

Susanne and the Nazis.

A Tale of Intrigue and Heroism.

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Chapter 1 - The dashing major

“She” – wrote the Nazi leader Josef Goebbels - “terribly non-Aryan, but he – clever, energetic and a true fascist.”

Goebbels was referring to Major Giuseppe Renzetti, the secret contact man between Hitler and Mussolini and to Renzetti’s wife Susanne, a charming society hostess in Berlin throughout the 1930s but – most regrettably in Goebbels’ view – Jewish.

The same 1941 diary entry goes further. Goebbels and Renzetti had been reminiscing about the Nazis’ “years of struggle” and to Renzetti’s important role in creating the coalition which eventually brought Hitler to power. Renzetti had “participated so actively in our party and in the creation of our state that he could well be regarded “als ein alter Nazi” – as a vanguard Nazi.¹

No doubt Goebbels remembered the evening of the day which Nazi propaganda named “Tag der Machtergreifung” – the day of the seizure of power, 30th January 1933. Thousands of torch-carrying Nazi storm troopers had marched past the Berlin Chancellery to hail the new premier. Hitler had saluted them from an open window. Together with the Nazis marched members of the ex-servicemen’s organisation Stahlhelm. What the torch-carrying marchers could not have seen was a handsome dark haired foreigner who stood only a foot or two from Hitler but was keeping discreetly out of sight. Yet he had done much to ensure that the Nazis and the Stahlhelm would come to march together.

“Hitler wanted me near him during the march past but I have avoided being seen,” Renzetti reported back to Mussolini.²

Renzetti had close relations not only with Goebbels and Hitler but with several other leading Nazis. He was probably closest to Goering. Despite this he failed in his efforts to protect his own father-in-law, Justizrat Arthur Kochmann. Yet in his time Kochmann had done the German state great service.³

To unravel this puzzling story we have to go back to the year 1918, to the violent period immediately after the defeat of Germany in World War I and to the dark coal mining districts of Upper Silesia.

It will not be easy. Many questions will remain unanswered. Witnesses are dead. Written evidence is fragmentary. There is much we will never know. What, for example, were the relations between Renzetti, a fervent Fascist, and his father-in-law, who had been a staunchly liberal parliamentarian in the early years of the Weimar Republic? What did his wife Susanne feel about her husband’s efforts to bring the Nazis to power? Did she know that he had (at least once) gone out with Nazi bullyboys on ‘punishment expeditions’ – presumably to beat up political opponents? What were her relations with the Nazi leaders who thronged her fashionable Berlin salon – even the detested Himmler? What did she make of Hitler’s “charming courtesy” to her personally?

We shall never know. The background to the story is, however, well documented.

Upper Silesia had a mixed population, German and Polish. After the end of World War I, the state of Poland - long suppressed and partitioned among its powerful neighbours - was re-created. The Poles now laid claim to this region, rich in coal and base metals. The Germans objected. They argued that the region may, centuries earlier, have been inhabited mainly by Poles, but for long years the majority of the inhabitants had been Germans.

There were demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, riots and some armed clashes. Polemic from both sides was virulent. Law and order broke down. Vehicles delivering wages for coal miners were held up by robbers. "In such politically tempestuous times even bandits clothe themselves in a political mantle."⁴

At the 1919 Versailles peace conference the victorious allies were puzzled. Hadn't President Wilson's 14 points proclaimed the right of all peoples to freely determine their own allegiance? "An independent Polish state should be erected which should include territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations." That posed problems in an area with such a mixed population.

Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, in a major speech in the House of Commons, waxed eloquent:

"Poland – torn to bits to feed the carnivorous greed of Russian, Austrian and Prussian autocracy - this treaty has reknit the torn flag of Poland, which is now waving over a free and united people; and it will have to be defended, not merely by gallantry, but with wisdomHowever unjust it was to take Polish populations and put them under German rule, it would have been equally unjust to take German populations and put them under Polish rule – and it would have been equally foolish..... Europe has the lesson of Alsace-Lorraine, and it would be folly on our part to create any more Alsace-Lorraines in Europe."

Disputes over Alsace-Lorraine had helped trigger two wars "The Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 and World War II. Lloyd George continued:

"It would have been wrong not merely to Germany but to Poland; it would have been wrong to Europe. Perhaps in fifty years time Poland would have had to pay the penalty for the blunder committed by the allies this year.

The British delegation – and I have no hesitation in claiming a share in it – resolutely opposed any attempt to put predominantly German populations under Polish rule. I think Poland will have reason to thank us."⁵

Lloyd George went on to warn about the level of reparations demanded. He said Germany carried the guilt for unleashing the war so Germany deserved to be made to pay. However, "Justice should not be merely tempered by mercy, but it ought to be guided by wisdom." There was danger in imposing too heavy a burden of reparations.

What the Prime Minister did not say in public was that he had had to stand up to French demands for monetary revenge against Germany.

In fact, World War II came not after fifty years, as Lloyd George had feared, but after a mere twenty. His prophetic warnings tempt one to speculation. What if –?

What if Germany had not been deprived of over three-quarters of the mineral wealth of Upper Silesia? What if Allied demands for reparations had been more moderate? What if - ? Would the German currency have remained stable? Could hyper-inflation have been avoided? By 1922 the Mark had fallen to one million millionth of its 1913 value. Fixed incomes and savings were wiped out. The German bourgeoisie and the petit-bourgeoisie were beggared. If this had not happened, would the Nazis ever have found support? Could they have come to power? Would World War II not have happened? What if -?

But to return to the realm of fact: it cannot be argued that the Upper Silesian dispute was a main cause of World War II though the incident that triggered the war did indeed occur in Upper Silesia, on the outskirts of Susanne's hometown.

The League of Nations decided on a plebiscite to determine the future of Upper Silesia. Anyone born in the area would have the right to opt for Poland or for Germany. But the climate of violence made a fair vote difficult. The League dispatched a multi-national peace keeping force: French, British and Italian. The British sent only a token few men to begin with but as the situation worsened, reinforcements were sent. The French sent by far the largest contingent.

The plebiscite was held in March 1921. Most remarkably 97% of those entitled to cast a vote did do so. 707,000 ballots were cast for Germany, 478,000 for Poland. The towns voted overwhelmingly for Germany. In the countryside affiliations were more varied but 664 communes had majorities opting for Germany and only 597 for Poland. Margins might have been narrower but for the efficiency of German organisation. All over Germany people born in Upper Silesia were traced and encouraged to return to vote. Hotels could not cope with the influx but residents put their spare beds and even mattresses at their disposal. Polish organisation did not manage to match this. The Germans argued that their vote would have been even larger if it had not been for Polish intimidation. The Poles, on the other hand, argued that the League should never have allowed people who no longer resided in Upper Silesia to vote. The leader of the Polish 'insurgents' Wojciech Korfanty had indeed called for German 'outvoters' to be driven away by force to prevent them from casting their vote in the referendum.⁶

Once the voting figures were published, the Berlin government said this proved beyond doubt that all of Upper Silesia should remain within Germany. This was also the view of Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister.⁷

But the issue divided the wartime allies. The French backed Polish claims while the British and Italians backed the Germans. The Germans themselves argued that if they lost the valuable resources of coal, lead and zinc of Upper Silesia, they would not be able to pay the heavy reparations demanded by the

victors. This did, indeed, turn out to be true. The French, however, argued that the new state of Poland would not be viable without Upper Silesia's rich mineral resources.

There were further complications. Ethnic affiliations in border regions can be complicated. Within the referendum area 60% gave *Wasserpölnisch* – the Upper Silesian dialect of Polish - as their mother tongue. Puzzlingly only 40% opted for Poland.⁸ One startling example: in the town of Kreuzburg in an earlier census only 46.9 % had stated that German was their mother tongue but in the referendum 96.1% opted for Germany.⁹

While the allies scratched their heads, fervent Polish nationalists took the initiative. In May 1921 some 40,000 Polish 'insurgents' marched into Upper Silesia to create a *fait accompli*.

The commander of British troops reported: "We have to do with a concerted Polish plan to seize Upper Silesia by force".¹⁰ He added that "the insurrectionary movement was too well planned and organised to be a spontaneous outbreak of national feeling." Lloyd George said in the Commons: "The Polish rising is a crime against the treaty of Versailles which gave Poland its freedom ...Silesia has certainly not been Polish for hundreds of years – 600 years."¹¹ Another MP amplified: "Poland has no more claim ...to Upper Silesia than we have to Calais."¹²

Allied troops intervened. They were fired on. Thirty Italians lost their lives. So did a number of Poles. British and French losses were lighter. The Germans were, allegedly, taken by surprise but it took only a few days for them to respond. Advertisements in German newspapers appealed for volunteers and soon a motley band of volunteers – the *Freikorps* – moved into Upper Silesia. Most were members of what has been called "the lost generation" – restless, demobilised soldiers who had survived years of trench warfare but were now at a loss what to do with their lives. Many came from fervently nationalist circles. The French said their sudden appearance was not spontaneous and accused the German government of having provided transport for their deployment.

