



Held annually in September from the early 1920s until 1938, the Nazis' Reichsparteitag ("Nuremberg Party Day") rallies or congresses were designed to show Germany and the world a German state in lockstep with its leader and his ideology. (The rallies were actually multi-day events.) Here, flags and soldiers greet Adolf Hitler as he enters the rally. The rallies offer political scientists perhaps the clearest single example of the organization of the Nazi regime.

Nuremberg

By SS Gen. Leon Degrelle

In the National Socialist Mind

The National Socialist Congress had become an annual session of a giant parliament composed of a million and a half representatives of the people, coming from the most varied regions. Politically, it was the most “colossal” (as the Germans say) expression of democracy that had ever been organized anywhere in the world. Such an event had never before been seen, and nothing like it would ever afterward be seen again. The Nuremberg Congress was a unique phenomenon in the political history of Europe.

Every year in the month of September Nuremberg became the mecca of National Socialism. In 1921 it was only a handful of militants following a virtually unknown Adolf Hitler who met there. In 1933 they came in a crowd of 400,000. In 1937 they were a million and a half. From every point of view, these gatherings were astounding.

Just to transport these million and a half deputies of the nation, a fantastic amount of railroad equipment had to be mobilized: 4,000 special trains, tens of thousands of railroad cars lined up like ants on dozens of kilometers of track. Then that immense host of people had to be received, to be given directions and to be fed.

All the hotels of Nuremberg together could hardly shelter a hundredth part of the participants. And so entire towns of thousands of tents were erected to shelter these crowds that were equivalent in number to a hundred divisions of infantry.

They would need not just a roof, but also hundreds of mobile kitchens, sanitary facilities, first aid stations and information booths, and thousands of Red Cross nurses. And all that provided with mathematical precision. Every one of these human ants had to be able to find his tent, his cot and his food by knowing exactly at every minute where he had to go, how he was to get there and for what purpose.

Arriving from the most faraway villages of the Reich, often knowing nothing of the town of Nuremberg, the million and a half participants couldn't turn around without knowing the exact geographic point and the exact hour where and when, for example, a youth would find the Grand Army of

Youth, a woman her women's organizations, the militant his SA column, or the worker his professional organization or his section of the Labor Front.

Only German discipline, the German genius for organization, could keep this gigantic conglomeration of human beings from becoming entangled in impossible disorder. Year after year there would be more participants attending. And year after year the arrival, the stay, the departure of this fantastic migration would be more flawless.

Moving two or three army corps took a Gen. Gamelin two or three weeks of shilly-shallying. Here, in just a few hours, the equivalent of the whole French peacetime army was got under way. A formidable lesson for future military operations.

The proof was given and repeated each year that it was perfectly possible to transport a million and a half soldiers in a matter of hours without the slightest hitch; that the railroads were capable of moving the entire German army from one end of the country to the other on schedule to within a quarter of an hour. Where else had a maneuver like that ever been organized and performed with such mathematical success?

On the return, just as on the arrival, the hundreds of divisions of civilians were lodged and fed. Their participation was orchestrated. We can look at photos of the period, study each sequence of the admirable film *Triumph of the Will* produced by Leni Riefenstahl in 1934: each human formation is



LEON DEGRELLE

perfectly aligned, each avenue is clear, like a stream. Not even a stray dog in the empty space. Not a single lamp that isn't burning.

The ceremonies unfolded with more majesty than at Saint Peter's in Rome.

Hitler comes forward, absolutely alone, on a paved avenue more than a hundred yards wide, amid 30,000 flags like flames, between a million and half men and women holding their breath.

Writes French historian Benoist-Méchin:

Nothing has been omitted to obtain the desired effect, a parade of a hundred thousand SA, pounding the pavements of the town for five hours, a forest of standards in which the blood-red emblems and the eagles of the party dominate, deafening fanfares, salvos of artillery, torchlight tattoos uncoiling their serpent of fire between the illuminated facades of the medieval town, batteries of searchlights aimed skyward, weaving a vault of light above the Luitpoldshain amphitheater: everything contributes to create an impression of ordered power from which the most skeptical visitors return astounded. It is impossible to resist this swirl of colors and songs and light whose intensity no report, no film will ever reproduce. For nearly a week the crowd has been swimming, rolling in a tidal wave of emotion.

This Frenchman is not the only one to describe that emotion. Many others have done it. And the agreement of these foreign witnesses is eloquent. What struck them the most were the preoccupation with, the concern for, the unalterable rites, and the almost religious aspect of the succession of the ceremonies.

For Hitler, who entered Nuremberg to the ringing of all the bells of the town, the basis of all faith was dogma. And dogma by nature is immutable and eternal. Truth can never change its face. To touch it up would be to detract from the mystery, to bring it in question. Everything in the history of National Socialism would be marked not only by the concern for greatness but by the supreme immutability of the gestures which sanctify the ideal, the conviction, the bond, the gift.

