American

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Heinkel, 101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Secretary of State for Aviation, Mr. MacCracken, who visited our works and plant during his presence in Germany, was right in describing the catapult air service of the Bremen as a very promising prelude to a subsequent continual air connection between Europe and America. We associate ourselves with this well-considered utterance and desire to express the hope that success will attend the efforts of the steamship companies, of the aviation concerns and aeronautical industries on both sides and that they will develop successfully the mail way between the two continents and considerably shorten it.

Heinkel's professional life was filled with moments of high drama like those witnessed on the deck of the *Bremen*. Working out of a shed during the First World War, Heinkel constructed aircraft built for sea landings and aerial bombing. He subverted the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles in a desperate attempt to stay on the sharp end of technological advancements. In the 1920s, Heinkel chased world records, like those set aboard the *Bremen*. He followed up those pursuits by setting records for high speed flight in the 1930s. He witnessed the terrible rise of the Third Reich. Rather than leave Germany, however, Heinkel's aircraft factory provided the airplanes that propelled the Nazi war machine across Poland, France, and bombed London during the Blitz. His company employed slave labor provided by the SS *Wirtschafts und Verwaltungshauptamt*. Yet, even after the destruction of the Third Reich, Heinkel remained at the helm of his firm. Simply put, Ernst Heinkel represents a remarkable case study. He also presents a host of historical questions. Even his autobiography, *Stürmisches Leben*, which was published in three separate editions, presents intriguing historiographical challenges.

Heinkel's life story highlights the ambitions of a man bent on advancing the cause of aviation, no matter the cost. The moment of conflict and triumph aboard the *Bremen*, when the aspirations of the *Bremen's* captain and Heinkel's sea plane came to a climatic head,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ernst Heinkel Aeroplane Works. "Rapidly Conveyed Appreciation." *New York Times* (1923-Current file), 21 August 1929, http://0-www.proquest.com.wncln.wncln.org/, (accessed November 17, 2010).

emphasizes what historian Peter Fritzsche argues was the inherent relationship between aviation and nationalism. Indeed, the perceived ability to harness technology and bend it to the German will was a source of national pride. German society, too, while struggling with a deep-seated ambivalence to modernity, also embraced aviation as a sign of human triumph over technology.

Many Germans undoubtedly believed that national pride and aviation went hand in hand; the strength of a nation's international might and the size of their air force seemingly coincided during the Twentieth Century. But did Ernst Heinkel also embrace aviation as an inherently nationalistic technology. Was Heinkel, an aviation pioneer who served Germany by constructing aircraft in two global wars, an ardent nationalist whose motivations centered on promoting Germany? Or was Heinkel a more complex historical actor? Using the incident aboard the *Bremen* as but one example, it appears that the personal ambitions of Ernst Heinkel, as well as his passion for aeronautical development, superseded the national interests of his country. Is it possible then, that Heinkel, while aiding German national interests both militarily and technologically, primarily served himself as a pragmatic business man?

If so, is it also possible that these pragmatic motivations blurred national boundaries for Heinkel? His editorial to the *New York Times* certainly provides evidence that this was the case. The carefully chosen words of his company's press release indicate that he embraced a more international view of the burgeoning technology. Aviation, the first mode of transportation that allowed for the relatively quick movement of people and goods across continents, appears inherently post-national. Heinkel also built aircraft for Russia, Sweden, and Japan in the years between World War I and World War II. Conversely, the co-opting of

aviation by the state cannot be overlooked. Kaiser Wilhelm II and later Adolf Hitler ordered military aircraft from Heinkel's company. The Third Reich controlled Heinkel's company for the last years of the Second World War. What do the actions of Heinkel and his company reveal about ideas of nationalism as it relates to self-determination?

A thorough examination of primary documents: Heinkel's autobiography, newspaper articles published during his lifetime, as well as court documents provide significant evidence with which to judge the question of Heinkel and German nationalism. The methodological focus provided by landmark works on German culture, economics, and intellectual history aid in the assessment of Heinkel as an historical actor from multiple perspectives. Ultimately, Heinkel's life story as an innovative aviation pioneer and successful business man demonstrates the dynamic nature of nationalism, the unmistakable influence of economic factors on decision making, and the complex ramifications of transformative technologies on an unstable and rapidly modernizing German society.

### CHAPTER ONE

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Historiography of Modern Germany: 1914-1945

To better understand Ernst Heinkel, one must understand a few aspects about the German society he inhabited. To do so, requires a review of pertinent literature, both in and outside of the field of aviation. The rich historiography of Modern Germany provides important insights into a remarkably tumultuous and disastrous first half of the Twentieth Century. Questions of economics, diplomatic and political intrigue, and the social and cultural history of Germany in the decades since the end of the Second World War have been carefully considered. Every period has been thoroughly examined: from the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II and Germany's march into the horrific Great War; the collapse of the Imperial Order and the uneven reconstruction under the Weimar Republic; the economic turmoil and dark rise of the Nazi Party and Adolf Hitler. As the decades progressed, both the subjects of historical research, and the conclusions reached, evolved. In the intervening years following the Second World War, a clearer view of German society emerged. An analysis of this German society provides insight into the decisions and experiences of Ernst Heinkel.

Peter Gay's seminal work on Weimar Germany offers a unique insight into Heinkel's world. Published in 1964, *Weimar Culture: Outsider as Insider* laid the foundation for further historical research on German history for the next fifty years. The impact of Gay's

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work extends far beyond the scope of Weimar. While his research focused specifically on the period, his work represents one of the first historical examinations of a whole society, and not simply an inquiry into the "high" history of pure politics. And while Gay's work was not the first historical contribution to the study of Weimar Germany, it was one of the most important and remains a vital work on the topic. Even more recent works like Eric Weitz's 2007 book on the same topic owe a debt to Peter Gay's groundbreaking research.

Weimar Culture was published in essay form and explained his research in a neat 145 pages. Gay himself noted in his preface that "I have not written the complete history of the Weimar Renaissance, though one day I plan to write it." He further stresses that his work attempts to "bring together themes that dominated the hectic life of the Republic." <sup>10</sup> Gay's contribution was seismic and his assessment of Weimar was hugely influential. Weimar Culture opens with a prophetic statement regarding the legacy of the movement. "Its tormented brief life with its memorable artifacts, and its tragic death – part murder, part wasting sickness, part suicide – have left their imprint on men's minds, often vague perhaps, but always splendid." Gay argues that the ultimate collapse of Weimar in 1933 and the dark years of the Third Reich that followed have largely overshadowed the contributions of Weimar and led us to forget what he refers to as the "other Germany." These other Germans represent those suppressed during the Wilhelmian era of World War I Germany. Liberals, artists, Jews, the Aufklärer, all contributed to making Berlin a revitalized, energetic, and socially open city in the 1920s. Art, literature, architecture, and science all blossomed under Weimar. The study of psychology flourished in Berlin with the founding of the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Peter Gay, Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), xiv.

<sup>10</sup> Gay, xv.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Gay, xiii.

Psychoanalytic Institute. Political research grew under the *Deutsche Hochschule für Politik*. In Hamburg, the Warburg Institute studied art history. The most famous institute of Weimar remains the *Bauhaus*, which created its own genre of architectural design. Gay also emphasizes the individual contributions of Thomas Mann, the famous author of works like *The Magic Mountain* and his activist brother Heinrich. These facets of Weimar culture all form what Gay famously termed "the best of Weimar." <sup>12</sup>

Gay also discusses the darker side of Weimar. Represented by youthful, intellectually brilliant, but ultimately unguided impatience with the world, these Germans facilitated the cultural instability that would ultimately exacerbate the impending economic upheaval. The radical, revolutionary theories of philosopher, and future Nazi, Martin Heidegger left Germans with a dark and amoral method to engage with the world, stressing that engagement was all that mattered and that ethics were essentially meaningless. <sup>13</sup> The political writings of Oswald Spangler's "Preussentum und Sozialismus" presented the intellectual potential for political distortion. <sup>14</sup> Beneath this philosophical tampering lies the *Vernunftrepublikaner*. These Germans represent a large body of intellectuals and everyday citizens who neither loved nor loathed Weimar. Gay argues that Germans largely felt unmoved by the Republic, often believing that it was the necessary government for the moment; neither wished for nor cursed. <sup>15</sup> This political apathy eventually gave way to resentment and then eventual dismissal of Weimar by the German people. This backlash from the right is covered in a chapter entitled "The Revenge of the Father" in which the more conservative groups of Weimar rose

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Fritz K. Ringer, "Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 75, no. 1 (October 1969): 151-152.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Gay, 82-84.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Gay, 85.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Gay, 23-28.

up and eventually killed Weimar. <sup>16</sup> Gay argues effectively that it was the rise of the right, and the rebuking of Weimar's ideals that led to its undoing.

Weimar Culture: Insider as Outsider is ultimately, as its title suggests, a work of cultural history. Gay spends little time linking these cultural and intellectual movements with the larger society as a whole. As reviews from the time of Weimar Culture's publication note, further work remained. One such reviewer, Fritz Ringer, noted that work was being done by historians like Barbara Lane, who eventually published *Architecture and Politics in* Germany: 1918-1945 and Istvan Deak's Weimar Germany's Left-Wing Intellectuals. 17 These works remained focused largely on the intellectual community. Sadly, while Ringer notes that Gay promised to write a complete history of Weimar, no such work ever came to fruition. 18

Forty years later, the echoes of Gay's work are clearly found in another seminal contribution to Weimar history: Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy by Eric Weitz. Much like Weimar Culture: Outsider as Insider, Weitz's book also focuses on German culture during the Weimar period. He investigates Weimar's affect on German architecture, film, radio as mass media, photography, sexuality, and philosophy. Much like his predecessor, Weitz espouses Weimar culture as inherently centered on the aesthetic and intellectual realms. Unlike Gay, however, Weitz successfully relates much of the intellectual developments in Weimar to the more practical matters of everyday life. Architecture, for example, transformed urban life from communal dwellings into apartments more reminiscent of the modern American nuclear household. Separate bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens and a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Gay, 119-145. <sup>17</sup> Ringer, 151-152.

living room all appeared during Weimar. <sup>19</sup> German psychoanalysis and a newly public interest in sexuality and sexual health grew out of the open society of Weimar. Women's liberation in the form of both fashion and rights changed the face of German culture during the 1920s. <sup>20</sup>

Lastly, Weitz differs from Gay's *Weimar Culture: Outsider as Insider*, in his assessment regarding the collapse of the Weimar Republic. Weitz's theory regarding the eventual downfall Weimar blames the political and economic climate of the period. For while Weimar's social, intellectual, and artistic culture influenced German society, the impact of the Great Depression and political unrest was far greater on the Republic itself. Ultimately, Weitz argues that while Weimar existed on a highly intellectual plane, it was the cataclysmic events of political and economic realities that contributed to its untimely collapse.<sup>21</sup>

It is also important to note that the forces which brought fundamental changes during Weimar existed before the Weimar Republic. Modern technology, new innovations in art, science, and literature, and fundamental changes in society were evident before the start of the First World War. These social and intellectual forces, however, were largely held in check by the dominating, militaristic power structure provided by the Wilhelmian imperial state. Yet, by 1917, with the war on the Western Front faltering, the Reichstag called for a dignified cessation of hostilities and a starving German society already desired sweeping change. The end of the war, with the abdication of the Kaiser in November 1918, coupled with a mutiny of the navy at home and riots across the country signaled the definitive end to

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Eric Weitz. Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 193-203.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Weitz, 297-331.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Weitz, 361-368.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Hew Strachan. *The First World War*. (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), 271.

the old order.<sup>23</sup> As Eric Weitz observes, "the destruction of the old imperial order in war and revolution unleashed the political and social imagination."<sup>24</sup> Over the next several months, until the eventual establishment of the Weimar government in 1919, a new modern era, born before Weimar and finally released, swept into the vacuum of German politics, industry, and culture.