* A personal aside: the author has experience of these ethnic complications. In the 1960s, in West Germany, my uncle, born in Upper Silesia, introduced me to a family stemming from his birthplace. The family name was Polish and their mother tongue was '*Wasserpölnisch*'. Despite this they declared themselves to be Germans. Had they defected West simply to take advantage of the higher living standards? My uncle thought not. He had known several generations of this family and told me that their father and grandfather had served in the Prussian army and had regarded themselves as Germans. The Prussian germanisation policy appeared to have had some successes. The son of the family – brought up in Upper Silesia after World War II and speaking no German - had managed to defect during the Cold War by holidaying in Yugoslavia and presenting himself at the German embassy in Belgrade. He showed them his German birth certificate. The embassy had to call an interpreter to understand his request for asylum. They 'repatriated' him to Germany and sent him on a crash course to learn 'his' language. He told me in heavily accented German: "Our family have always felt German".

No doubt such people did not endear themselves to Polish nationalists!

The Freikorps irregulars adopted, as their insignia, an Indian symbol that was to become more familiar in later years – the swastika.

The clashes got bigger. Allied troops could do little to keep these irregular warriors apart. There were pitched battles. The largest engagement in May 1921 was at the Annaberg (Gory Sw. Anny in Polish). Myth still obscures what really happened there: according to the Poles the engagement was ‘inconclusive’. The Germans, however, said the Poles were soundly defeated. Later, under the Nazi regime, the battle of Annaberg came to assume great symbolic significance: ‘a victory of heroic Teutons over Slav sub-humans’. Impressionable Hitler Youths were brought to the mountain at night by the light of burning torches to swear fealty to the Fuehrer.

A large amphitheatre on the slope of the mountain survives to this day. Originally it was crowned by a memorial to the Freikorps. After 1945 this was replaced by one honouring their opponents – the Polish ‘insurgents’.¹³

One of the German commanders Lieutenant von Eicken wrote years later that the “number of Germans who stormed the Annaberg barely exceeded 1,500. Today, however, there exist hundreds of thousands of veterans of all grades and ranks who stormed the Annaberg!”¹⁴ In the Nazi period the commanders of the engagement were greatly honoured. But not all – two of them had been half-Jews!

What is not in dispute is that among the German irregulars were some who later rose to prominence in the ranks of the Nazis. It was they who brought the swastika into the Hitler movement. Among them was Rudolf Franz Hoess, notorious in later years as the commandant of Auschwitz.

In 1921 an Allied boundary commission tried to divide the province roughly along ethnic lines – a difficult task. To give but one example: in the important industrial town of Kattowitz 86% opted for Germany. However in the surrounding rural district had a larger population of whom 55% chose Poland. Kattowitz was allocated to Poland. In the end some 60% of the land area of Upper Silesia remained German, but 80% of the coal, zinc and lead resources went to Poland. Inevitably considerable ethnic minorities remained on the ‘wrong’ sides of the new borders. This continued to lead to incidents, most of which were ignored or soon forgotten by the outside world – all except one – the incident that started World War II.

The German population complained bitterly that the French among the League of Nations forces favoured the Poles. They regarded British and Italian troops as more even-handed. It was not only the Germans who complained. Col. Percival, the commander of the British contingent, said in his dispatches to London that the French were grossly biased towards the Poles and hostile to the Germans.¹⁵

A London Times reporter on the spot wrote – somewhat apologetically: “The enforced espousal of the German cause is very distasteful to most Englishmen..... [However] the result of French partiality and unconcealed cooperation with the Polish cause is that any person with a sense of justice is driven to support and defend the Germans ...”¹⁶

Italian troops opened fire on Polish insurgents. There followed eyeball to eyeball confrontations between Italians and French troops. One of the German histories of the period draws attention to one Italian officer in particular: “The activities of the Italian major Renzetti in Gleiwitz remain unforgettable”¹⁷

Renzetti was a tall, elegant and much decorated officer of mountain troops. He had participated in campaigns in Libya, in Albania and against Austrian forces during World War I.

The memoirs of Dr. William Guttman, lawyer-journalist on the staff of the London Observer, provide some details of the major’s activities.¹⁸

“During a German protest meeting against some real or imagined case of French injustice, Renzetti intervened in favour of the German demonstrators and managed to avert an ugly situation. This aroused the wild enthusiasm of the masses who proceeded to carry their hero shoulder high in triumph.

The Italian officers ... were magnificent looking men in the grandiose uniforms of the pre-Fascist era, a toga slung over their shoulders and a high hat on their heads. Renzetti was one of those elegant Italian officers stationed in Gleiwitz... He and his comrades differed from members of the French forces in that they made personal contact with the German population and frequented some of their homes. Soon a romance developed between Renzetti and Susanne Kochmann and became the talk of the town. The lady was an outstanding beauty and the two of them made an attractive pair. She was the daughter of a prominent personality in the town, Justizrat Arthur Kochmann, a leading lawyer, democratic politician and a member of the Prussian Diet. He and his family were Jewish, almost orthodox, and deeply attached to their religion. Kochmann was, indeed, the head of the [Gleiwitz] Jewish community. There was no public resentment at this fraternisation between a German woman and an Italian as there would have been if he had been French.”

Guttman, who was Jewish, regarded her (as he regarded himself) as German. Later the Nazis would have other ideas.

“Miss Kochmann’s family objected to the courtship solely on the grounds that Renzetti was a Catholic. It was inconceivable to the Kochmanns that the girl – the granddaughter of a rabbi “ [Rabbi Dr. Jakob Cohen of Kattowitz] “should marry outside the faith. But the couple did not give up the fight and succeeded in breaking down the resistance after a struggle that lasted several years. They finally got married in 1926.”¹⁹



Susanne Kochmann was only seventeen when she fell in love with Renzetti and he with her. It was a close and enduring relationship.

After the partition of Upper Silesia the international peace keeping force was withdrawn. The feuding parties - Poles and Germans - had been persuaded to sign an agreement designed to protect minorities on the "wrong" sides of the new border. This stated that there would be no discrimination on grounds of nationality, language or religion in the plebiscite area. This was to have unexpected consequences during the Nazi period.

Chapter 2 - That old intriguer.

Major Renzetti remained in Germany and became president of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Berlin. He had met Mussolini in 1922 and had joined the Fascist movement. In Berlin it was said that the two were close friends. This was not strictly true but Renzetti did not disillusion his German contacts. It certainly advanced his influence. He organised Fascist party branches among Italians in Germany and Austria and study groups for Germans to study Fascist institutions such as the militia, the youth movement, sports clubs and working men's clubs. He published an Italian language newspaper "Il Gagliardetto" in Berlin and organised visits for German politicians and industrialists to Italy.

Renzetti's own political views were authoritarian and decidedly anti-democratic. In one of his articles he refers contemptuously to the "short-sighted and irresponsible regime of the parties". He made contact with leaders of the three main German right wing organisations – the uniformed ex-servicemen's Stahlhelm (steel helmet), the nationalist Deutschnationale Volkspartei and (most important for the future) with the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) – Nazi for short.

He has been described as Mussolini's 'shadow ambassador'. For a number of years he became the most important channel of communication between Mussolini and Hitler. This greatly irritated Italy's regular diplomats including the Foreign Minister, Count Ciano. Ciano was to prove a dangerous antagonist. He had married Mussolini's daughter and was, at the time, widely regarded as the Duce's chosen successor.

Several men who later became prominent in the Nazi movement had been active in Upper Silesian *Freikorps*. Renzetti may have met them there. But he probably needed no such old contacts. Woller describes him as a "Tausendsassa" – a term that could be translated as "one hell of a guy" or a "devil of a fellow". "He had the rare gift of getting on conversational terms with everybody."²⁰ He had charm, good looks and a beautiful wife. Mussolini later awarded him a generous monthly expense allowance.²¹

The Renzettis kept a hospitable open house on the fashionable Kurfuerstendamm in Berlin. Leading right wing politicians were frequent visitors at their salon, as were bankers, industrialists, generals, artists, the 'economic wizard' Schacht, the press baron Hugenberg and even the former crown prince. Among the Nazi leaders his closest friend was Goering. Renzetti was the only foreigner and his wife the only Jewess invited to Goering's wedding to the actress Emmy Sonnemann. The two women remained on visiting terms for years. Other Nazi leaders who were regular visitors to the Renzettis' salon were Hitler himself, the ideologue Rosenberg, Goebbels, Frick, the Minister of the Interior, probably Himmler and even the S.A. storm trooper leader Roehm. Presumably Roehm was not aware that Renzetti had long been advising Hitler to get rid of him, partly in view of his flaunted homosexuality but also because he was organizing his storm troopers as an alternative army. This was antagonising the regular generals.

"Roehm" – Renzetti reported to Rome – "is an excellent organiser and a proven friend of Hitler's, but he cannot remain at his post without sullyng the

image and the good name of the movement.” He need not have worried: in 1934 Hitler had his old comrade murdered in what came to be known as the ‘Night of the Long Knives’.

One of Renzetti’s qualities not so widely recognised was his talent for scheming. Ulrich von Hassell, a former German ambassador at Rome refers to Renzetti as “that old intriguer”.²²

In the 1920’s Renzetti had advised Mussolini to back the *Stahlhelm*. This ex-servicemen’s organisation appeared to have close links with the army, the civil service and with old President Hindenburg. They were becoming increasingly radical and willing to destroy the Weimar Republic. They harboured bitter resentments about the defeat of 1918 and objected to any rapprochement with France, which the democratic parties strove hard to bring about. Their Francophobia endeared the *Stahlhelm* to the Italians who had territorial disputes with France. But at this period Renzetti still had serious doubts about the Nazis. He regarded Hitler as weak because he refused to follow the example of Mussolini’s March on Rome and seize power by force without fussing about constitutional niceties.