Every detail had been fixed forever. The speaker's platform, atop 30 granite steps, rose up like a warship. It stood out against a background of bright light. It was crowned with oak leaves surrounding a hooked cross worked with gold. The stadium, where a million and a half faithful supporters breathlessly waited, was as vast as a metropolis. The grandstands themselves could hold 150,000 guests.

During the course of the week, the covered auditorium harbored by turns the youth, the women, the country people, and the factory workers, the SS and the SA. Hitler spoke before them 15 to 20 times during those days.

The stadium itself was gigantic, surrounded by columns three times as tall as those of the Acropolis. The columns were surmounted by eagles of granite and joined together by

tens of thousands of flaming banners with swastikas turning in their solar disks. Streams of blue vapor rose from tall basins.

Hitler had even invented an entirely new form of architecture that was made not of stone but of light. He'd had hundreds of air defense beacons installed on the four sides of the giant site. Their beams of light rose up very high and very straight in the night like the pillars of an unreal cathedral. It was quite a fabulous imaginary construction, worthy of Zeus, master of light and of the night of the heavens. Then, like a prophet, Hitler came forward.

Here is how Robert Brasillach, the most inspired French poet of the century, describes Hitler upon his podium:

Here's the man now standing upon the rostrum. Then the flags unfurl. No singing, no rolling of the drums. A most extraordinary silence reigns when, from the edge of the stadium, before each of the spaces separating the brown shirt groups, the first ranks of standard-bearers emerge. The only light is that of the cathedral, blue and unreal, above which one sees butterflies spiraling: airplanes perhaps or simply dust. But a spotlight beam has alighted on the flags, emphasizing the red mass of them and following them as they advance.

Are they advancing? One wishes rather to say that they flow. That they flow like the flow of crimson lava, irresistibly, in an enormous gliding rush, to fill the gaps prepared in advance in the brown granite. Their majestic advance lasts nearly 20 minutes. And it is only when they are close to us that we hear the muffled sound of their tread. Up to the minute when they come to a halt at the feet of the standing chancellor, silence has prevailed.

A supernatural and unearthly silence, like the silence for astronomers of something seen on another planet. Beneath the blue-streaked vault reaching to the clouds, the broad red streams of lava are now grown still. I do not believe I have ever in my life seen a more prodigious spectacle.

That prodigious spectacle was not born of chance, but from the mind of an organizer and an artist of genius.

Each day had its special program devoted to a quite distinct sector of the public. Another Frenchman, the historian André Brissaud, who is aggressive and often unjust when he speaks of Hitler, has also described one of these ceremonies which he calls [a] "Hitler service":

Under the blazing sun 52,000 young men of the Labor Service present their shovels in a virile offertory. Then, when they resume their at-ease position, one of their leaders, facing them at the foot of the tribune, snaps:

"Where do you come from, comrade?"

A voice from that host of brown shirts responds:

"From Thuringen."

"Where do you come from, comrade?"

"From Hessen."

"Where do you come from, comrade?"

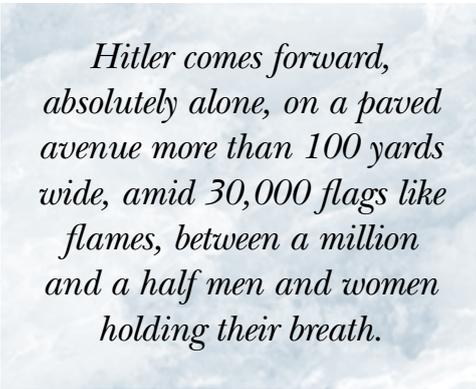
"From Schlesien."

Then come the traditional questions:

"Are you ready to bring fertility to German soil?"

Fifty-two thousand young men respond with a single voice:

"We are ready."



*Hitler comes forward,
absolutely alone, on a paved
avenue more than 100 yards
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The annual rallies staged in Nuremberg were the most potent of Nazi ceremonies. Because of the importance of the rallies to the Nazi movement, the historical documentation surrounding Hitler's Nuremberg speeches is far more complete than that of his other speeches. Thus, the rallies provide scholars with an excellent vantage point for studying the Third Reich as a political system. Here, Hitler shakes hands with Hermann Goering, Hitler's designated successor, at one of the rallies at Nuremberg.

"Are you ready to make every sacrifice for the Reich?"

"We are ready."

This singular and impressive spoken chorus lasts nearly 20 minutes.

Afterward the 52,000 men in brown, with much fervor and gravity, sing their song of militants and other things as well.

The drum rolls.

Silence is established. They meditate. They evoke the dead, the soul of the party and of the nation as one.