These works represent much of the promise and peril of the Weimar Republic. Ernst Heinkel experienced these changes during his lifetime. His company was firmly established by the 1920s and worked not only within the German government with organizations like the Reichswehr, but also abroad in countries across Europe and around the world. Indeed, the historical motif of promise and peril applied to Heinkel's experiences as well. Weimar presented the most freedom his company ever enjoyed. The untimely collapse of Weimar and the rise of the Third Reich represented the beginning of the end of such freedoms. The airplane, of course, also represented modernity – yet another question investigated by historians of Modern Germany.

The question of modernity, replete with promise and peril, played a large role in determining the direction of Modern German historiography. The late Detlev Peukert represents the first major historical work to research the question of what modernity meant to German society. *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* defined the concept of modernity in lengthy terms. Peukert, characterized modernity as possessing a "highly rationalized industrial production, complex technological infrastructures and a substantial degree of bureaucratized administrative and service activity; food production is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Roger Chickering. *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1919.* (Cambridge :Cambridge University Press, 1998), 202-204.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Weitz, 2.

carried out by an increasingly small, but productive, agricultural sector. Socially speaking, modernity's typical features include the division of labor, wage and salary discipline, and urbanized environment."<sup>25</sup> He continued, stating that modernity also featured "extensive educational opportunities and a demand for skills and training."<sup>26</sup> Most importantly, he argued that modernity altered previously held traditions: "Continuity with traditional aesthetic principles and practices in architecture and the visual and other creative arts is broken. Modernity marks the triumph of western rationality."<sup>27</sup> This quite lengthy definition both highlights the core characteristics of modernity, and the remarkable difficulty in pinning down its many influences on society. Modernity, in Peukert's mind, fundamentally altered everything from food production to aesthetics. <sup>28</sup> Clearly, the rapidly modernizing world of technology impacted German culture to a great degree. Heinkel, as an aircraft builder, and a major proponent of aviation, understood this modern world better than most, and chose to embrace, rather than reject modernity. Clearly, Heinkel's fellow aviators, engineers, test pilots, and factory workers, represented a cadre of Germans who embraced this view of modernity as well.

Heinkel's company, Heinkel Flugzeugwerke, also conducted a significant amount of business with the German military in the years after the First World War. The affairs of the German Army, known during the 1920s as the *Reichswehr*, and its impact on German society weighed greatly on men like Heinkel. His company held a vested interest in continuing the profitable business relationships forged during the Great War. Also, much like the Reichswehr, Heinkel worked around the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty to continue arms

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 82.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ibid.

production. To better understand the business dealings of Heinkel with the Reichswehr, a somewhat brief excursion into the history of the Reichswehr is necessary.

Surprisingly, this topic received scant attention before Harold Gordon Jr. published his book *The Reichswehr and the German Republic: 1919-1926*. Published in 1957, Gordon's history on the Reichswehr, or National Defense Force, is one of the most complete overview of the state of the German Army following the war. Gordon tracks the Reichswehr through its formation out of the Freikorps following the violent uprisings at the end of 1918 through its evolution within the Weimar state and its relationship with the government. As Alan Bullock stated in his 1958 review of *The Reichswehr and the German Republic, 1919-1926*, "The position held by an army in any society and the relation of its High Command with the Government are always fruitful questions for the historian to take up."<sup>29</sup>

The timing of publication for Gordon's major work was no accident. *The Reichswehr and the German Republic* relies heavily on then newly-available primary documents consisting of the Hans von Seeckt papers as well as the papers of his associates Gessler, Groener, and Ritter von Epp. This massive amount of source material was made available following the Second World War and provided a great deal of insight into the mindset of the Reichswehr leadership during the 1920s. As a result of Gordon's choice of source material, the narrative of *The Reichswehr and the German Republic* is told from the perspective of the army, providing a unique glimpse into the functioning of the unit during the tumultuous decade of the 1920s. The results are surprising.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Alan Bullock, "Review: The Reichswehr and the German Republic, 1919-1926," *The English Historical Review*, 73, no. 287 (April 1958), 328-329.

Much of Gordon's lengthy narrative focuses on Hans von Seeckt. Seeckt commanded the Reichswehr from 1920 until 1926 and was largely responsible for reorganizing and revitalizing the Reichswehr into a professional fighting unit. As Gordon is quick to note, the military force assembled to deal with the various crises early in the development of the Weimar government was not up to the task of actually defending the Reich. Gordon asserts, "The Provisional Reichswehr was a temporary expedient created to meet an emergency situation. It was never intended to do more than bridge the gap between the old army and the new."<sup>30</sup> Gordon also notes that it was the mutual protection agreement between the Weimar President Friedrich Ebert and the Reichswehr that assured the relative survival of both organizations. Following the crises of 1918 and 1919, the Reichswehr entered into a period of rebuilding. It was General Hans von Seeckt who helped reorganize the Reichswehr by instituting new methods in training and discipline and extending service limits to recruit only those interested in a professional career in the army. Seeckt, however, is portrayed by Gordon as an officer who was far from a right-wing reactionary. Seeckt was a moderate who believed the Reichswehr's service was ultimately to the Reich itself, not any one political party. His subordinates largely felt the same way. Bullock's review of Gordon supports this conclusion, stating that those leading the Reichswehr in the 1920s were "concerned to preserve, not subvert, the Republic by providing it with an efficient and reliable, if limited armed force."31

Gordon's work, despite its age and its omission of outside influences on the Reichswehr, is still influential and provides an important perspective on the relationship

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Harold J Gordon, *The Reichswehr and the German Republic: 1919-1926*. (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1972), 89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Bullock, 328-329.

between the German military and the social and political realms of German society. Armies are traditionally viewed as rigid, deeply conservative organizations, even more so in German history with the inevitable historical links to the Nazi party and the Wehrmacht that destroyed much of Europe, North Africa, and Russia during the Second World War. Gordon provides a different view, however. The Reichswehr; built out of the ashes of the defeated German Army, and used as a desperate stop-gap measure by a Weimar government on the verge of collapse in 1918 and 1919, the Army transformed into a cohesive and remarkably well trained and professional fighting force. It was also a surprisingly moderate force within the Weimar Republic. Its credo was ultimately in service to the Reich, and that meant defending the Weimar Republic. Gordon effectively argues that the Reichswehr was not responsible for the collapse of Weimar, and was far from a right-wing reactionary force. While many disapproved of the political motives of the vying political factions within the Government, the Army never wavered from its support of the German State during its command by General Hans von Seeckt.

Not all of the older historical works on Germany have aged as well as *The Reichswehr and the German Republic*. They are still, nevertheless, important in understanding the development of the historiography of Weimar Germany, and the changing theories behind its birth and eventual death. One such work is *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, written by George L. Mosse in 1964. Considered a major contribution to the field during the time of its publication, *The Crisis of German Ideology* explores some interesting, if not passé theories surrounding the development and eventual collapse of Weimar Germany. While these theories might be out of date, they prove that many of the ideological roots of National Socialism were not born

from the radical, anti-Semitic movement of Adolf Hitler, but are traced much further into the German past. 32

Mosse cites two historical concepts regarding the intellectual development of this German ideology during the Weimar Republic. First is the now historically rebuked theory of the Sonderweg or "special way." This theory discusses the development of German culture and society as being unique and particular to the German people. This theory finds its roots in the aborted revolution of 1848, in which Germany failed to transform from a monarchy to a bourgeois society. The result of this failed revolution left Germany destined to travel a unique path of development, one that many historians argued was born defective. The faults of this historical theory are now viewed as somewhat obvious. Historians have moved away from a theory of a special way in favor of more practical explanations behind Germany's descent from Weimar into the Third Reich. Economic turmoil, latent anti-Semitic feelings, political instability, all played roles in the collapse of Weimar. Each society has a unique path; Germany is no more or less unique than any other European country and was subject to the same pressures and external influences as the rest of the continent.<sup>33</sup>

The second theory behind Mosse's research involves the Völkisch ideology found in German culture. The Völkisch movement originated in the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century. Drawing on romantic and populist ideas, these ethnically driven folk ideas were initially formed into a system "designed to realize the good society was achieved" by the works of two late-nineteenth-century writers named Paul de Lagarde and Julius

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> A.J. Nicholls, "Review: The Crisis of German Ideology," *The English Historical Review*, 82, no. 325 (October, 1967): 860-861. <sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Langbehn.<sup>34</sup> These ideas spread into a national identity built around a connection between the ideals of ethnic Germans and the cultivation and connection with the land. This ideology clearly foreshadows the rise of Nazi Germany's "blood and soil" ideology that espoused the virtues of the Volk and the need for Lebensraum.<sup>35</sup>

Mosse also makes important contributions to the topic of German ideology in regards to the recruitment of a large youth movement within the Reich. As Mosse notes, school textbooks and professors all proclaimed the virtue of German Völkisch beliefs. The German Youth Movement and Student Corporations also molded themselves to Völkisch ideology. The exposure of the youth of Germany to Völkisch textbooks to novels like Der Wehrwolf, youth in Germany during the 1920s and early 1930s was nearly unavoidable. As Mosse argues throughout the book, this exposure essentially crafted an entire generation of Germans already in lockstep with Adolf Hitler. Though Mosse notes that many subscribers to Völkisch ideals existed on the fringes of German society, these views largely filtered down to the rest of German society; many of whom latched on to the ideology of the Nazi party as it rose from national obscurity to absolute power.

Beyond the ideas of Völkisch ideology, the central idea of *Sonderweg* - that Germany possessed a unique course through history - has been the source of great controversy since the 1980s. At this juncture, it is best to explain the position of this thesis in regards to *Sonderweg*. As mentioned earlier, Detlev Peukert's study of Weimar Germany and the sense of crisis induced by modernity were responsible for shifting much of the focus away from Sonderweg. As a result, historians looked towards other possible theories to answer the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich.* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Mosse, 89-103

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Mosse, 24-26.

question: Why Germany? It is the conclusion of this author, as well as many recent scholars, the Sonderweg does not adequately answer that question.

One such newer work of historical research, conducted by Matthew Stibbe, seeks to move further away from both Sonderweg and modernity, and look instead towards a year, 1914. Stibbe's book *Germany, Politics, Society and Culture: 1914-1933* provides scholars of Modern German history with new insight into the questions which have challenged researchers of the topic since the end of the Second World War. Stibbe immediately tackles the long held, but recently rebuked *Sonderweg* thesis. *Sonderweg*, the theory that German history is unique as a result of the path taken by the country from the late nineteenth century onwards, has received more and more criticism in recent years. While the author acknowledges *Sonderweg*, the theory is quickly dismissed. Stibbe then pays homage to another past historian, the late Detlev Peukert, who argued that it was the challenges posed by modernity, and not any *Sonderweg*, that dictated not only Germany's path, but that of much of Europe and the rest of the Western world. Finally, Stibbe confronts a final long-standing theory, that of missed opportunities by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) during the failed revolution of 1918 and throughout the brief and tragic history of Weimar.

Stibbe, however, rejects all of these theories and pointedly offers a fourth way. Rather than reaching for any one causational theory to explain decades of turmoil, Stibbe shifts the historical starting point of Modern German history to a new year: 1914. He argues that a new perspective, rather than a new theory, offers the best possible solution. The author argues that this year, more than any other, both crystallizes much of German thought regarding its place

"in the sun" and defines German identity for decades to follow. <sup>37</sup>As a result, Stibbe presents a fresh view, not only of Weimar, but on Modern Germany writ large and opens the door for wider, less restrictive exploration within the field of German history.