Hitler had, however, learnt bitter lessons over ten years earlier, in 1923. In the so-called Munich “Beerhall Putsch” he had attempted to seize power in Bavaria and had failed dismally. Police loyal to the state government had opened fire and had killed sixteen Nazis. Hitler had been put on trial and found guilty. Sentenced to five years of very genteel ‘fortress’ imprisonment he had, in fact, only had to serve nine months. This was typical of the tainted ‘justice’ of this period - administered by judges who normally came from the conservative upper classes. However, after this setback Hitler decided he would have to gain power by astute alliances with other anti-democratic forces and by building up mass support for legitimate elections.

In November 1931 Renzetti had an audience with Mussolini. No record of their conversation exists but as a result Mussolini switched his support from the *Stahlhelm* to Hitler’s National Socialists. It must be assumed that this was on Renzetti’s advice. One of Renzetti’s 1931 dispatches to Rome says: “Hitler certainly needs support and advice.” (He meant his own!) “Despite weaknesses and deficits I regard him as the best leader of the nationalist opposition.”

Mussolini admired Renzetti as the best expert on German affairs that Italy had.²³ Renzetti’s judgement was, however, not infallible. He regarded himself as a monarchist and told the German ex-Crown Prince that the Nazi movement was, at heart, monarchist. It never was. There were other instances where his political antennae failed him, though they were not frequent. He probably had a hand in organising an exhibition, in 1934, of Italian “Aeropittura” in Berlin – modern futurist paintings that depicted energy, speed and flight which made use of photomontage and collages. His friends Goebbels and Goering had been persuaded to act as patrons. But the Nazi’s main organ, the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, denounced the art as decadent. They labelled it “Kulturbolschewismus”. Could the journal have been aware that a major influence in matters of art on the Fascist movement had been Margherita Sarfatti, Mussolini’s former Jewish mistress?

On the other hand, Renzetti was right when – challenging the views of most political commentators - he correctly predicted great Nazi gains in the September 1930 elections. His long-term forecast was that Hitler would eventually come to power. The Nazi movement, he wrote, corresponded with the historical needs of Germany and Hitler was the interpreter of that need.

“Playing several roles simultaneously, he [Renzetti] was in Berlin as commercial representative and lobbyist, as society lion, as fascist propagandist and as secret agent. In the 20th century, no Italian participated in so many ways in the German political scene - admittedly sometimes in the shadows.

By advocating Italian “corporatismo” Renzetti showed his sound political instincts.... It was this apparently new idea of a Third Way - the alleged reconciliation between Labour and Capital - which made Italian fascism interesting in the crisis period of the declining Weimar Republic

.....He established personal relations with Hjalmar Schacht, Fritz Thyssen, Alfred Hugenberg and other leading conservative personalities of the economy.”²⁴

He cultivated contacts with influential journalists and organised group visits of journalists and of rightwing politicians to Italy. He ensured that some were received in audience by Mussolini himself. He wrote several political leaflets and was instrumental in the publication of writings by other Fascist authors. These covered subjects such as Italian financial policies, the youth movement, leisure organisations and the modern Italian art movement.

No other foreigner met Hitler as frequently as Renzetti. Forty-two meetings – not counting purely social occasions - are on record between 1929 and 1941. There may have been more. Twenty-four of these were ‘unter vier Augen’ – with no one else present. He was invited, in 1931, to Hitler’s mountain retreat at Berchtesgaden – a privilege normally reserved only for Hitler’s closest circle. His contacts with Mussolini were less frequent. Only nine such meetings are on record. At many critical periods in the Nazis’ rise to power, Renzetti was with the Nazi leadership. For example, in the last days of January 1933, while Hitler and Goering were negotiating with President Hindenburg about the composition of the first Hitler government, Renzetti sat in a nearby hotel, huddled with the remaining Nazi leadership anxiously awaiting Hitler’s return.

One of the studies of the Hitler-Mussolini association makes the point that until 1930 Renzetti had confined himself to the role of a society lion, and as a propagandist for Fascism in Germany. Simultaneously he had reported regularly to Mussolini, by-passing the Italian diplomatic service. After 1930, Renzetti’s role changes. He becomes a political advisor to the Nazis. The Italian ambassador would have been constrained by diplomatic protocol to offer advice to an opposition party. Renzetti was not. His advice was, presumably, given in concert with Mussolini. What is known about it is based on Renzetti’s regular and frequent dispatches to Rome.²⁵

The advice Renzetti gave the Nazis was to keep out of governments until they could be certain they would be the dominant force. A premature entry into a government would harm the élan of the movement.

In 1931 the German rightwing organisations did come together in the so-called Harzburg Front with the aim of destroying the democratic system of the Weimar Republic. At the meeting at the spa town of Harzburg Renzetti sat on the platform with the party leaders and watched the parade of their uniformed supporters “with so much enthusiasm that one might have assumed that his own government was also a member of the new front.”²⁶ The preparatory negotiations for this conference had taken place in Renzetti’s Berlin apartment. Renzetti himself says in his dispatch to Rome: “The Harzburg Front was born in my house”. Was this self-aggrandisement? Fulvio Suvich, the Italian Undersecretary of State at the Foreign Office suggests that it was. He pokes fun at Renzetti’s pretensions:

“Renzetti tried to create the impression that it was he who determined Nazi policies and that the entire Nazi leadership hung on his every word and hastened to follow his advice.”

Suvich’s judgement is, however, suspect. As a career diplomat he was disgruntled at being by-passed by this ‘shadow ambassador’. So was Foreign Minister Ciano. But even Suvich had to concede that Renzetti “gave some excellent service which no one else who did not have his close relations to the Nazis could have provided.”²⁷

Goebbels – as we have seen - evaluated Renzetti’s role far more positively. He confirmed that in the “years of struggle” Renzetti’s role had been considerable. He had preached “the mobilisation of the streets” as more effective than parliamentary action. The masses should be kept constantly occupied and goaded into action. They needed small successes. They should never be left idle else they would fall prey to the Left.²⁸

After the 1931 Harzburg meeting Hitler invited Renzetti to accompany him to a Nazi get-together at Braunschweig where – according to Renzetti’s dispatch to Rome – he had spent two days in “honest and hearty comradeship”. But more: he reported proudly that he had even been allowed to participate in a ‘punishment expedition’ against communists. Presumably this meant he had joined Nazi bullyboys in beating up political opponents or at least in destroying their printing presses.²⁹

The following year, 1932, Goebbels quotes Renzetti’s advice “about the tactics of our revolution”. At this stage Renzetti had advised that the close alliance with the Stahlhelm and with von Papen should only be regarded as temporary expedients. They should be got rid of at the first opportunity. He recommended Machiavellian suppleness. In the battle for power all means were justified.

“Beware of priests and generals. Move away from von Papen as soon as possible.”

Franz von Papen, a member of the Catholic Zentrum party, was briefly chancellor in 1932. He agreed to join Hitler's coalition as his vice-chancellor feeling confident that he could control the chancellor. He was wrong. He was soon shunted off to ambassadorships abroad, first to Vienna and later to Ankara.

Goebbels comments: "Renzetti is a clever fellow. He has the right political instincts. ["Er hat es in den Fingerspitzen"] We have nothing in common with the leaders of the Stahlhelm."³⁰

Renzetti himself refers to the Stahlhelm leaders as "fossils:"

"Those who advocate a state modelled on the former Prussian military structure – have they not noticed that a revolution is in train in their country? All attempts to lead Germany by means that may have been suitable in the past, and which once had their good points, are doomed to failure."³¹

Renzetti's relations with Hitler were, at this period, very close: "I have observed" – he reported to Rome – "that several times Hitler has confided matters to me that he did not even entrust to his party friends." In January 1933 Renzetti could provide Mussolini with a list of the first cabinet proposed by Hitler even before this was presented to President Hindenburg.³²

"At the very moment they were forming their [coalition] government he advised them to eliminate Hugenberg and the Deutschnationale Volkspartei as soon as possible and to deprive them of power. In consolidating their power they should not concern themselves too much about adhering to legal methods. The important thing was to win an absolute majority at the forthcoming elections".³³

The March 1933 elections were indeed going to be critical for the Nazis. The coalition government they had formed was based on a shaky alliance. They hoped – with some violent intimidation of opponents - to get a parliamentary majority for the Nazi party alone. This would require a major propaganda campaign. For that they needed funds.

One German study says it was widely believed that Mussolini subsidised the Nazis financially at this critical juncture but that no proof had ever come to light.³⁴

In fact, some evidence has since been published in *Corriere della Sera*. Renzetti wrote to Mussolini within a few days of the Nazis getting into government saying he had received from the Nazis an explicit request for the funding of an Italian translation of Hitler's book "Mein Kampf". Mussolini immediately gave orders for a payment of 250,000 lire as an advance for the Italian publication – to be paid in cash. This was more than **twenty** times the sum paid for the English edition and considerably more than the advance paid to the most popular Italian author of the year, Guido da Verona.³⁵

'La Mia Battaglia' was duly published – in a translation by a Jewish linguist, Prof. Angelo Treves! He had, in fact, translated it some years earlier and

submitted it to the publisher Bompiani because “the monstrosities it contains should be read by as many people as possible”. But at that time the publisher had turned it down.