Finally the Fuehrer speaks, bringing the collective emotion to a white heat. Transported by passion, his nostrils quivering, his eyes flashing, Hitler is the Nazi faith. The violence, the fierce energy, the triumph of the will. His voice, broadcast by loudspeakers, takes on a superhuman dimension. A hypnotic phenomenon takes place—gigantic, stupefying.

Another day it was the ceremonial of the cult of the "flag of the blood" (*Blutfahne*), the standard that was soaked with the blood of Hitler's companions on November 11, 1923, the

day after the Munich putsch, when the Bavarian police killed seven of the National Socialists around the young Fuehrer. The new flags received the consecration of the "flag of the martyrs" at the foot of the monument commemorating them.

The German author Joaquim Fest, a notorious anti-Nazi, has described this ceremony:

Finally, starting from the "Luitpoldshain" accompanied by two disciples keeping their proper distance, Hitler marched to the monument, taking the wide ribbon of concrete (now called the "Avenue of the Fuehrer") between several hundred thousand men of the SA and the SS lined up in stately array. While the flags were lowered, Hitler was motionless, deeply immersed in his thoughts, like a heraldic figure.

Citing an official account, Fest adds:

The beams of 150 gigantic searchlights pierced the overcast sky of a gray-black night. High in the air, on the surface of the

clouds, the shafts of light came together to form the figure of a square. . . . The image is gripping. . . . Stirred by a light wind, the flags framing the stands tremble slightly in the sparkling light. The main speaker's platform comes into view in a blaze of light. . . . To the right and to the left, flames shoot out of immense cups supported by pillars. From the opposite stands, on command, a flood of more than 30,000 flags pours toward the center; the tips of the staffs and the fringes of silver glittering in the illumination of the searchlights.

As always, Hitler was the first victim of this production made of light, of crowds, of symmetry and of "life's tragic awareness." It was precisely in these orations made before the "first militants" and after the minute of silence observed in honor of the dead that Hitler frequently found his speech marked by a sort of exaltation and rapture: on these occasions and in a few extraordinary words, he has celebrated a sort of mystic communion before the spotlights sweep down on the center of the stage, and the flags, the uniforms and the musical instruments come ablaze in flashes of red, silver and gold.

A newspaper, the *Niederelbischen Tageblatt*, has preserved some of these invocations. [Note: this paragraph is lined out in the original French text. We put it back in because we find the unguided leap to the following paragraphs confusing without it—Ed.] Hitler exclaimed:

I have always had the feeling that for as long as the gift of life is granted a man, he must retain his nostalgia for those with whom he has fashioned his life. What would my life be without you? That you have found me and believe in me has given your life a new significance and imposed new duties on you. And that I have found you, that alone has made my life and my struggle possible.

And this:

How could we not feel in this hour the miracle that has brought us together? You heard a man's voice in the past, and it struck your heart, it awakened you, and you have followed that voice. You have followed it for years without even having seen the man who had that voice. You have only heard a voice, and you have followed it.

The tone of the speeches had messianic echoes. Hitler added:

We all meet here again, and the miracle of this meeting fills our souls. Not every one of you can see me, and I cannot see each of you, but I feel you and you feel me. Is it not faith in our people that has made big men of us from small, rich from poor; and that, discouraged and faltering though we were, has made brave and valiant men of us?

At the end of a week it was time for the parting of this million and a half men and women who had renewed their vows as if they had been Crusaders, or members of a religious order.

Once again it is the French poet Robert Brasillach who evokes this hour of departure:

Deutschland Ueber Alles is sung and the Horst Wessel Lied soaring with the spirit of comrades killed by the Red Front and by

the reactionaries—and the song of the soldiers of the war:

"I had a comrade,

"A better one I'll never have. . . ."

Then still other songs, composed for the congress, which harmonize easily with the fresh night, the gravity of the hour, the many beautiful and melancholy voices, and with all the musical enchantment without which Germany can conceive nothing, neither religion nor fatherland, nor war, nor politics, nor sacrifice.

Brissaud adds: "Then there is the interminable torchlight tattoo through the streets of Nuremberg. Groups of the SA, of the Hitler Youth, or of the SS march tirelessly by, lighted only by the gleam of their torches."

Like everyone else, some of the most prominent persons of distinction from abroad were seized by the popular wave.

The entire diplomatic corps was invited by Hitler and put up in the Nuremberg station itself in two sumptuous special trains provided with club cars, dining cars, sleeping cars, bathrooms and even hairdressing salons.

The French ambassador, François-Poncet, even spoke to the Congress of 1937. He would sum up his feelings almost with dread:

During those eight days, Nuremberg was a town given over completely to joy, an enchanted town, almost a town that escaped from reality. That atmosphere, combined with the beauty of the spectacles and the magnificent hospitality, greatly impressed the foreigners. It created an impression very difficult to resist. When they went back home, they were captivated and won over.