Stibbe's first chapter, "The War From Above" discusses the events of the First World War, beginning in the summer of 1914, from the perspective of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Bethmann-Hollweg, as well as General Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Stibbe contends that Wilhelm II lost power as early as 1911, three years before the start of the conflict. After a diplomatic disaster regarding its demands for a share of French Morocco, the Kaiser was forced to concede his position. As a result, he was "referred to by senior figures in the German military as the 'peace-Kaiser.'"<sup>38</sup> His trusted deputy, Bethmann-Hollweg was a key figure in the July crisis of 1914 and ultimately, played a critical role in deciding German war aims, political reform at home, and the question of unrestricted submarine warfare. <sup>39</sup>Stibbe clearly argues that the war from above was mismanaged by an inherently weak and inadequate Wilhelm II, and witnessed great internal strife and political power grabs. The ramifications of which were felt decades later.

"The War From Below" shifts the perspective to the home front. Stibbe effectively refutes previous historical arguments that the home front and the front lines were disconnected during the conflict. Stibbe cites recent research focused on "private communications and personal recollections" which have radically changed the historical narrative. The chapter elaborates on this research in great detail. Suffice it to say that the mass movement of populations, such as the mobilization of millions for the armed services,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Matthew Stibbe, *Germany, 1914-1933: Politics, Society, and Culture.* (Harlow: Pearson, 2010), 2-7. Stibbe, 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Stibbe, 21.

combined with mass death, and family interactions all served to give both fronts a nearly clear picture of their respective experiences. Food played a critical role in the war from below and created much of the turmoil that led to labor strikes, anti-war rallies, and the eventual cry for the abdication of the Kaiser.

Chapter three, "Political and Psychological Consequences of the War" and Chapter four, "Economy and Society in the 1920s," moves Stibbe's argument into the larger currents of history. Stibbe again blames instability, fragility, and uncertainty as much of the cause of Germany's political and social problems. Long standing political fault lines, dating back to the critical war credits vote in August 1914, led to continued difficulties in creating a stable government. Perception also played a large role. Here Stibbe cites a picture of Reich President Friedrich Ebert dressed in swim trunks and looking "small and inept" featured on the cover of the *Berliner Illustrierte* as partly leading to "his reputation as a Biedermeier – a middle-class philistine who lacked the dignity of a true statesmen in the Prussian tradition."<sup>40</sup> Stibbe chronicles the political movements of the anti-republican right, the fragile coalitions built within the Weimar government, as well as voting patterns in the years following World War I. The conclusions drawn are compelling: arguing that German society did not fully polarize until the late 1920s and 1930s, coinciding with the economic upheaval that rocked Germany and much of the world, to its foundations. The following chapter on the economy delves into the impact that the economic chaos of the 1920s had on German society, from the upper and middle classes, to the urban poor.

The second half of Stibbe's book covers the cultural history of Weimar, as well as the causation of its eventual downfall. Chapter 5, "Weimar Culture" retraces territory covered by

<sup>40</sup> Stibbe, 68-69.

Peter Gay and, more recently, Eric Weitz. Stibbe examines the role of art and politics within Weimar as well as changing social and cultural norms within large cities like Berlin. Class division, mass media consumption, and shifting gender roles are all addressed. The ramifications of films like the Fritz Lang classic Metropolis as well as the works of men like Otto Spangler and Thomas Mann are all addressed. Stibbe's discussion of the backlash to these movements, the shift towards censorship during the second half of the 1920s also provides great insight into the culture of the period. The chapter closes with a telling discussion of German and Jewish relations during the period, and the dependency of the Jewish community on the survival of Weimar.

Stibbe's last chapter, "The Final Years of the Republic" addresses the political and social events that led to the death of the Weimar government and the rise of Adolf Hitler. Stibbe discusses the culmination of political disunion, economic catastrophe, skyrocketing unemployment, and violent, reactionary responses from the right as all causes of the eventual downfall of Weimar. In the end, the inability to stabilize the economy or form any political consensus within the Weimar government, as witnessed by the breakdown of the Grand Coalition, led to ever greater dissatisfaction and anger among the German populace.

Ultimately, Stibbe lays much of the responsibility for Hitler at the feet of Hindenburg. 41

Stibbe's work is not without its faults. Each chapter could have been significantly longer and there are passages where an endnote for further reading simply does not do the topic at hand proper justice. Stibbe's book is neither a primer on the subject of Modern German history for the undergraduate, nor is it enough to be sufficiently self-sustaining reading for the graduate student or scholar. Time and again the book presents fresh historical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Stibbe, 187-194.

perspectives side by side with summaries of contributions made by previous scholars on the subject. While some ambiguity exists behind the target audience for such a work, there is no refuting the invaluable contributions made here. Ernst Heinkel experienced all of the events described in Stibbe's book. He held the unique position of witnessing the terrible toll of the war on the home front of German society, while simultaneously constructing the weapons of war needed to continue the fight on the front lines. He and his company experienced the shortage of supplies, the civil and economic instability at home, and the uneven years of Weimar. To better understand Stibbe's contribution to the scholarship is to better understand Heinkel's experiences within German society.

Most importantly, Heinkel witnessed and suffered from the collapse of Weimar and the rise of the Third Reich. These political failures and the subsequent exploitation of Germany by the Nazis is the focus of an older, yet foundational work on the rise of the Nazis during the collapse of Weimar. *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1930-1935*, written by William Sheridan Allen, represents an early social history based on the case study of a German town, renamed Thalburg for the sake of anonymity. Allen's work broke with the traditional historiographical trends of his era. Eschewing the accepted top-down historical method of reviewing decisions of national governments, presidents, prime ministers, diplomats, and generals, Allen casts his historical narrative against the backdrop of a small rural town in Germany as it mutated from a quiet community to a hub of Nazi activity in six short years.

Thalburg's experience is not unlike the rest of Germany and represents an accurate reflection of events throughout the country during the Nazis forceful rise to power. Allen notes that Thalburg already exhibited signs of class division well before the rise of the Nazi

party. Class division, the almost comical number of clubs and drinking societies that populated the town and the small town tension of old, established families running head long into newer members of the community, all played a part in the systematic breakdown of relations in the town. Allen notes particular townspeople's, like Walter Timmerlah, the local bookstore owner who proudly supported the Nazi movement and frequently advertised their social functions in the town. Allen mentions a visit from Field Marshal von Mackensen which turned out the entire town and serves to highlight deep seated nationalistic emotions. Lastly, he notes that the town was deeply religious and had a nearly non-existent Jewish population. All of these seemingly unrelated facets of the town's dynamics would all be exploited by the Nazi party to full effect.

Allen is quick to argue, however, that the Nazi party would never have succeeded if not for the collapse of the German economy at the end of the 1920s. The town's bank collapsed in April of 1931. <sup>42</sup> Unemployment skyrocketed during the start of the 1930s and continued for years. As a result, workers in Thalburg often were unemployed for years, not months. <sup>43</sup> Exacerbating the misery of a depressed economy, the Weimar government, led by the Social Democrats, seemed utterly inept at solving the problems plaguing the town of Thalburg. <sup>44</sup> Local newspapers voiced their collective discontent. Worker's societies and drinking clubs turned political, packing auditoriums with angry townspeople.

The Social Democrats seemed to be at a loss for how to deal with the growing economic crisis. Their political maneuvers on the local level appeared equally incapable of meeting the growing crisis, and the growing challenge from the Nazi party. While the Social

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town: 1930-1935.* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1965), 56

<sup>43</sup> Allen, 142.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Allen 56-60.

Democrats held meetings on a semi-regular basis, the Nazis held rallies, speeches, and town gatherings on a nearly weekly basis. In between these regular meetings, the Nazis blanketed the town with propaganda. It appeared to the Social Democrats that the Nazis were suddenly everywhere.

By the summer of 1932, any sense of community within Thalburg simply ceased to exist. Violence between townspeople, the inability of the middle class parties to hold off the determined drive of the Nazi party, election fatigue resulting from the endless rounds of new elections, and a persistently and inexplicably depressed economy all played straight into the hands of the Nazis. Allen argues that by 1932, conditions in towns like Thalburg were so bad, that any government promising revolution, even if it meant dictatorship, would likely win the next election. Eventually, Thalburg fell to the Nazis, although Allen notes that support for the Nazis just before the ascension of Adolf Hitler as Führer, was on the decline. Yet in the years following the rise of the Third Reich, the town eventually fell from enthusiasm to one of ritual and suppression, much like the rest of Germany. 46

Allen notes that all politics, even those within the soon-to-be Third Reich, were a local affair. As mentioned earlier, Thalburg was a deeply religious community with a strong sense of national pride. The Nazi Party exploited these local attributes to the hilt. Rallies focused on national pride, the return of Germany to the world stage as a leader among nations. Further, anti-Semitic rhetoric was dialed down, owing to the town's nearly non-existent Jewish population. Even religious beliefs were played up; an ironic historical fact considering the largely anti-religious stance of the Nazi Party. In short, the Nazis exploited

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Allen, 100.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Allen, 241-257.

the economy, deeply seated class division, and growing discontent for the Weimar government's Social Democrats to break Thalburg's population down and turn them against each other. The consistent rise in Nazi support with each subsequent election return serves only to support Allen's argument that the Nazi part was far from inept and thuggish. They were an extremely well organized, adaptable political organism.

The Nazi Seizure of Power in a Single German Town, 1930-1935 represents one of the earliest attempts to create a social history reminiscent of the type that is so popular now in the current historiography. While Allen's work is not without faults, mostly stemming from relying on a highly localized study of one town based on the town's documents and interviews with those who remember the events firsthand, it is a massively important historical contribution. Allen's narrative provides critical insight into the politics of the Nazi party, and their remarkable adeptness at exploiting conditions on a local level to gain power. The unsettling experience of the dizzyingly rapid rise to power by the Third Reich was felt first-hand by Ernst Heinkel. Allen's assertion of politics as being a local affair would ring with remarkable truth on the morning of January 30, 1933, when Ernst Heinkel arrived at work, only to find the red and black flag of the swastika flying over his own factory. Three years later, the reach of the Third Reich was nearly limitless.

By 1936, as noted in Ian Kershaw's second volume on Hitler, entitled *Hitler*, 1936-1945: Nemesis, Hitler and the Nazi party largely felt invincible following their vanquishing of Weimar's Social Democrats and the subsequent adulation of the German people.<sup>47</sup> While somewhat outside of the scope of this review, Kershaw's work is considered a masterpiece

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ian Kershaw, Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

on the life of Adolf Hitler, and discusses in incredible detail, the events surrounding the Third Reich following its triumphant ascension onto the world stage.

Primary source material, like Heinkel's own autobiography, only serves to affirm the theories and conclusions made in the books reviewed here. One such work compiled by Benjamin Sax and Dieter Kuntz in 1992 and entitled *Inside Hitler's Germany: A Documentary History of Life in the Third Reich* provides just such insight. Largely focused on events following the ascension of the Nazi party to power in Germany, *Inside Hitler's Germany* also includes documents discussing life before the 1930s. It is clear from the documents that a deep, seething resentment grew in German society following the end of the First World War. Much like the divisions witnessed in Allen's work, this broader view of German reveals a society that was incredibly disillusioned with the end of the war and the subsequent peace treaty. One German asks in an early passage regarding the return of the German Army if the soldiers marching before him hated the revolution too. He also states that "The war is over, but the warriors continue to march." 48

The anger from the populace spilled over to the politicians of Weimar as well. One such document, entitled "The National Assembly Debate on the Treaty of Versailles" highlights the discontent in Germany regarding the terms of the treaty. One delegation head after another speaks out against the treaty. "Our Fatherland finds itself in the most difficult hour of its history. The enemy stands before our gates, and in the country there are disconcerting signs of internal breakup." <sup>49</sup> Regarding the eventual signing of the Treaty of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Benjamin Sax and Deiter Kuntz, ed. *Inside Hitler's Germany: A Documentary History of Life in the Third Reich.* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1992), 31.
<sup>49</sup> Sax, 47.