Whether the Nazis ever drew on Mussolini’s money is not certain. They were reticent about accepting help from a foreign government. Had it leaked out, this would have damaged their electoral chances. Hitler must have known that Lenin’s use of German help to reach Russia in the midst of war had been exploited by his enemies. However, at this point Hitler received the offer of financial support from German industrialists who were apprehensive about possible Communist gains. Hitler must have found it safer to accept money from German sources, but even this was kept secret.

Was Mussolini a great admirer of Hitler and his writings? Very unlikely! Mussolini had a reasonably good command of German. He had read ‘Mein Kampf’ years earlier in the original language and had reviewed it in terms that were far from complimentary: “An indigestible doorstop that no one reads - obscurantist, chauvinistic and imperialistic.” Hitler, he continued, was “muddleheaded and had got himself stuck in racial theories that may not have looked out of place in the Middle Ages but did so in the 20th century.” He even referred to Hitler as a “buffone”.³⁶

We cannot be certain that this scathing criticism was actually Mussolini’s own. Some earlier articles published in the American Hearst press under his name were, in fact, written by Margherita Sarfatti, his Jewish mistress.

Mussolini eventually suppressed his reservations about Hitler and associated himself with a regime that claimed ideological affinities with his own and was likely to support his imperial ambitions. Hitler, on the other hand, had a genuine admiration for Mussolini and the Fascist ideology. One of the new chancellor’s first acts – the day after moving into the chancellery - was to send Mussolini greetings through Renzetti:

“Without doubt I owe it to Fascism that I have reached this point. Even if the two movements show some differences it remains true that Mussolini created the ‘Weltanschauung’ which links the two ideologies. Without this creation I might never have reached this position.”³⁷

Renzetti piled on flattery. He reported to Rome that Hitler adored the Duce, he saw him as a “brilliant statesman” and as a “Roman Caesar”.³⁸

Hitler’s enthusiasm for Mussolini was quite genuine - at this early period. He said he wanted his first foreign visit to be to Italy “because of his sympathy for Italy and his admiration for the Duce”. He wanted to cement close relations between their two countries. Interestingly, he went on to say he wanted these relations to be extended later to close German-British relations.

Renzetti advocated the formation of ‘Kampfgruppen’ – strong arm squads to beat up and intimidate opponents - like the “squadristi” that Mussolini had employed in the 1920s.³⁹ This advice appears to have been given on direct instructions from Mussolini.

But in the use of violence the Nazis needed no foreign guidance. They had long employed squads of bullyboys. A fortnight before the March elections, Renzetti predicted an absolute victory for the Nazi-led coalition. "Part of the left voters is so intimidated and discouraged that one can count on large numbers of abstentions."⁴⁰

But the Nazis went much further themselves. The Reichstag went up in flames. Had the Nazis started the fire? It is very likely but it has never been proved with absolute certainty. The Nazis certainly seized the opportunity. They blamed the Communists and arrested every one of their deputies. This immediately gave their coalition the hoped-for parliamentary majority.

Once the Nazis were in government, they could communicate with Rome through diplomatic channels. But there was still an obstruction – the personal hostility of Cerutti, the Italian ambassador. Both Hitler and Goering thought that Cerruti had stirred up anger in Rome over the 1934 assassination of the Austrian chancellor Dollfuss by Austrian Nazis. Cerruti did not disguise his distaste for the Nazis' anti-Semitic excesses – influenced, no doubt, by his Hungarian Jewish wife. Hitler wanted to get rid of him. In June 1935 he used Renzetti to by-pass the regular diplomatic channel.

"An ambassador" he told Renzetti, "should be correct and should report to his government exactly what I say to him. The British and French ambassadors are anti-Nazis but they report precisely what I say. Not so with the Italian ambassador."

Renzetti demurred but Hitler replied: "My dear Renzetti, when I say this, I do have proof."⁴¹ The Germans must have found ways of intercepting the ambassadors' communications.

Cerruti was promptly recalled. However – much to the annoyance of the Nazis – he was appointed Italian ambassador to Paris, where he came to be regarded as a determined opponent of Nazi Germany.

Cerutti's replacement, Attolico, was sympathetic to the Nazis. For Renzetti, however, the removal of Cerruti was a pyrrhic victory which greatly reduced his own influence. From now on Hitler could use the official lines of communication with confidence. Foreign Minister Ciano ordered that from now on Renzetti was to communicate with Rome only through the Berlin embassy. Perhaps even this was not enough to eliminate his influence. Ciano then went further. In June 1935 Renzetti was, for the first time, put on the Italian diplomatic payroll but transferred to San Francisco as consul-general.

But only very briefly. One suspects that the "Tausendsassa", this 'hell of a guy', managed to engineer his return by pulling strings. Goering himself told Italian visitors that the Nazi leadership had been greatly disappointed by Renzetti's removal. A few months later he was transferred back to Berlin and welcomed enthusiastically by old friends. "Gottlob!" says the Goebbels diary. "God be praised, he is back!"

Socially the Renzettis' Berlin salon flourished as before but he never regained the political influence he had once had.

How did Renzetti reconcile his closeness to his wife with the virulent anti-Semitism of the Nazis? In Rome it would not have created any embarrassment – at least not at this time. Italian Fascism did not turn anti-Semitic until 1936. As we have seen, the Berlin ambassador had also had a Jewish wife. Mussolini himself had earlier had a Jewish mistress who retained influence on Fascist cultural policies even after their relationship ended.

In Berlin the situation was very different. Goebbels records one conversation on the “Jewish question” in 1932:

“Lunch with Hitler, Davanzati, Goering: Question of plutocracy and of antisemitism. All were of one opinion and clear. The fascists have a simpler position towards the Jews. There are hardly any Jews in Italy. But for German domestic consumption they are sharp anti-Semites, especially Renzetti.”

Did Renzetti's views provoke disputes with his father-in-law? We do not know. Did Goebbels report Renzetti's views correctly? It seems improbable since he stuck to his Jewish wife and apparently made efforts to save his father-in-law even though he must have detested the old man's political views. Perhaps, conspirator that he was, he disguised his own views.

In 1936 came Italy's colonial adventure - the invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Mussolini found himself isolated internationally and faced with a hostile League of Nations. This made him draw closer to Hitler. It was at this stage that Mussolini adopted anti-Semitic laws similar to those of the Nazis. This still remains a puzzle in view of Mussolini's earlier criticism of Hitler's racism. A number of Jews who had been prominent in the Fascist movement were now dismissed.⁴²

Although Renzetti no longer wielded much political influence in Berlin, he continued to socialise with top Nazis. He happened to be dining with Goering in March 1939 when he learnt that German troops – who, under the Munich agreement, had occupied the Sudetenland - were now about to occupy the rest of Czechoslovakia. Mussolini had not been kept informed. Renzetti insisted vehemently that the Duce be told immediately and Goering saw to it that this was done.

The British Prime Minister had warned, many years earlier, that Upper Silesia could become the cause of another world war. It cannot be claimed that World War II was caused by disputes over this mineral-rich area but it was an incident in Susanne's hometown that was used as the excuse: this was a night attack on the German radio transmitter at Gleiwitz. The attackers broadcast an appeal for a Polish rising. The Polish language used was, however, suspiciously ungrammatical. Next morning the corpse of a Pole was found outside the transmitter building. The attackers had disappeared in the dark. This ‘Polish outrage’ was used by Hitler to justify the invasion of Poland. In fact, the entire attack had been staged by an SS commando under the command of an SS-Sturmbannfuehrer Alfred Naujocks. The corpse was that of a local Polish

activist, Franciszek Honiok, who had been kidnapped only one day earlier and murdered outside the radio station to give the incident some verisimilitude.⁴³

Over a week earlier Hitler had addressed his generals: “The resolution of the conflict will follow appropriate propaganda. Credibility in the matter is unimportant. Victory provides justification.”⁴⁴

When war broke out, Mussolini decided to keep out, waiting for an opportune moment to grab his share of the loot. In April 1940 Goering promised Renzetti that Mussolini would get at least two weeks notice before a German offensive in the West. Later that year Goering used Renzetti to pass on the Nazis’ request that Italy should now enter the war. Mussolini was offered a free hand in Greece and also gained acceptance of his claim to part of the French Riviera.

Renzetti’s activities after this no longer have much importance. There is some correspondence in German archives with an official of the Ministry of Propaganda, Staatsrat Hans Hinkel. This is a man of whom we shall hear more. In 1938 Renzetti had invited him to a masked ball. In 1940 (in a letter dated Year XVIII of the Fascist era) Renzetti briefed him on arrangements for an afternoon of Italian musical entertainment for German war wounded at a Berlin military hospital.

In 1941 Ciano again endeavoured to banish Renzetti who had not made a secret in Berlin of his criticism of Rome’s policies. His friend Goering appears to have intervened to try to get him a status-worthy posting.⁴⁵ Renzetti was transferred to Stockholm, but only as No. 2 at the Italian embassy – once again a loss of influence. He paid a series of farewell visits. One was to Wilhelm Frick, the Minister of the Interior. Frick himself was away but his Secretary-of-State Pfundner received Renzetti and made notes for the minister. Thanks to these (and to the Goebbels diaries) we know more about the circumstances of Renzetti’s removal.

