

HITLER AND THE NSDAP.  
BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND GLEICHSCHALTUNG

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National Socialism had meaning in the early years apart from Hitler's movement in Bavaria. Indeed, during the years immediately after World War I the National Socialists of Bohemia regarded themselves as the senior representatives of the National Socialist idea, although by the mid-twenties they had been eclipsed by the far larger branch of the movement in Germany. The Bohemian Nazis are of some significance historically for two reasons. First, they illustrate the importance of context and environment in the rise of National Socialism generally — how a salubrious environment, as in Munich, could foster success, while an unsalubrious one, as in Czechoslovakia, would not, even apart from specific personalities. Secondly, the „forgotten Nazis“ of Bohemia are important for what they contributed to Hitler and his success, although he never acknowledged the debt. In brief, they gave Hitler an approach to politics in a parliamentary state which bypassed the pre-1923 revolutionary activism in favor of a „legal“ approach which permitted the undermining of a parliamentary democracy from within.