Versailles, the German People's Party delegate angrily proclaimed, "We reject [the treaty] because to accept it would mean the destruction of the German nation." <sup>50</sup>

Inside Hitler's Germany includes a wide range of documents covering everything from inflation figures to inflammatory speeches made by Hitler and Goebbels during the years leading up to and including the Third Reich. These sources all illustrate a leftist Social Democratic Party unable to cope with rising inflation, skyrocketing unemployment, discontent at home, unacceptable peace terms abroad, war debt, and an unceasing assailment from the Nazi Party and Adolf Hitler.

The primary sources included in *Inside Hitler's Germany* bring the historiography of Modern Germany full circle. Peter Gay's initial discussion of the "best of Weimar" being overwhelmed by the dark destructive elements of Weimar opened the doors of deeper, probing scholarship into German history. Even more modern works, such as Eric Weitz's portrayal of a Weimar culture riding the knife edge of liberalism, creativity, and utter destruction, to the uncertainty of the Reichswehr, to the exploitation of the German populace by the Nazis, presents a clearer picture of Weimar's historical dilemmas. These works reveal a Germany struggling to find its identity after the traumatic experiences of the First World War. From the depths of a sharply militaristic Wihlemian era, the Weimar Republic represented the great ideals of a liberal society. It created an open society and culture of artists, thinkers, film makers, and authors who created new ideas and espoused a new politic.

Weimar was a radically different society from the Wilhelmian era it replaced. And the rising tide of economic, social, military, and political problems eventually overwhelmed the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Ibid

Weimar government and the Social Democrats who led it. In spite of its best efforts and its high ideals, and perhaps because of them, Weimar could not stave off depression, discontent, and a violent assault from the radical elements of the very society it created. The result of Weimar's failure was its death. In its place rose a totalitarian regime the likes of which the world has never seen before or since. The all conquering Third Reich drove Germany into a deeper chasm than even the First World War. The resulting destruction and death left Germany utterly devastated. The works reviewed here provide an historical overview of this remarkably tumultuous time in German history, and perhaps opens new avenues for investigation for future research. To understand these events in their larger historical framework provides the foundation with which to understand the world Ernst Heinkel inhabited.

Ernst Heinkel steered his company, Heinkel-Flugzeugwerke, through the turmoil and chaos of the Weimar period, and into the darker years of the Second World War. The historiography reviewed in this chapter charts the unsettling, and dangerous currents in German society during Heinkel's lifetime. Heinkel, like many Germans, was undoubtedly affected by Germany's defeat in the First World War. His company, like thousands of others, struggled through the economic depression and hyperinflation of Weimar. The political and social upheaval likely made Heinkel uncertain about his future in Germany, and the role that aviation could play. The collapse of Weimar again left doubt, and the rise of the Third Reich presented business opportunities and, simultaneously, great peril; both economic and ethical. Heinkel's company was not immune to the hostile takeover tactics of the Nazi Party during the Second World War. Nor would the *Heinkel-Flugzeugwerke's* reputation emerge from World War II untarnished by the use of SS provided slave labor. Indeed, from the economic

currents that rocked Europe and the rest of the Western world, to the rebuilding of German military might, to the chaos and destruction of war, Ernst Heinkel's life coincided with all of the currents of Modern German historiography.

# Comments on Autobiography as Historical Material

Ernst Heinkel was one of the few German aviators to put his life on paper following the Second World War. Even more surprising, his company continued to thrive throughout the 1950s, until it was bought out shortly after Heinkel's death. His autobiography, *Stürmisches Leben*, was published in 1956, two years before his death. Heinkel's memoirs provide remarkable insight into an aviation pioneer who, perhaps, viewed the world with a far more internationalist perspective than his contemporaries. His words form the foundation of this thesis, and provide a first-hand perspective of how he experienced the remarkable history of aviation's early years and the eventual power struggle between private business and the state.

The use of an autobiography, however, presents significant historiographical challenges that must be addressed by the researcher. *Stürmisches Leben* was published in 1956, eleven years following the collapse of the Third Reich and the defeat of Germany in the Second World War. The intervening years allowed Heinkel the precious gift of time to compose his thoughts, analyze his perspective, and ultimately decide how he felt his life played out during the past half-century. As a result, there can be no doubt that some liberties were taken in writing his life's story. While no directly contradictory evidence surfaced during the research process to disprove any of his assertions, the historian must always be guarded against giving too much weight to the unchecked memoirs of one individual. It

should also be noted, that the time in which this autobiography was written presents historiographical challenges as well. One must ask if Heinkel would have condemned the Third Reich and the decisions made by the new Luftwaffe if he put his words on paper at the height of the Nazis power. Clearly, Heinkel's own words must be scrutinized thoroughly.

Ideally, other primary sources from Heinkel and his company, generated during the lifespan of the Heinkel Flugzeugwerke, would augment the material presented in Heinkel's autobiography. These papers exist, and currently reside at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, Germany. Unfortunately, due to logistical and financial constraints, these documents were not accessed during the research process for this thesis. It is the sincere hope of this author that these documents will be accessed in the future, and will provide the impetus for further research into the ebb and flow of power between Ernst Heinkel, his company, and the German government during the life of his company. Perhaps these papers will lead to a much larger doctoral dissertation.

In light of these difficulties, methodological adjustments were made in an effort to combat the historiographical shortcomings presented in this work. Whenever possible, this thesis utilizes outside material from newspapers, court documents, and secondary works by other scholars in the field in an effort to either support or refute Heinkel's own words. Ultimately, Heinkel's memoirs provide the foundation of this work, and his words, when viewed through a stringent historical lens, stand on their own. He presents what appears to be an honest assessment of events, and whether intended or otherwise, Heinkel gives startling insight into the events leading up to and following the Nazi seizure of not only governmental power, but control of his own company. It is the assertion of the author that the research presented here is as sound, well researched, and fairly scrutinized as possible.

#### CHAPTER TWO

### THE LIFE OF AN AVIATOR

Aviation transcended a multitude of concepts in Ernst Heinkel's life. Even Heinkel's birth was overshadowed by the power of flight. "My real life did not begin in 1888 when I was born."51 In the course of his lifetime, Ernst Heinkel designed remarkable aircraft, established new world records with his machines, provided both the German Empire and the Third Reich with weapons of war, endured the Nazi takeover of his factory, employed slave labor, and unlike many of his contemporaries, lived to write his life before his death in 1958. Yet, by his account, Heinkel's birth was insignificant; aviation was the only all-consuming passion in his life, a factor which likely contributed to multiple divorces. If the measure of ink utilized in his memoirs provides any insight into the priorities of Heinkel's mind, even his family trails a distant second to the science of flight. He mentions his father only once; describing him as a tinkerer. His mother receives no mention at all. The Heinkel family lived in the small Swabian village of Grunbach in the Remittals. 52 Beyond these small details, little of Heinkel's life before the age of twenty is described in his autobiography, *Stürmisches* Leben.

Even more peculiar than his insignificant birth, is the event that marks what Heinkel viewed as the start of his "real life." This "read life" birth came from, of all things, a catastrophic air disaster. Heinkel witnessed one of the world's first true air accidents on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 11. <sup>52</sup> Ibid.

August 5, 1908 with the horrific, fiery crash of the gigantic Zeppelin LZ 4. Through traumatic circumstances Heinkel's life began "in the sinister glare of the flames from the Zeppelin LZ 4, which burned to cinders before my eyes." <sup>53</sup> The Zeppelin LZ 4 was the culmination of work by one of Heinkel's predecessors; the elderly airship designer, Graf Zeppelin. 54 With aviation only a scant five years removed from the Wright Brother's flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, the airship still represented a formidable alternative to the airplane. Thus, the twenty year old Heinkel, whose own coming of age coincided with that of human flight, watched as the elder Graf Zeppelin stood helpless near the fires of the LZ4 and exclaim, "I'm lost..."55

All was not lost, however. The moments following the disastrous crash of the LZ 4 demonstrated the generosity of the German people. The crowd, still in shock from the crash, called out to Zeppelin, "Courage, Courage!" Individuals immediately began donating money to Zeppelin to build a new dirigible. Heinkel describes the scene: "This word "collection" [referring to the donations made to Zeppelin] rang in my ears all the way to the train that took me back to Stuttgart."<sup>56</sup> Yet it was clear to the young Heinkel that Zeppelin's airships were doomed to fail. He stated that "lighter than air could not possibly be the final solution." Within days of his return from the site of the Zeppelin disaster, Heinkel began researching aircraft designs from both France and America. The young engineering student, who was enrolled at the Technical High School in Stuttgart, had found his life's passion.

Secondary sources, however, dispute Heinkel's account of the LZ 4 disaster. Peter Fritzsche, in A Nation of Fliers, notes from his own research that, "Heinkel's story is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>Heinkel, Stormy Life, 12.
Ibid.</sup> 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Ibid.

probably apocryphal; local newspapers in their reports from Echterdingen do not mention collections taken up at the disaster site itself."<sup>57</sup> While this invented story casts doubt over the rest of Heinkel's assertions and statements, Fritzsche offers Heinkel an historical reprieve: "But the fictional incident is instructive. The accent on the workingman and his spontaneous gesture points to the effort to cast the spirit of Echterdingen as embracing people's nationalism that included all social classes."<sup>58</sup> Beyond the idea of a people's nationalism, this story serves, in Heinkel's own mind, as the impetus for his life's work. And that focus led him to study the early science of aviation.

Heinkel immediately found both obstacles and opportunities in the burgeoning field of flight. The simple act of locating information about flight presented the first of many challenges. Heinkel attended lectures on aviation, but found the rooms filled with less than a handful of people, and in once instance, only included "the professor's wife, his mother-in-law and a nursemaid." This was hardly an audience enraptured with the new science of aviation. Heinkel finally found information after discussing the matter with a friend, who pointed him to the Café Reinsburg in Stuttgart. The café was a relatively unknown repository of the latest aviation news, photographs, and documents. Heinkel immersed himself in the stories of the Wright Brothers flight at Kitty Hawk, which many in Germany referred to as the "lying brothers" - convinced that the flight as a tall tale from America. <sup>60</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup>Peter Fritzsche. *A Nation of Fliers: German Aviation and the Popular Imagination*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 18.

While reading in the Cafe Reinsburg, Heinkel discovered an announcement: an aviation competition held the city of Frankfurt during the first week of October 1909.<sup>61</sup> It was his first foray into professional flight. The moment was not lost on him, "As I read this, I knew that at all costs I had to see this show."62 To fund his trip from Stuttgart to Frankfurt, Heinkel sold his copy of *The Elements of Machinery* at a local bookstore. It was a painful parting, earning him only six marks, but giving him just enough money to pay for the train ticket to Frankfurt. Heinkel described the International Flying Exhibition as the "second decisive event" in his life. 63 The show convinced him to become an aviator and an aircraft constructor. After working on plans to build his own plane, he answered a want ad for an engineer. Heinkel jumped on the chance.