“His recall from Berlin is clearly against his wishes because he disapproves of Ciano’s policies with regard to Greece”

This refers to Italy’s disastrous invasion of Greece when even the army of little Greece repulsed the invaders and pursued them deep into Albania. Renzetti was received for farewell visits by many of the top Nazi leaders. This suggests that they shared his criticism of Rome’s policies. Goebbels records two visits:⁴⁶

“Renzetti pays his farewell visit. He has been tripped up by Ciano. He complains bitterly about this and about the entire clique around the Duce, their mistaken politics and military strategy; about the absence of courage and of truthfulness in the leadership. I only listen. But he is right. Rome treats him badly, partly due to the jealousy of the diplomatic establishment but partly because of his non-Aryan wife. He curses the diplomatic bureaucracy.”

Goebbels did not reveal his own views to Renzetti. He did, however, confide his thoughts about his Italian allies to his diary:

“Rome would love it if we were to conquer Yugoslavia and make them a gift of one half. Their appetite is twice as great as their courage. Some rare allies we’ve got into bed with!”

Renzetti’s disenchantment was by now widespread among Fascists. The regime had built up myths of manly heroism, Roman virtues, imperial conquests but, above all, on the infallibility of the charismatic Duce. War had exposed all these pretensions as false. Mussolini had entered Hitler’s war even though his generals had warned him that the army was not ready. A series of military disasters followed. In the botched invasion of Greece Hitler had to rush German troops to rescue his allies. Further disasters followed in North Africa. Again the Germans had to provide troops to prevent disaster. Then the Allies landed in Sicily. The Italian mainland was about to be invaded.

Towards the end of his life, Hitler himself admitted that his alliance with Italy had been a serious mistake. For Mussolini, too, the alliance had fatal consequences. If he had he been as wily as Franco he might have died as an old man and in his own bed. But by the time it became obvious that he had associated himself with the loser, Mussolini was far too deeply committed to switch sides.

In July 1943 the Fascist Grand Council was convened. It had never been anything but a claque to applaud the Duce. This was about to change. Mussolini had had repeated warnings that leading Fascists were plotting to dislodge him. He resolutely refused to believe this. That day, however, one of the leading members of the Fascist old guard, Dino Grandi, confronted Mussolini:

“It is the dictatorship that has lost the war. In the 17 years in which you have held the three armed forces ministries, what have you done?”⁴⁷ Italy’s military position was indefensible.

Grandi proposed restoring the king’s constitutional position. This meant depriving Mussolini of his dictatorial powers. Nineteen members of the council voted in favour, seven against. Even Mussolini’s son-in-law, Ciano, voted against him. (He later paid with his life for this ‘treachery’.) Mussolini, however, was still confident that he had the backing of the king. However, when he saw the king that afternoon he found himself dismissed, arrested and spirited out of the palace in a windowless ambulance. The king appointed Marshal Badoglio to succeed him as Prime Minister. Both Badoglio and the king hoped to save Italy from further involvement in the war. In this they failed disastrously. Italy became a theatre of war and worse, the theatre of a bitter civil war.

Renzetti switched sides. The former German ambassador to Italy von Hassell summarised Renzetti’s political career in scathing terms:

“Particularly grotesque is the case of that old intriguer Renzetti-formerly Mussolini’s agent with the Nazi party, then – after the seizure of power – the middleman who bypassed the ambassador’s official route and finally – thanks to Goering’s help – legate at Stockholm. He declared that he served only His Majesty the King – no one else.”⁴⁸

Did Renzetti ever consider what his change of sides would do to his father-in-law? He himself sat out the war in Stockholm. This was probably the safest place for him and his wife. But his decision to desert Hitler's ally, Mussolini, was to prove fatal for Susanne's father.

After the war Renzetti retired to Castellina Maritima near Pisa. He and his wife lived there in straightened circumstances. As a monarchist he had refused to opt for the new republic. As a result he received no pension for his diplomatic services (most of it 'off the cards', i.e. not as an employee of the Italian Foreign Office). He only had a small pension for his military service. The opulent days of Berlin were over.⁴⁹

He started to write an autobiography but never finished it. Several drafts – over 500 pages of typescript - survive. Professor Wolfgang Schieder, whose study of Renzetti's role is of great value, writes that the autobiographical drafts recapitulate his dispatches to Rome but add little to them. More significantly, they contain not one word of self criticism, nor any belated insight into the failings of the two regimes he had served. He was never held to account – but then no Italian ever faced legal proceedings for participation in the Fascist regime. He died on 27th November 1953.

Chapter 3 - Who was Susanne?

We know little about the beautiful Susanne – far too little. She stuck to her husband all her life. She survived him by twenty years or more and continued to live on the Renzetti family estate near Pisa.

Had she tried to stop his strenuous efforts to help the Nazis to power? Did she know that he had gone out, at least once, with their bullyboys to beat up political opponents? How did she get on with men like Goering, Goebbels, Hitler and even the widely detested Himmler? All of them had been visitors to her elegant salon at Kurfuerstendamm 100, Berlin. Did she share their contempt for the democratic institutions of the Weimar Republic and for its politicians – of whom her father had been one? Was she, perhaps, one of those Jew-hating Jews? Or was she merely a spoilt, giddy-headed girl, a small-town girl intoxicated by the society life of Berlin and dazzled by the admiration of powerful men? Did she have no interest in political affairs?

Both her father and one of her grandfathers had been prominent in their fields. Her maternal grandfather, Dr. Jacob Cohn of Kattowitz, was, in his time, a leading rabbi. Her father was a successful lawyer and (for some years) an influential parliamentarian. But such ancestry does not necessarily prove that she must have been intelligent.

A shadow fell early on her life: in 1931 her brother Hans committed suicide. He had been suffering from depression. But she must have had diversions. She enjoyed a glamorous life during the period of the Weimar republic and – more remarkably - even later, during the Nazi era. One study of the relations between Hitler and Mussolini mentions that “in Berlin society circles she was regarded as an outstanding beauty.”⁵⁰ Her rival, the Italian ambassador’s wife Elisabetta Cerruti, acknowledged in her memoirs that “at every great reception, at every gathering, even at important funerals, Susanne was present and stole the show.”⁵¹



Her portrait was painted by a fashionable society painter, Egon Josef Kossuth. Was it significant that she had herself painted in a German folk dress? The portrait looks dated today, even ‘kitschy’. It makes her appear far less attractive than her wedding photographs. However Kossuth’s portrait was used for the cover of the fashion magazine “Elegante Welt” for

its issue of the 17th July 1933 – half a year after the Nazi takeover. The journal discreetly did not identify the sitter.

Bella Fromm's book about the social life of Berlin mentions her repeatedly:

“Blonde Susanne Renzetti has turned the head of Herbert Scholz, the handsome referent at the Foreign Office. Society has been watching the amorous game for weeks with benevolent irony.”

“At a reception given by Renzetti the party lions appear in luxurious numbers. Bose, von Papen's right-hand man, says the homage paid to the host with his Jewish wife, was an indirect tribute paid to Mussolini, whose friend he is. One after another the Nazi guests bent devotedly over the well-groomed little hand of the hostess. Schacht, especially, adores her.”⁵²

Hjalmar Schacht was the financial mastermind credited with bringing to an end the disastrous hyperinflation of the 1920s and, later, with procuring funds for Hitler's rearmament.

Guttman's previously quoted memoirs recall that “the story went around [Gleiwitz] that Hitler had called on the Renzettis with a bunch of flowers and a hand-kiss for the Lady of the House- the one and only Jewess ever to be so honoured by the Fuehrer.” But this was not just Gleiwitz gossip. A report in the Bayerische Kurier dated 16th January 1933 – two weeks before Hitler became chancellor – confirms that on a visit to the Renzettis' apartment Hitler had presented a bunch of roses and orchids to Susanne.”⁵³

Guttman's claim that Susanne was the only Jewess ever to be so ‘honoured’ was, however, not quite accurate. Bella Fromm, a Jewish journalist on a leading anti-Nazi paper describes the very first reception that Hitler attended at the palace of President Hindenburg early in 1933. What follows may be tangential to our story but it is too amusing to omit!

Hitler approached Bella Fromm. She tried to escape but he followed:

“May I have the pleasure of bidding you a good evening, ‘gnaedige Frau’ [gracious lady]?” He seized my hand, pressed it to his lips and presented me, gratis, with one of his famous hypnotic glances. It did not seem to work with me.

“You enjoy being here?”

I said that I did, but that in addition it was my job as I was the diplomatic columnist of the Ullstein papers. I saw Hitler wince. The word “Ullstein” rang an unpleasant bell in some noisome depth of his mind. Another kiss on my hand: “Hope to see you again soon.” He was off. He forgot to pay attention to Manmi. She was furious.” Thyssen says that often when Hitler is attracted to a woman she turns out to be racially undesirable.”

The industrialist Fritz Thyssen was a major contributor to Nazi campaign funds. Mammi was one of Fromm's gentile colleagues. Fromm continues:

“When I rejoined Lammers and Thomsen I could not help a slightly catty remark. “Your Fuehrer must have a cold”, I said. “He’s supposed to be able to smell a Jew from ten miles away, isn’t he? Apparently his sense of smell isn’t working to-night.” They couldn’t help laughing, though not without a quick furtive glance around to see who was listening.”⁵⁴ End of tangent.