The ambassador/interpreter Paul Schmidt, commissioned to escort the rich and famous, has described the sensation:

On the day when Hitler made his grand triumphal promenade at Nuremberg, I happened to be in a open car with the most important

French and English guests, only a few meters behind the dictator's car. . . . We could thus observe him from very close up and also especially the crowds cheering him from both sides of the road.

The procession, triumphal in the true sense of the word, took more than an hour to make its way through the old town. The impression produced by these masses of people cheering Hitler as though in ecstasy was extraordinarily powerful. Once again I noted with what an expression of devotion, with what biblical trust, the people gazed on Hitler, seeming to be under a magic spell. The thousands and thousands of spectators all along the route were as though seized by a collective rapture at the sight of him. They held out their arms and saluted him with rousing shouts. Moving along for an hour in the middle of this frenzied outburst was a real physical ordeal, which left us exhausted at the end of the trip. All power of moral resistance seemed paralyzed; we almost had the feeling of having to restrain ourselves to keep from joining in with the general ecstasy. . . . I could see that the English and the French often had tears in their eyes from the effects of the inner emotions caused by all they were seeing and hearing. Even journalists as blasé as Jules Sauerwein of *Le Matin* and Ward Price of *The Daily Mail*, who were in my car, were literally groggy when we arrived at the end of the route.

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The American journalist Richard Helms, special envoy of the United Press, who managed to get to the Nuremberg palace, where Hitler was receiving his guests at the end of the festivities, would make this droll comment: “When I got there myself, I was suffering from megalomania. I decided that I must be nine feet tall even though the cheers had not been addressed to me.”

Benoist-Méchin concluded:

When all is said and done, what we saw at Nuremberg was no longer the party; it was the entire German nation offering itself the spectacle of its own rediscovered power. . . . What was forged here was a mystique powerful enough to triumph over individual feelings and cast them in the crucible of a single faith.

At the end of four years of stubborn struggle, Hitler had thus transformed his people.

He had made a unity of them, hard as steel.

Even the army would be welded to that unity henceforth: the *Wehrmacht* spent eight days at Nuremberg fraternizing with the people, parading jointly with them with their new tanks, their new cannon and above all with their new spirit.

Hauled out of the wreckage of 1918, Germany at year's end in 1937 had a greater solidarity than ever before in her history. The first stage of the Hitler revolution was now completed.

From the Nuremberg stadium Hitler gazed down at his vibrant people. He had completed their political unification: no longer were there either states or parties locked in petty rivalry; their social unification: the classes, formerly rivals, now formed just one team; their military unification: there was now just one armed force, built for all, open to all. Still to be achieved was the racial and geographical unification.

Beyond the border to the southeast stood 10 million Germans of Austria and the Sudetens, already conquered politically, and waiting impatiently for their church bells to sound the German hour.

Hitler, creator of the Greater Reich, was moving toward them in the full assurance of their unanimity, his eyes fixed on the destiny to be subdued. ❖

GENERAL LEON DEGRELLE was an individual of exceptional intellect and physical courage, dedicated to western culture. He fought not only for Belgium but for the survival of Christian Europe, preventing the continent from being inundated by Stalin's savage hordes. What Degrelle has to say, as an eyewitness to some of the key events in the history of the 20th century, is vastly important within the historical and factual context of his time and has great relevance to the continuing struggle today for the survival of civilization as we know it.



ARCHIVE PHOTOS

Elite troops enter the Nuremberg Party Day rally. *Each day of the rally showcased a different part of the party and state, be it the army, German Labor Front or League of German Girls. Adolf Hitler spoke many times during the Nuremberg rallies, and on each occasion he addressed a different audience. In addition to hammering on general themes, Hitler's comments pertained specifically to the activities and interests of his audience. Examining Hitler's speeches during the Nuremberg rallies offers the historian an opportunity to investigate over one brief period of time the various aspects of Hitler's ideology, as it operated within the organizational hierarchy of the Nazi state. Hitler made extensive use of a new invention—the loudspeaker—erected all across Germany, from about 1936 on during the rallies. As a rule, Hitler's speeches were announced well in advance, and repeatedly. When the day came, citizens would hear the speech over a hookup of all stations in the Third Reich, out of loudspeakers in the streets, loudspeakers in the factories, in restaurants—in all places where people might gather. People all over Germany could also listen in on an inexpensive, mass-marketed and very popular radio, called the Volksempfänger, or “People's Set.” This radio was crucial in Hitler's quest for effective propaganda because of its affordability. The “People's Set” was the cheapest radio in the world at the time, costing only 76 marks (around \$9) compared to a normal 150 marks for other radios.*