This initial job offering gave Ernst Heinkel an opening into the burgeoning aviation industry. It was an opportunity that provided Heinkel with a career for the rest of his life. Heinkel met a master mechanic named Friedrich Münz, who provided the young aviator with a small salary and a workshop to begin construction of his aircraft. He spent the next several months building an aircraft of his own design. In May of 1911, Heinkel successfully flew his first machine, attracting the attention of the *Stuttgarter Tagblatt*, the local newspaper. He continued to fly for another ten days. As was the case for many aviators, however, luck soon ran out. 64

While flying his machine, Heinkel experienced what he called a side-slip to the right. Losing control of the aircraft, the machine spiraled and Heinkel lost consciousness. The crash fractured his skull, his upper and lower jaw, his left thigh, his third right finger, broke his

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 20. Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 27.

nose and also left him bleeding from his ears. He also suffered second and third degree burns to his face. His recovery was a long, difficult, and incredibly process. Remarkably, Heinkel remained determined to work in aviation, even if it meant others would fly his new machines. On September 16, 1911, Heinkel hobbled out of the Munich hospital and headed to the recently founded Luftverkehrs-Gesellschaft, or LVG, to ask for a job. 66

Heinkel's tenure at LVG was eventful, but short lived. During his time here, Heinkel came into contact with members of the international aviation community. One designer, whom Heinkel only refers to as a "red-haired, freckled designer with the Polish name of Skolnik," worked with the French at the well-known Nieuport firm. <sup>67</sup> Skolnik had significant work experience constructing Gnome-Rhone powered monoplanes. Industrial intrigue played a role at LVG, and the company sought out Skolnik to copy Nieuport's designs for a well publicized flight from Berlin to Vienna. <sup>68</sup> Heinkel also met a future contemporary, the famous, enigmatic Antony Fokker. Heinkel's impression of Fokker was that of a man who "was a lean, unmarried crank, and flying was in his blood." Despite his negative assessment of the Flying Dutchman, Heinkel admired his work; the appreciation of talent over national origins became a theme throughout Heinkel's life.

The remarkably lax working conditions in the differing German firms were evident by their work environment. Heinkel describes his time at Johanisthal field – the central location and test center for multiple German aircraft companies – as resembling "a hastily

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

erected shanty town of the early American west." Even before the devil-may-care days of World War I pilots, the test fliers at Johanisthal field lived a morally questionable existence. "The two cafés – the Senftleben and the Bürgergarten – were the center of a wild life dedicated to pleasure." Heinkel comments that "the girls from Berlin were not exactly of the best families, but the pilots lived for the day because they never know how long they would survive."<sup>72</sup> Clearly, aviation's early days were dangerous even before the outbreak of World War I.

While at LVG, Heinkel was approached by Hellmuth Hirth, another engineer who founded the Mahle GmbH and Hirth companies sought out Heinkel to work for him at the Albatros aircraft company, tempting him with a salary of 425 marks and the offer to construct sea planes for Hirth. The venture was a success. Heinkel constructed aircraft that broke records and brought acclaim to Albatros. By 1914, Heinkel's aircraft broke altitude and endurance records and set the standard within organizations like the *Federation* Aeronautique Internationale. The accomplishments of Heinkel's aircraft led to enormous expansion within Albatros. Yet Heinkel was restless and by the eve of the First World War had left Albatros in search of greater challenges.

Heinkel's autobiography paints the picture of an aviation innovator who led a charmed life; a man never far from fortuitous opportunities. Yet, this picture is tempered by historical fact. By 1914, larger firms began swallowing up smaller companies, thus forcing Heinkel to move to a larger firm like LVG, rather than start his own company. John Morrow notes in, Building German Airpower 1909-1914, that the market was far more driven by the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Heinkel, 32. <sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Heinkel, 32.

demands of the German military. He also states that "as firms expanded, many of the industry's entrepreneurs, who were technicians and inventors, could no longer direct personally the details of production..." Heinkel's account, while somewhat overstated, is not without some truth. Morrow notes that "Rumpler, Fokker, and Heinkel, successfully made the difficult transition from small entrepreneur to business director of a large firm." Part of this transition involved Heinkel's contacts with some wealthy, independent businessmen, with ties to aviation.

Following his departure from Albatros, he was contacted by Ignatz Etrich of Austria, who recently started his own aircraft company. He lured Heinkel with a remarkable increase over his old salary at Albatros: "I know you earn 54,000 marks a year [at Albatros]," Etrich stated, "I'm offering you 20,000. You're only twenty-six. Twenty thousand marks is the salary of a cabinet minister." Needless to say, Heinkel jumped at the opportunity. All did not turn out well, however, and Heinkel soon became disillusioned with the dysfunctional company. He was contacted by another wealthy entrepreneur, named Camillo Castiglioni, who purchased the *Hansa und Brandenburgische Flugzeugwerke* in 1914. Castiglioni who wowed Heinkel with his charming demeanor and large salary offer: this time of 100,000 crowns a year. <sup>76</sup>

Heinkel remarks that his relationship with Castiglioni was one of warmth and equality.<sup>77</sup> The two men greatly respected each other. Heinkel constructed yet more aircraft for his employer and the two enjoyed a successful business relationship as well as a personal

<sup>73</sup> John Morrow. *Building German Air Power, 1909-1914*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1976),121-122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Morrow, 122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 41-45.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

friendship. Heinkel mentions, however, that during the war, Castiglioni, whose company operated in Austria, was charged with treason for continuing business relations with Italy. Heinkel remarks in his autobiography that Castiglioni was labeled as an "international Jewish finance iackal. He would be slandered and smeared."<sup>78</sup> For Heinkel, the treatment his friend received was unjust and unwarranted. In Heinkel's mind, Castiglioni's love of both Italy and Austria was not treasonous. He stated that he felt Castiglioni believed that he considered "the whole world was his fatherland." 79 Simply put, Castiglioni transcended national borders, and had every right to.

It is clear from Heinkel's own accounts, as well as his business ventures, that he viewed aviation as the primary focus of his work. Whether consciously or otherwise, Heinkel moved from business to business; the intent always focused on producing more aircraft and furthering new designs. He demonstrates no discernable loyalty to any one firm, only to a higher salary and, above that, the opportunity to invent and produce his own designs. At no point in his writings does Heinkel convey any latent feelings of nationalism. His passion was his work.

The First World War: Questions of Self-Determination and Power:

Even the outbreak of war failed to stir such feelings in Heinkel. The First World War was viewed quite differently in the mind of Ernst Heinkel. Now an established aircraft designer, Heinkel viewed the outbreak of war not as a tragedy or a great national triumph, but rather as the start of new business. He focused his design work in the town of Briest. As the armies of Europe mobilized around him, he drove to Liebau in Austria and with the help of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 47. <sup>79</sup> Ibid.

his workers, gathered up the supplies needed for drafting aircraft blueprints. Yet, even a great aircraft designer was not impervious to the chaos and paranoia of war. On their return trip, Heinkel and his passenger were threatened with revolvers and nearly killed by an angry mob before the police intervened and convinced the crowd that he and his men were not French spies. What was the cause of the confusion? Heinkel mistakenly left a French-style balloonist cap on the front seat of his car while he and his men stopped to eat dinner. 80 Clearly, the tense early days of the war effected Heinkel, whether he fully grasped the gravity of his situation or not.

Heinkel's portrayal of the war is equally clinical. This level of detachment is curious, considering when he wrote his account of the war. He does not express any feelings of sorrow or loss over the tremendous human toll the war levied on Germany. Instead, Heinkel's impression of the war focuses on aircraft design and production. Heinkel constructed several sea planes during the conflict. He was awarded the Iron Cross, Second Class, when one of his aircraft shot down two English Curtiss flying boats. 81 He focused his attention on sea planes and multi-engine super planes. While he constructed many of the former, the latter never left the drawing board. Heinkel's war experiences put him into contact with some of the greatest engineers of his time: Ferdinand Porsche and Antony Fokker, among others. His work studio within *Hansa-Brandenburg* grew from seventy men in 1914 to over one thousand by the end of the war.<sup>82</sup>

Yet, for the first time in his career, Heinkel experienced the strict limitations placed upon his designs by the German military. It was the first time he met conflict between the

<sup>Heinkel, Stormy Life, 49.
Heinkel, Stormy Life, 56.
Ibid.</sup> 

self-deterministic will of his own designs and the power of the German state. John Morrow notes in, *German Air Power in World War I*, that "Rear Admiral Starke, head of the aviation department in the Imperial Naval Office, discussed ... development mandates with the manufacturers in periodic two-hour conferences in Berlin." The results of which meant Heinkel found "the choice of either 160-horsepower Mercedes or ... 150-horsepower Benz engines constraining, yet had a small floatplane built in eight weeks and shipped to Warnemünde for tests." While working for *Hansa-Brandenburg*, Heinkel found his work largely dictated from above, and as a result, embarked on the task of constructing seaplanes.

Ever the engineer, Heinkel's own intuition allowed him to persevere around the limitations placed on him by the German military. Working within the tight parameters set by Rear Admiral Strake, "the chief test pilot discovered that the plane was tail-heavy." Reacting to the problem, Heinkel and his factory crew stayed overnight to "remove the top wing and set it thirty-five centimeters to the rear of the plane to correct the center of gravity." The experience reminded Heinkel, and perhaps reinforced Heinkel's idea that construction was best done "über den Daumen gepeilt" (taking one's bearings over one's thumbs). In other words, by guesswork, and trial and error. Regarding the oversight of the German Navy, Heinkel described a conversation between himself and another worker that night when told that the Navy would "never allow it" by simply replying, "Then for once we won't ask the Navy's permission." Heinkel experienced these moments of trial and error throughout the war. And while his work on seaplanes was directed by the Imperial Naval Office, he was

 <sup>83</sup> John Morrow. German Air Power in World War I. (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1982.), 88
 84 Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Morrow, 88.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 55.

largely spared the heavier hand of interference by the German government, which was focused on larger tasks like the Hindenburg Program and later, the America Program.<sup>87</sup>

Ultimately, Heinkel's autobiography never discusses the war as a tragedy. The millions of deaths on the Western Front are never mentioned. Nor is the Eastern Front, with its mass slaughter, ever discussed. While his aircraft were successful, they saw little or no combat during the war. For Heinkel then, the First World War was experienced from a distance; the engineer detached from the sharp end of the conflict. Even his designs served more as experiments than weapons. Only his friend, Castiglioni, directly experienced the brutality of war by being dragged into a military tribunal over charges of treason at the dawn of the conflict. Heinkel states that Castiglioni rose through the ranks of great financiers, and as a result, he was "fiercely opposed as an 'international Jewish finance jackal." The results were terrible. Castiglioni was "slandered and smeared." Heinkel states that "he would be accused of lack of patriotism and of treason merely because he had two countries close to his heart – Italy and Austria-Hungary – and was bound to consider the whole world as his fatherland."90 In this statement we see in Ernst Heinkel a man who grasps the concept of nationalism, and views the world through such a prism, and yet sees aviation pioneers like Castiglioni as transcending those boundaries. Even during wartime, Heinkel held fast to the concept of aviation as beyond national borders; an international invention that moved beyond the rigid definition of countries.

Heinkel's closest encounter with the war occurred when he had a brush with revolution, and likely suffered a scare during the naval mutiny at Kiel in November 1918.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Morrow, 89-110.

<sup>88</sup> Heinkel. Stormy Life, 47.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

The chaos of protestors and naval mutineers prevented him from entering one of his factories. Heinkel recalled that "Just before Castiglioni appeared the garrison commander stopped me in the street and warned me not to go to the factory." The garrison commander stated, "The Red sailors from Kiel are there. They'll kill you." Heinkel was undaunted, and drove straight into his factory. Remarkably, there was no incident. Castiglioni was with him, and shortly after the incident with the Red sailors from Kiel, told Heinkel that "Germany and Austria will be forbidden to build planes." He was right. The Treaty of Versailles, signed several months later in 1919, strictly forbade the construction of aircraft in Germany. For the first time since his horrendous accident in 1910, Ernst Heinkel was out of a job. Yet, Castiglioni also stated, unnervingly, that "Germany will never rest in peace. She will go on building aircraft."92 Again, it is clear that concepts of nationalism were latent in both men, yet only surfaced when the primary focus, that of constructing aircraft, was in jeopardy.