To return to Susanne Renzetti: as an old woman she told Prof. Schieder that Hitler had, on numerous occasions “endeavoured to treat her with the most charming courtesy” She added that shortly before her husband’s reluctant transfer to San Francisco Hitler had received her in a private audience to bid her a personal farewell. Schieder found this “almost incredible”.⁵⁵

Could she have been fantasizing? Or does this support Thyssen’s remark about the type of woman Hitler found attractive?

Her portrait in German folksy ‘dirndel’ dress – such as the women around Hitler tended to wear – raises again the question: was she denying her Jewishness? That would have been difficult since it was widely known and much gossiped about in Berlin ‘high society’ in the early years of the Nazi period. Even Goebbels, who appears never to have met her, wrote her off as “terribly non-Aryan”. But she seems to have played down her origins. In old age she told Schieder that her parents had opposed her marriage to Renzetti because they thought she was too young. This may be true. She was only 17 when the two fell in love. But it was only the lesser part of the truth. Their main objection was that she – the granddaughter of a prominent rabbi and daughter of the head of the Jewish community of Gleiwitz– would be marrying “out of the faith”. Renzetti was Catholic.

We know little about Susanne’s activities in the following few years. She and her husband remained regular visitors at the Goering household. We have seen that he was dining there just before the Nazis marched into Czechoslovakia. According to Schlesinger Susanne was a close friend of Goering’s wife Emmy. But it would appear that it was something of the ethics of the husband, Hermann Goering, which brushed off on Susanne. He regarded himself as ‘the last Renaissance man’, a freebooter who pillaged art works from Jewish collectors in Germany and from foreign museums in Nazi occupied territories. Susanne’s thefts were on a more modest scale. A descendant of a branch of the Kochmann family, Ernst Kochmann, remembers that his grandmother Friedel handed Susanne some valuables to take out of Germany for her. This must have been in 1938 when the Nazis compelled Jews to list their jewellery and art works. Jews realised that this was a preliminary to being robbed. Susanne took them but never returned them. The grandmother never imagined that she would be robbed, not by the Nazis but by a relative.⁵⁶

A number of letters survive in the Koblenz German National Archives⁵⁷ between Susanne and Hinkel, an official in the Propaganda Ministry. The dates extend from 1938 to 1943. Over these years the relationship obviously grew closer. The early letters use the formal address “Sie”, the later ones the familiar “Du” and refer to Renzetti by a nickname, Pipo.

Hinkel was an SS officer who held the Nazis' highest decoration – the “Blutorden” or blood order. This was awarded only to that small band of men who had participated in Hitler's abortive ‘Beer Hall Putsch’ in 1923. Hinkel had joined the party as early as 1921. His membership number was 287 in a register that eventually listed millions. Even before joining he had been a warrior in the Freikorps Oberland together with Himmler, later boss of the Gestapo. Units of this Freikorps were among the warriors who stormed the Upper Silesian Annaberg in 1921. Between 1930 and '32 Hinkel was editor of the rabid Nazi daily Voelkischer Beobachter. Among his articles he attributed the November 1918 revolution that dislodged the Kaiser and ended the war to a dagger stab in the back by the Jews. Once in power Goebbels appointed him ‘culture administrator’ with special responsibility for removing Jewish influences from German cultural life. He purged the German PEN club and forcibly “aryanised” Jewish publishing firms. It was he who blackmailed the opera composer Richard Strauss, whose son was married to a Jewish woman, to collaborate with the Nazis. He was part-responsible for the virulently anti-Semitic propaganda film “Jud Sues”. Among his tasks he had to supervise the activities of the Juedische Kulturbund – the segregated but tolerated Jewish cultural association. This became his private domain – until mass emigration of Jewish artists and, later, deportations to the gas chambers destroyed his empire. He was then put in charge of radio transmissions of the Grossdeutsche Rundfunk. After the war he was extradited to Poland but after four years of detention he was released without trial. He had apparently proved he had had no part in mass murders. He is, however, known to have denounced one Jewish woman, Emilie Bluen, in 1943. She had written to him saying she had been a friend of his mother. She had done so without identifying herself as Jewish by adding “Sarah” to her name as required by Nazi regulations. Nor had she worn the obligatory yellow Star of David when invited to see one of his assistants. She was sent to Auschwitz and her death. Despite this, the post-war denazification tribunal classified him as “minderbelastet” - lesser incriminated. He had managed to convince the tribunal that, as a result of his efforts, an independent cultural life for Jews had existed for several years. He further produced carbon copies of letters he claimed he had written in 1943 and 1945 denouncing corruption in the Nazi Party. He was trying to re-brand himself as an anti-Nazi resistance fighter. His American interrogators did, however, not accept the letters as genuine.⁵⁸

Prof. Schieder regards him as “one of the most important and most unpleasant of Goebbels' collaborators and a man of great influence.”⁵⁹

Yet this arch-Nazi intervened to protect Susanne's father! In 1941 Gleiwitz Jews were driven from their homes and herded into a few Jewish-owned houses, entire families crowded into one room. A little later they were carted off to nearby Auschwitz. Not one of these survived. Susanne's father, however, was spared – for a while. Whether it was Susanne or her husband who had approached Hinkel is not clear. On file there is a scribbled note from Hinkel to his secretary instructing her to book a long distance call ‘tomorrow morning’ (underlined) to Meyer, the mayor of the town of Gleiwitz. What was discussed becomes clear from the mayor's written response.

“Concerning the residential affair of Justizrat Kochmann, I will take account of the telephoned instructions and have given orders accordingly.

I remember the activities of Major Renzetti (as he then was) at the time of the plebiscite. He behaved impeccably towards us.

Heil Hitler. Dr. Meyer.”

The mayor will have remembered the incident described by Guttman when Renzetti intervened to protect a German crowd from trigger-happy French occupation troops. Following Hinkel’s phone call Kochmann was allowed to remain in his villa. There can be little doubt that the mayor will also have remembered that after 1919 Arthur Kochman had himself been an important spokesman for German interests in Upper Silesia. However, by 1941 it would not have been politic for the mayor to praise the patriotism of a Jew.

A few later letters between Hinkel and Susanne survive. She was now in Stockholm where her husband was the No.2 at the Italian embassy. Curiously Hinkel does not end his letter with the customary “Heil Hitler” but “in alter Verbundenheit” – in old amity. He ends a 1943 letter “I hope that the new year of struggle will bring us, at least in part, that which we stand for.” It is a phrase far more ambiguous than the wish for final victory which would have been more usual in his circle. It appears he was already striving to ‘reinsure’ himself for the post-war period.

In early 1943 Susanne sends the Hinkels parcels of chocolate – probably by then unobtainable in Berlin. She expresses the hope that the Hinkels’ house had been spared “these latest terrible aerial attacks.” Then she turns discreetly to her concern for her father in Gleiwitz.

“Could I send something for the relevant person in Silesia, possibly through you? What do you think? I don’t want to do anything wrong. Would it be possible for his old maid, Johanna, to remain [with him]? Apart from her there is no one left who can care for him and he is 78 years old. I fall asleep with worries and I wake up with them. I can’t think of anything else any more and suffer terribly. I beg of you, write urgently. Best write to me via Dr. Bobba, Italian Consulate-General or Consul Giretti. You understand me and will forgive me for bothering you again.”

Her last letter surviving in the archives is dated 7th June, presumably 1943.

“Forgive me for bothering you again. For one month now I have been without news from down there and, by chance, I heard a few days ago that in G, too, drastic steps have been taken. I am dreadfully worried and I beg of you: Make enquiries. Help if you can and relieve me of this dreadful weight of anxiety. Answer urgently, perhaps by telegram”.

No answer survives.

We then lose sight of Susanne until many years after the war. She was by then a widow. Guttman visited her at Castellina Marittima near Pisa. He left no

record of their conversation but – many years later – described her to this author as ‘still good looking in old age.’ Professor Schieder visited her in 1973 and again 1974. He says she was then living in very modest circumstances. On her behalf, he negotiated the sale of Renzetti’s autobiographical drafts to the German National Archives. She needed the money.

At their second meeting in 1974 she invited him to dinner at nearby Pisa “with some friends”.

“It was a ghostly evening. Her friends all turned out to be old Nazis, washed up somehow or other in Italy.”

When these friends realised that Schieder was not ‘one of them’, they treated him icily. It was the last time he saw Susanne. He had come to feel uncomfortable with her. He had found her “unheimlich” – weird, almost frightening. He never had an opportunity to ask why she associated with these types. She had, however, told him earlier that the rest of the Renzetti family were cutting her dead. He says life in that one-horse town – Castellina Marittima - must have been very lonely for her.⁶⁰

As for the question I had put to him – he says he raised the same with her several times over: what had induced this Jewish woman to associate for many years apparently happily with top Nazis? Was it the proximity to power, the social contact with prominent men that dazzled her so that she did not grasp with whom she was involved? Or did she adore her husband so much that she followed him unquestioningly? Schieder says one may have to compare her with Eva Braun or Clara Petacci who followed Hitler and Mussolini voluntarily even into death.

All the reply she gave to Schieder was “We lived through a great time. Later we had to pay for it.”⁶¹

The reply raises more questions than answers. Had she come to identify with Nazi objectives? Was she saying that Hitler’s Germany had been great? Or – more probably - was she simply saying that for her and her husband life in Berlin high society had been great fun?

A sad finale to the tale of this once glamorous society belle – the daughter of a hero!

Chapter 4 -“A wise man and a hero.”

A record card of the German Ministry of Justice says Arthur Kochmann was born on 24.12.1864 as the son of a master plumber. A family record ⁶²says he was the fifth of seven sons of his father. The second half of the 19th century was the period when German Jews were rapidly moving into higher secular education. Kochmann conformed to this pattern. His exam results were excellent and he became a successful lawyer in the Upper Silesian town of Gleiwitz. In 1911 he was nominated Justizrat - an honorific title for a lawyer of good repute. The following year he was nominated notary public. The Notariat had financial advantages.



There are only two further entries – both made a quarter of a century later. The card is marked “Wenden” – ‘turn’. The world had turned! An entry dated 1937 records that under new legislation he had been stripped of his Notariat. In 1938 Nazi decrees went further: he was deprived of the right to practise as a lawyer. The same was happening to Jewish lawyers all over Germany.

The family web page quotes an unidentified contemporary: “His outside

appearance, his stately behaviour and the dignity that emanated from him made him a personality that was impressive and demanded respect”.⁶³

Guttman describes Kochmann as “deeply attached to the Jewish religion – almost orthodox.” He had married the daughter of a rabbi and was, for many years, the head of the Jewish community of Gleiwitz. He was, however, also involved in German politics as a member of the Deutsche Demokratische Partei

(DDP). He served for many years on the Gleiwitz city council and in 1919 was elected as a deputy to the Prussian constituent assembly. He was outspoken as an advocate of Upper Silesia remaining within Germany, opposing the claims of Poland.⁶⁴

The DDP was a bourgeois liberal party which - according to one historian of the period - "represented the fine flower of enlightened German bourgeois culture."⁶⁵ Among its founder members were Einstein, the painter Max Liebermann and Walther Rathenau, later Foreign Minister. All three were Jews. But the party also had among its founders non-Jews like Hjalmar Schacht, who later became Hitler's minister of economics. Thomas Mann, too, was a supporter.

The DDP sought inspiration for the new Germany - not from the goose stepping soldiers on the parade grounds of Potsdam and Berlin - but from Weimar, the city of the Enlightenment and of Goethe and Schiller. The party blossomed only briefly.

During the near-civil war between supporters of the Polish and the German cause, Kochmann appears to have been in some danger. He was briefly taken into custody by Polish insurgents. After his release he left the referendum area and he appears to have remained in Berlin between 1919 and 1922. Acute tension died down fairly soon but Kochmann remained away from Gleiwitz. Did he fear for his life? It seems unlikely. He was a man of great courage - as he was to prove later. There was, however, a good reason why he had to stay away. In 1920 the inter-allied commission - French, Italian and British - ruled that since the future of the region had not yet been decided, Upper Silesian residents could not participate in German elections, neither for the Reichstag, nor for any other German legislative body. But in the 1919 Prussian state elections Kochmann had been elected as a deputy. These elections were declared invalid by the inter-allied commission. Border controls were set up and visas - issued by French consulates - were required to enter the disputed area. Anyone offending against this ruling was banned from entering.

The Germans protested that the elections had been free and fair. The territory had been Austrian or Prussian for centuries and remained German unless its status was legally altered. The inter-allied commission stuck to its guns but Kochmann appears to have defied their ruling. He continued to represent Gleiwitz in the Prussian diet. However for several years he could not enter the disputed area. He must have communicated with his constituents by post.⁶⁶ When the situation eased he returned to his home town. He was hailed as a hero and awarded the freedom of the city of Gleiwitz.

However, when the Nazis came to power he was struck off the register of Gleiwitz freemen and the title was bestowed upon - Adolf Hitler! Sic transit ...

The very day that he took his seat in the Prussian constituent assembly, 25th March 1919, Kochmann raised the problem of the future of Upper Silesia. He challenged a speech made earlier that same day⁶⁷ by the Social Democrat premier of Prussia, Paul Hirsch. Hirsch had addressed a wide range of current problems but had only referred to Upper Silesia very briefly. All he had said was that the post-war reconstruction of German industry would not be possible

without the mineral resources of the Saar region and of Upper Silesia. This was not sufficiently forthright for Kochmann:

“The population of Prussian lands, threatened by the Polish danger, is in a great state of perturbation. They would have greatly welcomed it if this House had decided unanimously on a lively and energetic protest against any separation of this territory; especially since the state government has done nothing to reassure the population. Today’s declaration by the premier was not sufficiently energetic for the worried population to derive any hope for the future.”

“Call from the Right: “Very true!”

“According to the premier ‘No Polish territory exists apart from the Province Posen’ (Poznan). Thus – in the views of the government – there can be no question of any separation of Upper Silesia. That is the only reassurance we have.”

In fact even this had not been said in the premier’s speech earlier that day. Hirsch must have said it on another occasion.

“I have got up to speak in the first place because I am an Upper Silesian, have spent all my life in Upper Silesia and thus have the greatest interest in the future of Upper Silesia...”

If one regards simply the question whether Upper Silesia is Polish or German, then by all criteria, Upper Silesia must be regarded as German. When elections took place for the German national assembly and for the Prussian state diet, Polish nationalists in Upper Silesia called for a boycott. They did not merely use soft words but made use of all possible terrorist tactics. Despite all this, the effect achieved was pathetic! If you examine the election results in Upper Silesia, for example in the constituency of Oppeln, you will see that 60% of those entitled to vote did cast their vote. If you take into account that elsewhere in the country participation was, at best, 80%, it is clear that only approximately 15 to 20% boycotted the elections. This would be the most favourable result for Poland that one could deduce: 60% went to vote and thus stated ‘We are Prussians. We are Germans, even if we have our Polish peculiarities and wish to preserve our Polish mother tongue and want it respected.’ This is the stand of the people of Upper Silesia.”

Kochmann then ranged over the history of the region and the puzzling question of mother tongue. Silesia, he said, had been separate from the kingdom of Poland for 700 years and the population retained no historic memory of belonging to that kingdom. There was no need for a referendum.

“We have no fears of the results of such a referendum but it would be better if it never came about because no one can predict how Polish agitators – who have been mightily engaged – might be deployed.

It has been raised that Upper Silesians speak a dialect of Polish. This consists of a mixture of German and Polish. In the electoral campaigns just past it became evident that Poles from Greater Poland” [Wielkopolska – the Polish heartlands] “and our Upper Silesian Poles cannot even communicate. Thus it became necessary for agitators from Greater Poland to address voters using the German language. They had to use the German language to communicate with Poles! And yet they make the claim that Upper Silesians belongs to Greater Poland and to the Polish nation.”

Kochmann then turned to Prussia’s need for Upper Silesia’s coal and minerals and the great contribution that the region made to the all-German national exchequer. This was a subject likely to make more of an impact on non-Silesian members of the diet. Kochmann ended with a quotation from a speech by Matthias Erzberger, Catholic Zentrum Party Minister of Finance [assassinated not much later].

“No peace treaty that demands from us the ceding of Upper Silesia* ... should ever be signed by us.”

Calls of “Bravo”!

Kochmann is remembered as a leading spokesman for Upper Silesia remaining within Germany. The speech quoted above is, however, the only one he made on the subject in the Prussian state diet. Far more vital debates on the subject⁶⁸ took place in the all-German Reichstag because the economy of all of Germany would be seriously affected if Upper Silesia were lost to Germany. But Kochmann had no voice in the Reichstag.

Perhaps he spent his exile years in Berlin lobbying or addressing public meetings. This is surmise – but his reputation as a leading spokesman for a German Upper Silesia must have rested on more than this one speech.

During his career in the Diet he was an active parliamentarian. He was selected as Berichterstatter, i.e. rapporteur for two important sub-committees.

On 27th June 1919 he spoke for the budget sub-committee. In this capacity he ranged over a wide area but focussed mainly on matters of justice. He said that since the revolution of November 1918 the German public expected a more liberal spirit in the administration of justice. He denounced the arbitrary justice administered in military courts martial, then turned to the primitive standards of German prisons. The budget that his sub-committee had just recommended provided moneys to improve prison diet and to ease access to defence lawyers for all accused. Prison libraries, too, were to be enlarged. Further, he said, there had long been discrimination in the appointment of women and of Jews to posts as notary publics. His sub-committee now had the minister’s agreement that this would be corrected. Further, prisoners contracted to work for outside employers had so far only received a small proportion of what was paid for their services. The new budget would improve prisoners’ earning capacity.

Compulsory attendance at religious services was to cease. Freedom of conscience was to be guaranteed.^{69†}

These were reforms that had long been demanded by liberals but in earlier years they had met with resistance from the authoritarian and militaristic Prussian imperial regime. In his maiden speech Kochmann had been highly critical of Hirsch, the new state premier. But there was much that Hirsch had said about the reformist aspirations of the new Weimar Republic that Kochmann must have applauded. He had said he hoped the state would preserve some valuable aspects of Prussia's past – its financial probity, its frugality and its sense of duty. On the other hand, he hoped that the new Prussia would turn firmly away from the class-ridden, hierarchical structure of the past, its subservient and deferential spirit and its rigid authoritarianism.

Such aspirations were expressed much more forcefully in Kochmann's last major speech in May 1922. This time he spoke as the rapporteur for the judicial subcommittee. Serious flaws in the judiciary of the Weimar Republic had by now become apparent. Reactionary judges appointed in the Kaiser's days were still dominating the courts. Many made no secret of their distaste for democracy and their sympathy with the political Right.⁷⁰ There had been serious miscarriages of justice.