Open for Business: Power Limitations and Aviation After Versailles:

The 1920s witnessed Ernst Heinkel move from constructing military aircraft for the Imperial Naval Office to a far more international business model. By moving production outside of Germany, Heinkel circumvented the Versailles Treaty's restrictions on aircraft construction. He also moved his business beyond the borders of Germany for the first time in his career. As a result, his business grew during the decade before the Third Reich, and he achieved international acclaim as an aircraft designer and constructor.

The devastating impact of the Treaty of Versailles on German aviation cannot be overstated. Simply put, "the signing of the Versailles treaty signaled the death knell of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 62. <sup>92</sup> Ibid.

German air force and aircraft industry of World War I."<sup>93</sup> Morrow notes that by the time the treaty's restrictions went into effect, the vast majority of the "old guard" of Germany's air force had left. Close colleagues of Heinkel: Col. Hermann von der Lieth-Thomsen, Lt. General Ernst Wilhelm von Höppner, and Major Wilhelm Hähnelt, all vacated their positions by October 31, 1919. <sup>94</sup> Men like General Hans von Seeckt, commander of the German Reichswehr, however, knew that rebuilding was not only possible in the future, it was inevitable. "The future German Luftwaffe was already alive in the minds of the Troop Office's military aviation experts."

While German aviation suffered restrictions and stagnation at home, its founding pioneers looked abroad to continue their work. Ernst Heinkel, now relocated back in Warnemünde and operating independently, looked towards Sweden as a potential market for his seaplanes. His reasons were economic. Heinkel noted that there was an "aeronautical vacuum" in the Scandinavian countries. <sup>96</sup> Similarly, his expertise in seaplanes also attracted the attention of American markets. The United States Navy sought out Heinkel's talent for designing seaplanes for use aboard submarine. Heinkel describes the plane, stating that it was to "be so constructed that it could be stowed in a round tank 4 ft. 6 in. across and 18 ft. long, and dive with the submarine." Morrow also notes that Heinkel achieved a great deal of success in circumventing the Versailles Treaty limitations on aircraft construction: "Heinkel

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Morrow, 162.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Morrow, 163.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Ibid.

designed seaplanes for foreign powers and had the parts assembled in Sweden, where the navy had been buying his floatplanes since the end of 1918."98

Between 1919 and 1920, Germany still represented a threat to the outside world as an aircraft manufacturer, even while limited to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. A report released by the French Sub-Secretary of the State for Aeronautics stated that Germany aircraft builders had "retained their original personnel" and continued work on new designs:

"From the time the Junkers and Zeppelin corporations can put their aircraft on the market, commercial aviation will progress with incredible swiftness... To place the enormous number of factories capable of producing aviation equipment on a footing to produce new material will require no more than three months; to enable them to produce again at full capacity, no more than nine months to one year. Consequently, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles which forbid all aeronautical construction in Germany for six months will have no appreciable effect on the subsequent volume of Germany's aeronautical production. The only present restriction to Germany's assuming aviation supremacy is her financial and economic situation."99

The situation was worrisome for the French. As Morrow notes, "The French had two choices: they could recommend lifting all the Versailles prohibitions, or they could attempt to postpone the inevitable resurgence of German aviation for as long as possible." <sup>100</sup> While representing state power and pressure from outside of Germany, the French maneuvers to control represents another move by a national state power to impose control on the inherently international technology of aviation. Yet this decision by the French was largely one of overreaction; the findings of the report were not reflective of the reality for most German firms on the ground. As Morrow finds in his study of German aviation firms following World War I, many collapsed on their own accord. Rumpler, for example, dissolved in June, 1919. Aviatik, though accused of constructing transport planes as late as 1920, had already converted to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Morrow, 164.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

tractor production. The company completely disbanded by December 1921. Halberstadt, another World War I era fighter plane constructor, folded in 1920. Antony Fokker and the company that bore his name closed in 1921 and fled to Holland. <sup>101</sup>

Heinkel's firm was not as large as Junkers or Zeppelin, but avoided bankruptcy and enjoyed a measure of great success during the 1920s. In addition to selling aircraft to much of Scandinavia and the United States, Heinkel expanded to other countries as well. In 1928, Heinkel states that he "produced the greatest number and variety of types, including training planes, reconnaissance torpedo-carriers, monoplanes and biplanes, single-engine and twinengine airplanes, for Sweden, Japan, Hungary, Denmark, and Germany." It is clear, that, due to the limitations of the Versailles Treaty, aviation as an industry in Germany moved beyond national borders. Even if for purely pragmatic and economic reasons, the field of aviation spread outside of Germany and moved across Europe and to fields abroad. Heinkel's company was a major proponent of building aircraft in any location that would sign up for a contract. International deals were struck and the company grew larger. Yet, the reach of the German government was never far off. Heinkel notes that his company soon constructed aircraft for the Reichswehr, in collaboration on a project with, of all countries, the Soviet Union.

Heinkel was approached by a member of the Reichswehr command, a sharply dressed man referred to as "Student." Morrow mentions a Captain Kurt Student, who was most likely the man who made contact with Heinkel. Student was, according to Heinkel,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Morrow, 165.

Heinkel, Stormy Life, 73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Morrow, 163.

"surrounded in secrecy" and only later informed him of the "true story." <sup>104</sup> The account of the "true story," according to Heinkel was that the Reichswehr, "in collaboration with the German government, had established relations with the Soviet Union." <sup>105</sup> His opinion of the Soviet's aeronautical ability was damning: "In a state complete disorganization and lacking all technical means for their industrialization program, the Soviets were seeking a rapprochement with Germany." <sup>106</sup> Heinkel also noted the strategic reasons for the new relationship: "...differences with the Poles and the threat of France in the Ruhr, the camouflaged military aviation department in the Reichswehr Ministry was trying to insure for the helpless Reichswehr a few pilots and planes." <sup>107</sup>

John Morrow, however, presents a far less benevolent perspective on the situation between Germany and the Soviet Union. According to Morrow, the deal with Russia symbolized Germany's attempt to circumvent the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty and continue work on military aviation. "The German Defense Ministry's secret rearmament project in Russia enabled it to evade the total ban on military aviation, while restrictions on commercial aviation forced the few remaining German aircraft firms back into the clutches of the army if they desired contracts." Here again, Heinkel denies culpability. "This bit of secret history remained largely hidden from me." Once more, the business of constructing new prototypes was placed at odds with the demands of the German government. Student ordered Heinkel to produce "a land biplane with a speed of 140 mph and a ceiling of at least

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 73.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Morrow, 166.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 74.

20,000 feet to be used as a short-distance reconnaissance plane." Lucrative contracts failed to materialize. "There was no fortune to be made. He could not even guarantee the financial basis of my work." Heinkel's covert work at re-armament continued, this time in the East.

While working on project planes for the secret Reichswehr-Soviet armament deal, Heinkel was approached by the Japanese government, which had a delegation in Berlin in 1923. Heinkel met with a Captain Kaga and engineers from the Japanese aircraft company, Aichi Tokei Denki. As in his dealings with Student, Heinkel encountered similarly stringent requirements from the Japanese military as well. According to Heinkel, the Japanese wanted "superior land and sea planes based on [his] previous experience and suited for the Japanese Naval Air Force as torpedo-carriers." <sup>112</sup> Curiously, Heinkel admits to fully understanding the secrecy of such a project, stating "When I mentioned the ban on such projects, they smiled sweetly and ambiguously."113

The Japanese promised to compensate Heinkel extensively for his work. Heinkel even refers to the work conducted at this time as "hot," with a clear intent to break international law for the sake of perfecting new catapult technology. Heinkel mentions the Allied Commission put in charge of overseeing German compliance with the aeronautical restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles. The Commission was also easily circumvented. In one incident, Heinkel's engineers were using a large displacement Fiat engine, one that violated the rules. When a contingent of French and British officers arrived to inspect the grounds of Heinkel's workshop, they spotted the power plant. Heinkel recalls that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 74. <sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Japanese "only winked at me." <sup>114</sup> Heinkel even admits complicity in the cover up. "What's the matter? I said, 'That's an old experimental engine for apprentices. What else do you think it is? We know perfectly well that we're not allowed to build high-powered planes." <sup>115</sup>

International trade, growing business relationships, and expanding markets remained, according to Heinkel, his critical work throughout the 1920s. One of his biggest achievements for the decade was building a mail plane for an American airline, the name of which Heinkel never specifies. <sup>116</sup> He continued work with the Japanese, culminating in a trip to Japan in 1925 to oversee the first successful test flights of catapult-launched aircraft from the deck of a new Japanese aircraft carrier. In a truly ironic twist of historical fate, Heinkel traveled to Japan by way of the United States.

Heinkel disembarked in New York, and by his account, enjoyed the frenetic and restless lifestyle of the United States. "I realized how much the tempo and restless land corresponded to my own temperament. I have always had the same impression and never leave the country without a pang." During his trip to America, Heinkel enjoyed a whistlestop tour of American industry, culminating in a personal tour of the Boeing factory in Seattle, Washington. Boeing himself gave Heinkel a personal tour of the shop floors. Heinkel noted that Boeing was "an energetic, good-looking man, who told me that his father had been a Prussian officer." He foreshadows Boeing's role in the Second World War, stating: "His dream was to build multi-engined giant planes... when Boeing's Flying Fortresses attacked

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 75.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life,76.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Ibid.

Germany, I thought of him." Ever the logistically-minded engineer and businessman, Heinkel noted that "the factories [in America] were comparatively small but had much greater financial backing than our little concerns in Germany. There was distinct progress in aviation engine production and this was to prove one of the causes of our downfall." <sup>120</sup>

As the 1920s ended, Heinkel continued work with the Japanese military, ultimately assisting in the development of catapult launched aircraft that were the predecessors to those used in the Pearl Harbor attack of December 7, 1941. Heinkel's company continued to build aircraft for any country, or military entity that would sign a contract with the firm. As a result, among other things, Heinkel Flugzeugwerke set air speed records with high powered single seat planes during the end of the decade. The company also constructed twin engine mail planes and airliners. Within the designs of these powerful high speed aircraft, mail planes, and transport machines, however, lay the seeds of the new Luftwaffe. Single seat speed planes became fighters, mail planes mutated into bombers, and transport craft soon carried the troops of the Third Reich. The international businessman who sought to transcend national boundaries had, once again, found himself snared within the power structure of the German government and its rapidly rearming military. 121

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 86. <sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Heinkel, 90-131.

# CHAPTER THREE

## UNDER THE SWASTIKA

The morning of January 30, 1933 represented the end of self-determination for the once-internationalist Ernst Heinkel. His day began by driving to his factory at Warnemünde; the ascension of Adolf Hitler to power in Berlin likely far from his mind. When he drove up to the factory gates, however, the consolidation of Nazi power suddenly felt uncomfortably close. "I looked with some amazement at our flagpole. The swastika was fluttering in the breeze." Heinkel was incensed. "I barked sharply [at the] gatekeeper, 'What is the meaning of this?'" His gatekeeper replied that one of Heinkel's own test pilots, who also held membership in the S.S., ordered the flag flown. <sup>124</sup> Heinkel ordered, "Take that thing down at once. If any flags are to be hoisted here, I'll give the order. What the hell is going on here?" <sup>125</sup>

His secretary, a woman named Maria Hupertz, informed Heinkel about the political intrigue that culminated with the flag of the swastika flying over his factory. "Yesterday morning a certain Herr Bittrich was here, a high-ranking S.S. official. He told Herr Brenner to see to it that the flag was flown in honor of the Party coming to power." Heinkel replied

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 132-133.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Ibid.

"Is that so? Well, well, now that the flag's down again it will remain down." At that moment, Ernst Heinkel believed the incident was behind him. He likely also believed that he still controlled affairs at his own factory as he had for years.

A few hours later, Herr Bittrich arrived to personally rectify the removal of the swastika from Heinkel's factory grounds. Bittrich noted to Heinkel that the flag was flown on his explicit orders. He continued, saying, "I've also noticed that it's been taken down. I should like to know the reason." Heinkel recalls in his memoir that he felt rebellious in that moment. "I am afraid that this had nothing to do with politics or my political convictions. I felt that in the place where I worked and which I had built up, it was for me to say whether a flag should be hoisted or not." Clearly, the ideas of self-determination still held strong for the German aviator.

Heinkel, however, was also a pragmatist at heart. Realizing that his shop floor consisted of workers from a variety of diverse, often diametrically opposed political factions within Germany, it was in the best interest of the company not to create any more political tension than necessary. "Seventy per cent of my workers are Social Democrats," he informed Bittrich, "I can't afford to antagonize them. As far as I know, I've only four or five National Socialists here. I can't afford to deal with any trouble in my works." Heinkel's comment of "as far as I know" also denotes a certain pragmatic detachment from the political goings on within his labor force. Bittrich, ever the Party official, had none of it. "We'll soon deal with any trouble, you leave that to us." Heinkel was more determined than ever to end the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 133.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> Ibid.

incident before it could grow worse, and replied, "But I don't want any trouble in my factory, we have work to do and no time to lose." Bittrich's response was chilling: "I shall report your attitude to Berlin. You'll be hearing from us." From this moment on, Ernst Heinkel suffered under the ever expanding power of the Third Reich, and its ability to suffocate independence and self-determination not just for Heinkel, but his factory as well.

A few hours later, the telephone rang in Ernst Heinkel's office. The newly appointed Reich Air Minister, Hermann Goering, waited on the other end of the line. Goering's choice of words was ominous: "Herr Heinkel, people are rather upset about you here. I remember my pleasant visit with you last summer. What I predicted then has now taken place. I have just been appointed Air Minister and we are going to build up a German aircraft industry second to none in the world." <sup>132</sup> Heinkel knew Goering. The year before, Heinkel hosted Goering and actress Antonie Strassman at his home in Warnemünde. According to Heinkel's recollection of the meeting, Goering was insistent that he would become Air Minister. Clearly, that moment had arrived.

Goering continued, "I would not like our future collaboration to start off on the wrong foot. Hoisting that flag...was [an] arbitrary interference. I fully understand your attitude, but I need to ask you for a favor." Heinkel, knowing the situation was now hopeless, relented and asked the new Air Minister what he could do for him. "I must ask you to let our people hoist the flag to celebrate this day, which for Germany in general and for German aviation in particular, will have such a decisive meaning. In the meanwhile, the flag is flying at all other

Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 134.Ibid.

aircraft factories. I'm sure you won't refuse the request." <sup>134</sup> Heinkel stated that this was his formal introduction to the new regime.

The Nazis, too, had their views of how best to control labor within Germany. In December, 1936, the Nazi regime commissioned a report on workers groups within Germany. The report discusses attempts by the Nazi party to coerce labor through propaganda. The Nazis met with mixed results in their efforts to persuade labor to the cause of National Socialism. The Nazis did, however, succeed in placing agents within the work forces of multiple factories within Germany, and collected a remarkable amount of intelligence.

For example, at a large Berlin elcotrotechnical plant, which consisted of a labor force of about five thousand people, the Nazis wrote: "The attitudes of our colleagues vary considerably. Aside from the large number of those who are indifferent, one finds many groups of politically aware workers who act without prearranged agreement...but who nonetheless make common cause with us... Our technique of branding as poor workers those who are politically undesirable is quite effective and not at all dangerous." At another plant, one which resembled the political make-up of the *Heinkel Flugzeugwerke* as described by Heinkel, the Nazis reported: "The present political views of the work force... was heavily Social Democratic, is approximately: 10 percent Nazis, 30 percent undecided, and 60 percent inclined toward a passive rejection [of the regime]. Political activism is rare, although discussions are conducted quite frequently within closed circles." 136

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> Sax, 294-295.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Ibid.

Perhaps the most damning assessment of workers during the Nazi consolidation of power came from a 1934 report entitled: "The Condition of the Working Class Under National Socialism." The report stated that while the Reich did not yet have enough data to present a clear and uniform picture of the working class, they could conclude that the regime "seems to have the most support among workers." Their reasons were chilling: "This [their support] is especially true for those who earlier had not been part of a political organization... It also seems that workers submit far more readily [than other social classes] to Nazi terror methods and allow themselves to be easily influenced." <sup>138</sup> Coercion also played a large role: "The fact that one has to greet others by raising the hand is regarded as an insignificant act... There is a fear throughout the ranks that one will have difficulties at work and lose one's job." 139 Clearly, the terrible ramifications of the Nazis rise to power echoed throughout the industrial circles of Germany.

Interestingly, especially in light of Nazi efforts to intimidate and manipulate German labor, Ernst Heinkel never clearly articulates a political position in Stürmisches Leben. Access to German documents in Munich will likely provide better insight into Heinkel's political affiliations, and perhaps even his voting history. Without these documents, however, Stürmisches Leben provides the best available insight into Heinkel's views. It should be strongly noted that these were expressed after the fall of the Third Reich.

According to Heinkel, the National Socialist Party was never a factor in his life until the flag hoisting incident of January 30<sup>th</sup>. He states that he had "only a vague conception" of

<sup>137</sup> Sax, 288-299. <sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

the Nazi party. <sup>140</sup> Heinkel proclaims that, like many of his fellow aviators, he held onto a "rugged" individualism once he achieved the economic independence to do so. <sup>141</sup> Heinkel also blames a complicated personal life for much of his political ambivalence at the time. "Many people regarded my life during that period as wild and stormy, particularly after I was separated from my second wife in 1929." <sup>142</sup> He claims that he lived through a "restless" ten year period. During this time period, he says he experienced only "isolated incidents that brought contact with Nazi ideology and left me with a certain aversion which, for a politically minded man, would have led to active opposition." <sup>143</sup> Heinkel's statement is historically questionable. He claims only limited knowledge of the Nazis and their political philosophy. Yet Heinkel, in near contradictory fashion, also claims to be a victim of the Nazi Party ideology.

His troubles with Nazi ideology began at the end of the 1920s when he experienced a "fanatical campaign" against him. Nazis frequently referred to him as "the Jew Heinkel." He attempted to brush off the slander, attributing the racial slurs to envy for his business success and, he states his "large Swabian nose." Earlier in the decade, in 1924, Heinkel was attacked by an angry anti-Semite while spending time with his family on a beach near his factory at Warnemünde. While playing ball with his son, an angry man approached Heinkel and his family and yelled, "The shamelessness and bad manners of this race are growing more intolerable every day." He further attacked Heinkel for having "Semitic" behavior. Heinkel sued him. The attacks continued, with passing strangers on the street referring to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 134-135.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Ibid.

Heinkel as "another one of those damn Jews." Nazi sympathizers also attempted to run Heinkel out of Warnemünde and Mecklenburg, running slanderous comments in *Der Völksiche*.

Historically speaking, Heinkel's account of his relationship with the Nazi Party is curious, if not troubling. On one hand he claims limited knowledge of the Nazi Party or any real conception of their ideology. On the other, he suffered the slings and arrows of racial hatred and anti-Semitism. Yet, in court, Heinkel proudly traced his pure Aryan decent back two-hundred years. Lastly, Heinkel had close relationships with both Hermann Goering and Joseph Goebbels. Both men visited Heinkel at his Warnemünde plant, and spent extensive time with the Heinkel family. Therefore, one can only conclude that Heinkel, in all likelihood, had a greater knowledge of the Nazi Party and their activities than his account conveys in his autobiography. It is clear, however, that from the moment of the ascension of Adolf Hitler to the position of Chancellor, any remaining remnants of self-determination, or the spirit of internationalism that was evident in Heinkel's earlier career were gone forever.

Heinkel's War Experiences: The Second Storm:

From 1933 on, Heinkel was no longer a man of his own destiny. His company, the *Heinkel-Flugzeugwerke*, would be ruled more and more by the Third Reich. It was clear to Heinkel as early as 1933 that the Nazis would rearm Germany faster than the Reichswehr of the 1920s. Equally apparent, was the need for aircraft as weapons of war. The first such conversation came after Heinkel was informed that he would need to construct a much larger factory for the future projects of the German Luftwaffe. During the conversation,

<sup>146</sup> Heinkel 135.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> Ernst Heinkel, He1000 (London: Hutcinson, 1956), 125-140.

weaponization of his aircraft was discussed: "We're already thinking in terms of aerial warfare..." Word also came from a Luftwaffe official named von Pfistermeister that strategic war concerns weighed heavily on the minds of Luftwaffe officials: "two factories so close together would make too good of a target." <sup>149</sup>

Perhaps the final, most violent consolidation of power of the Heinkel Flugzeugwerke came on the night of June 17, 1934, when part of Heinkel's factory at Warnemünde burned to the ground. Heinkel states that he rushed to the site of the fire, only to find the No. 4 hanger was consumed with flames, taking the previous two weeks of work with it. He was told by his foreman that "an S.S. man had inspected No. 4 hanger a few moments before the outbreak of the fire, but found nothing suspicious." In a clear sign of motivation, a Nazi Party official informed Heinkel that the fire was the result of "what happens when you employ Communists." As Heinkel states, "This was the first public declaration of war in a struggle which had been brewing for several months, and was typical of the period." 151

Heinkel claims that his relationship with his workers was very close before the fire. Yet, in 1933, "the new shop steward began to complain about my attitude." As a result, Heinkel views this as "the beginning of the struggle between my rather naïve belief that I was master in my own house and the conviction of the Party that it had the right to meddle in all matters not strictly technical." Again, Heinkel plays the role of the naïve, detached engineer, neither standing with his workers nor truly against the Nazis. Merely, he allows events to play out as they will, while simultaneously refusing to accept any culpability for the consequences. The fire investigation continued until it finally reached the desks of Heinrich

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 144.

<sup>150</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 146.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> Ibid.

Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich. When Heinkel remarked that "the night watchman on duty the night of the fire was an S.S. man," Heydrich and the Gestapo Chief both ignored the complaint. 153

The intimidation and scare tactics of the S.S. and the Nazis at large plunged Heinkel's factory into "an atmosphere of gloom ... such as I have never experienced." <sup>154</sup> Heinkel's secretary was ordered to give him notice and leave work at once. As the Nazis purged members of Heinkel's staff, the walls rose on a new, modern set of hangers and aircraft production facilities needed for the coming war. 155

The power struggle between Ernst Heinkel and the Nazis continued into 1935 and 1936. The first aircraft produced in Heinkel's new, Nazi-controlled production facility was the notorious He 111, the bomber made famous during its duties over London during the Blitz. The aircraft was originally slated as a passenger plane for Lufthansa. Once again, Heinkel contradicts himself, at once claiming no knowledge of Nazi plans and yet positioning his aircraft to serve well in military roles. "It was obvious that the Luftwaffe would immediately see the possibilities of the He 111 as a bomber, or as it was thenceforth called in Germany, as a combat plane."156

Competition still reigned between Heinkel and one of his competitors, Hugo Junkers, who had just produced the Ju 86. The two men engaged in a bitter and fierce rivalry, with Heinkel convinced that his aircraft were more advanced and thus, better suited to the demanding roles of the new Luftwaffe. Heinkel explains: "When the new Luftwaffe came out

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>153</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 146.

<sup>154</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 149-150. 155 Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

of hiding in 1935, it possessed certain convertible bombers [which were vulnerable]. The twin-engined types were not much better. By comparison, the He 111 was a twin-engined bomber was an enormous advance." <sup>157</sup> The two companies, however, would soon be brought into close proximity, as the last vestiges of Heinkel's control over his company vanished.

The ever-growing demands of the Luftwaffe to increase production finally outstripped the logistical capabilities of Heinkel's factory. Soon, the He 111, the plane that was so in demand by the Luftwaffe, was outsourced to Junkers' factory. Heinkel was incensed, stating, "The day that Junkers start building Heinkels under license, I shall have reached my goal, and I'll hang myself." The next day, a colleague of Heinkel's appeared with a rope and said "Hang yourself. Junker's has been ordered to build the He 111 instead of the Ju86. Heinkel notes, with increasing frustration, that the Nazi demands for more production stripped his factory of any control over design or production. "I still could not cope with the increasing demands of the Luftwaffe." Soon after, he was informed that the Air Ministry decided "to build a mass-production factory along the most modern lines for the exclusive construction of the He 111." At first, Heinkel was perplexed, and wondered how he would pay for such a facility. He was soon informed that the payment for, construction of, and management of the factory thereafter, was all Nazi-controlled.

What followed was a building-boom for the German economy. Heinkel states that "countless license builders owed their very existence to this boom and in most cases and been financed and built by the Luftwaffe." The boom came with a terrible cost to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>158</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 151-152.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

Heinkel's freedom: "I...was asked to surrender my independence, but I was unwilling to take this step." <sup>162</sup> Once again, the brute force of the Nazi Party stepped in to intervene. A General Loeb arrived to speak personally to Heinkel and stated that he "heard you won't go along with us. Personally, I sympathize with you." <sup>163</sup> Heinkel believed he still held some semblance of control over his company. He was soon disappointed when informed that the new factory was to be built entirely with Luftwaffe funds. It was not to belong to Heinkel yet he would be held accountable for the daily operations of the plant. General Loeb then snorted, "for the sake of appearances, we should like the factory to be known as Ernst Heinkel Ltd. Do you think your cherished independence would be compromised in this way?" <sup>164</sup> Heinkel relented, agreed, and the Nazi takeover of his business was all but complete.

The final acts of submission to the Third Reich before the Second World War occurred in 1936. Heinkel met with Albert Speer, whom he felt a great bond of sympathy with. The two men rarely discussed politics and shared a passion for speed and were frequently seen racing cars on Heinkel's runway. When the two met in 1936, Speer was pouring over plans for Hitler's new Berlin as the Führer's personal architect. Heinkel, ever the astute businessman, could not help but realize that the rapid building of new armaments factories was a prelude to war. He also recognized the perilous position it placed the German economy. "Who is going to finance this?" Heinkel inquired. "Finance?" replied Speer, "Why, the man who ordered it of course." 165

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>162</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 151-154.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>165</sup> Ibid.

Heinkel also witnessed the final war preparations made for his factory. The factory installed an "efficient system of air-raid precautions." <sup>166</sup> He also noted that "The whole factory with its vast areas of glass framed in steel and red-glazed brick could be blacked out at a moment's notice." In a finally consolidation of labor and power under one roof, the factory built "a new workers' town, with more than 1,200 houses, a town hall, a school, a movie theater, a hotel, several shops, a laundry, and a public swimming pool." By April of 1936, the plans were completed. <sup>167</sup> By 1937, Heinkel had submitted much of the will of his company to the Third Reich.

In one act of political outrage in *Stürmisches Leben*, Heinkel notes the fate of a fellow engineer named Dr. Todt. Todt served as an engineer on several of Hitler's Autobahn projects and Minister of Armaments and Munitions until his death in 1941. Later becoming a political enemy of Hitler, Todt was eliminated on one of Heinkel's He 111's. Heinkel recalls that the plane prepared to crash land and "at 150 feet... it suddenly stalled, crashed and caught fire. All occupants were burned to death beyond recognition." Heinkel states that the controversial fate of Todt was unfair, even if was accused of having a violent quarrel with Hitler shortly after the failure of Operation Barbarossa. <sup>168</sup> In a court deposition, Heinkel stated "People are quick to condemn Todt, but they are happy to use his speed-ways. In my opinion there are only two possibilities: either to put up a statue for him, or to close and destroy his speedways." This is one of the only political statements clearly made by Heinkel throughout his autobiography. It provides clear reasoning behind Heinkel's self-

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>166</sup> Ibid.

Heinkel, Stormy Life, 155.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>168</sup> Heinkel, Stormy Life, 157.

rationalization with Nazism. In the mind of Ernst Heinkel, the ability to engineer great things trumped all else, including politics.

Heinkel delved into one of the last moments of internationalism shortly before the start of the Second World War. Once again, inspiration came from overseas, this time in the form of Hell Diver aircraft of the American Navy. While working on a new project to create a new and improved dive bomber, Heinkel looked across the Atlantic for ideas. After examining the Curtiss diver bomber, Heinkel once again worked with the Japanese Navy to build them a comparable aircraft, the He 50. <sup>169</sup>

Final Loss of Independence and the Use of Slave Labor:

The start of World War II, which Heinkel refers to as his Second Storm, witnessed near total submission to the will of the Third Reich. Such submission also reached into the realm of slave labor, which was dictated by the Nazis. This, without doubt, presents the darkest, most damning moment in Heinkel's career, and solidifies the idea that Heinkel, while leading by name only, was likely no longer in charge of any of his own affairs. Two such cases were presented following the end of the war. One case, Bartl v. Heinkel was brought to trial in 1959, after Heinkel's death.

Bartl v. Heinkel brought the issue of S.S. provided slave labor to light. The case, named for Dr. Bartl, who claimed to work in Heinkel's Oranienburg factory for twenty-four months as a prisoner at the nearby Sachsenhausen concentration camp. According to the court documents, the ruling court in the Augsburg District held for Bartl on his compensation claim but, surprisingly, ruled that his claim for pain and suffering was time-barred. The case

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>169</sup> Heinkel, 159.

was appealed and, even more shockingly, was overturned by the Supreme Court. According to that ruling: "It held that as a German citizen, Bartl should have known his rights and filed the case within the normal time." <sup>170</sup> The opinion of the court regarding conditions within Heinkel's Oranienburg factory was particularly damning, stating "the managers of the company did next to nothing."

One of the seminal cases, however, that brought the full horror of slave labor to light, came in the case of USA v. Pohl et al. This court case documents the actions of the SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt or WVHA, which procured and directed forced labor throughout the Third Reich. According to the court documents, the WVHA was "connected intimately in a variety of ways with the cruelty, torture, and murders which particularly characterized the slave labor program in the building of armaments." <sup>171</sup> One such example of WVHA provided slave labor was the V-1 and V-2 projects. Again, according to the court transcripts, "The V weapons were a specialty of the SS and of the WVHA and were constructed upon the lives of those foreigners whose countries were destroyed by them." <sup>172</sup>

The court further found that "close liaison was maintained by order of Speer among the highest officials in the Reich Ministry for Armament and War Production... The policy of the WVHA was to allocate concentration camp labor...in groups not less than 1,000 male inmates or 5,000 female inmates." Heinkel's friend and kindred spirit, Albert Speer, aided in the direction of slave labor. Further, Heinkel's acquaintance, Reich Marshal Goering, directed much of the labor towards Luftwaffe factories. A letter from Himmler states:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>170</sup> Fafo, Business and International Crimes: Category II: Forced Labor / Enslavement, http://www.fafo.no/liabilities/part II-2forc-lab.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>171</sup> USA v. Pohl et. Al, "Opening Statements of the Prosecution and Defense," http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/open4.asp <sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>173</sup> Ibid.

Following my teletype letter of 18 February 1944 I herewith transmit a survey on the employment of prisoners in the aviation industry. This survey indicates that at the present time about 36,000 prisoners are employed for the purposes of the air force. An increase to a total of 90,000 prisoners is contemplated. The production is being discussed, established, and executed between the Reich Ministry of Aviation and the chief of the Economic-Administrative Main Office, S.S. Obergruppenfuehrer and General of the Waffen S.S., Pohl, respectively. 174

### As a result:

"In Oranienburg we are employing 6,000 prisoners at the Heinkel works now for the construction of the He-1777. With that we have supplied 60 percent of the total crew of the plant. The prisoners are working without fault. Up until now 200 suggestions regarding the improvement of work have been handed in at Heinkel from the ranks of the prisoners, which were used and rewarded with premiums. We are increasing this employment to 8,000 prisoners.

Ernst Heinkel never mentions the use of slave labor in his factories at any point in *Stürmisches Leben*. The remaining chapters of his autobiography focus on the engineering feats of his early rocket and jet propelled aircraft, the failings of Ernst Udet as a leader within the Luftwaffe, and the final end of the war which was seen as inevitable. At no point does Heinkel indicate any level of regret in his involvement in the war, or for the use of slave labor in his plants, even if they were his in name only. Ultimately, Heinkel surrendered all to the Nazis: his independence to design, the freedom to run his own factories, and his own morality in the use of concentration camp prisoners for labor within buildings bearing his name.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>174</sup> USA v. Pohl.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>175</sup> Heinkel, *Stormy Life*, 161-241.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This thesis has examined the continual power struggle between the growing field of German aviation and that of the German state throughout the first half of the Twentieth Century. The aviation industry endured both success and great turmoil as Germany transitioned from the Wilhelmian era of World War I, through the Weimar Republic, and into the darkness of the Third Reich. Aircraft designer and businessman, Ernst Heinkel, served during both the First and Second World Wars, and provided Germany with intricately designed war planes. His experience within this power structure provides first-hand knowledge of the conflicting needs of aviation's inherently internationalist existence, and the nationalistic desire of the German government to control the growth of this new industry.

The question of state power and its relationship to aviation has been addressed through the eyes of Ernst Heinkel. His autobiography, entitled *Stürmisches Leben*, provides one critical perspective on the first half-century of German aviation. While extensive research has been published on the mechanical engineering of his remarkable aeronautical designs, there has been no published research on the man himself. Peter Fritzsche's book, *A Nation of Fliers* offers the theory that aviation and nationalism are linked. Fritzsche's thesis is intriguing: coupling the world of aviation to ideas of national identity and ultimately, nationalism itself. But Fritzsche only mentions Heinkel once and never delves into the details of Heinkel's life or business practices.

It is clear that Heinkel both fits Fritzsche's mold and transcends it. Utilizing Heinkel's autobiography and its subsequent translations, as well as other primary source material, it is clear that Heinkel sought to further the cause of aviation, no matter the cost. Working for a host of wealthy, independent businessmen at the start of his career opened doors for Heinkel to own his own studio and factory. During the inter-war years, while German aviation firms were enduring collapse, Heinkel moved his production outside of Germany. In doing so, he simultaneously circumvented the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles while also opening his products to new, international markets.

His writings denote a man who comprehended the transformational power of aviation. His use of phrases such as "the whole world was his fatherland," as well as his respect for American aviation, as well as the strides made by other countries like Japan indicate a man who saw beyond national borders, to a future world where his aircraft would link peoples, nations, and continents. Yet Heinkel also experienced the crushing power struggle with the Nazi Party and the might of the Third Reich. What began with a simple hoisting of the Nazi swastika culminated in the complete surrendering of his company to the control of the Nazi government. The results were too terrible to contemplate: ultimately his company was complicit in the use of S.S. acquired slave labor during the Second World War. 6,000 prisoners worked and died within the gargantuan factory walls that bore his name, even though his name was merely symbolic by that time. Ernst Heinkel represents a fascinating historical actor; one who transcended so many preconceived notions about nationalism and aviation, and yet remains one of the classic victims of power and the struggle for self-determination between private industry and the state.

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### VITA

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