Assassinations of democratic or left-wing politicians were becoming frequent but were going virtually unpunished.

Kochmann criticised the judges. They administered a class-ridden justice. They had never come to terms with the changes brought about by the revolution of November 1918. They were not rooted in the new republican spirit. Judgements often lacked objectivity. Some of them were deeply anti-Semitic. He did not want to generalise but instances of such lack of objectivity were not the exception. They were part of the system.

He queried how new judges were appointed. They should not be drawn only from so-called better-off families. Other social classes should be brought in. The new budget, recommended by his sub-committee, would set aside funds for the education of poorer candidates to qualify to become judges.

“May it become true that every judge will regard it as his greatest honour to possess, in full, the trust of the people.”⁷¹

This speech marked the end of his parliamentary career. In 1922 Kochmann lost his seat. The German Democratic Party disintegrated under the impact of the hyperinflation of 1921/22 which impoverished much of the German bourgeoisie. A contributory factor to the collapse of the currency, as mentioned before, was the loss of the valuable mineral resources of Upper Silesia.

An aside: One wonders what this liberal-minded lawyer would have said if he had known that nine years later his son-in-law would go out with Nazi storm troopers to beat up political opponents!

But even his 1922 electoral defeat did not end Kochmann's role in Upper Silesian affairs. He was a key figure in a victory that Jews achieved against Hitler – probably the only one. I quote from a record of the final days of the Gleiwitz Jewish community set down many years later by a survivor – one of the few. The author, a lawyer named Erich Schlesinger, escaped murder at Auschwitz because he was married to a gentile wife who stood loyally by his side.

“The Gleiwitz story is important for the entire history of German Jewry because from Justizrat Kochmann and Dr. Lustig together with Dr. Weissman from Beuthen came the initiative, based on the Geneva agreement, to oppose Hitler's legislation ... I remember participating in the large meeting at Gleiwitz where the decision was taken to act against Hitler. This was the one and only successful action of German Jews against Hitler's legislation and – at least for a period of four years – it protected Upper Silesian Jews.”

In the beginning of 1934 a number of employees were fired from various businesses. In April lawyers were forcibly chased from law courts and doctors were dismissed from miners' associations. All Jewish businesses were picketed. The joint committee of Upper Silesian synagogue communities decided that the Geneva Agreements, concluded between Poland and Germany, guaranteed equal rights for all races and religions. Thereupon Justizrat Kochmann took strong action against the measures of the Reich government. An employee of the Defaka [a Gleiwitz Department Store] had been dismissed because he was a Jew. After he had emigrated he appealed to the League of Nations on the grounds of the Geneva agreements. The League took up his case. The appeal was supported by the association of Upper Silesian Jewish communities. Justizrat Kochmann approached the Reich government and requested – so as to preclude a ruling by the League – that they should send a representative to discuss with him the question of the equality of rights of Jews in Upper Silesia. The Reich government agreed. However they delayed sending their official. A fortnight before the League's ruling was due, no official having yet appeared. Kochmann requested a decision from the council of the League. At the time all of us shivered for the life of Justizrat Kochman [“Wir haben damals alle um das Leben des Justizrat Kochmann gezittert”].”

It was the second time Kochmann risked his life. In the turbulent period after World War I he had been in danger from Polish insurgents. Now the threat came from people he regarded as his own – Germans. The danger which caused Schlesinger to shiver with fear was real enough. With the growth of the Nazi movement tensions had flared up again. Political murders were becoming frequent. They no longer attracted much press attention – except for one in 1932, the last year of the Weimar Republic. This was a murder in the Upper Silesian village of Potempa. Why? Because Hitler himself intervened.

A gang of Nazi bullyboys had gone out to ‘have a bit of fun’ roughing up a Communist or two. They took half an hour to beat and trample to death a miner of Polish origin, Konrad Pietzuch. This took place in the presence of his mother and despite her desperate pleadings. Horrifying details of his injuries were

revealed in court. Boot kicks had severed his jugular vein. His larynx had been crushed.

The five Nazis were sentenced to death. But what brought the Potempa murder into the headlines was Hitler's telegram of support for the murderers:

“I find myself linked to you by the deepest bonds. Your liberation is a matter of honour for us. How could I forsake you?”

The Nazi daily *Voelkischer Beobachter* denounced a recently promulgated decree under which the five had been sentenced:

“Man is not equal to man. Deed is not equal to deed. By this decree Hitler's storm troopers are put on a par with Bolsheviks. But worse ... these were Poles. Our men would be equated to subhumans.”

Such were views of the people that Kochmann faced. Schlesinger's account of the case before the League of Nations continues:

“One day before the League's decision was due, a senior ministry official did arrive but a League decision could no longer be averted. The decision was in favour of Upper Silesian Jewry. The government was compelled to cancel all anti-Jewish measures. The ban on ritual slaughter was annulled; lawyers and notary publics were reinstated, insurance panel doctors got their practices back, trade union doctors were given back their posts. The Nuremberg laws became invalid in Upper Silesia.”

The League's decision was a unique victory, protecting Upper Silesia's Jews from discriminatory laws that were in force in the rest of Germany. The practical effects were less impressive:

“Boycotts against Jewish businesses continued. The practices of doctors and lawyers declined. Many Jews recognised that, despite the legal protection, there was no way to survive economically.

On 15.7.1937 the Geneva agreement expired and now the notary publics were dismissed, as were the doctors of miners' associations. Many employees of larger enterprises lost their jobs. The ban on ritual slaughter came into force. Boycotts became worse and worse. Banks cancelled the credit of business people.”⁷²

The situation of Jews in Upper Silesia had become like that of Jews in the rest of Germany. This was now deteriorating rapidly. In November 1938 – during the so-called *Krystallnacht* – the synagogue where Kochmann had worshipped was burnt down, as were many synagogues all over Germany.

Worse was to follow. After the outbreak of war Gleiwitz Jews were confined to a rapidly improvised ghetto and later deported to Auschwitz. Kochmann, however, was spared, as were a handful of others who were married to gentiles.

Kochmann stayed isolated in his villa until 1943. His uniquely privileged position came to an abrupt end when the king of Italy dismissed Mussolini and had him arrested. A minority of fervent Fascists stuck to Mussolini but the bulk of the Italian establishment – Renzetti among them – chose the side of the king.

Did Renzetti ever consider what might now happen to his father-in-law? Did he ever discuss this with his wife? The Gleiwitz Gestapo chief Linz – described by Schlesinger as a particularly fanatical Nazi – must have been waiting for this very moment. Kochmann was by then confined to a wheelchair – according to the family website. He was immediately arrested. Schlesinger (who had been appointed spokesman for the few remaining Jews) was allowed to visit him. He found him in a cell attached to the Gleiwitz law courts - the very courts where Kochmann had long practised. Schlesinger makes no mention of the old man being confined to a wheelchair. He applied to have Kochmann sent to Theresienstadt because of his age. This was regarded at the time as a slightly more humane camp. Schlesinger failed and was himself threatened by the Gestapo chief for daring to intervene. Kochmann was taken to Auschwitz.

Auschwitz selection procedures are well known. At 76 he would have been found unfit for heavy labour and pushed into the gas chambers, probably within hours of arriving.

Schlesinger writes: “He could have gone abroad in good time, thanks to his great connections, but he refused. He died like the captain of a ship – as the last. A wise man and a hero!”

Horst Bienek, in his autobiographical work “Reise in die Kindheit”⁷³ says Kochmann deserves to have a street named after him – if not in what has become a Polish city, then in Bottrop, the German town twinned with Gliwice. In his 4-volume novel-cycle “Gleiwitz” – part fact, part fiction – Bienek recalls that Kochmann had resolutely refused to join his daughter in Stockholm. Bienek has him saying “This is my home. This is where I want to be buried.”

But Kochmann has no grave.

¹ Goebbels Diaries I,9. 31st March 1941.

² “Duce. The Rise and Fall of Benito Mussolini” Richard Collier. Collins, London 1971.

³ “Lexikon “Juden in Preussen”, Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin 1981.

⁴ “Blut Erz Kohl” Rudolf Schricker. Publisher Zeitgeschichte, Berlin 1930 (?) quoting Joint Appeal of Upper Silesian German parties.

⁵ Hansard 3rd July 1919. Vol. 117, column 1214.

⁶ Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939. First Series, Vol XI. Doc 83

⁷ Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939. First Series. Vol. XVI. Doc 3.

⁸ German diplomatic note quoted in Schricker., pg. 109

⁹ Otto Ulitz “Oberschlesien. Aus seiner Geschichte. Publisher Landsmannschaft der Oberschlesier, Bonn., Pg.55.

¹⁰ Documents of British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939. First Series Vol XVII. Doc 27 and 31.

¹¹ Hansard 13.05.1921, Volume 141, Column 2380

¹² Lt. Commander Kenworthy in Hansard 21.05.1922

¹³ Website Onlineprojekt ‘Gefallenendenkmaeler’

¹⁴ H.W. Koch “Der deutsche Buergerkrieg”. Ullstein, Berlin 1978.

¹⁵ Doc on British Foreign Policy. First Series, Vol.XI. Doc 37. Oppeln, 5th September 1920.

¹⁶ Times, 11.05.1921, as quoted by Lt. Commander Kenworthy in Commons 11.05.1921

¹⁷ Schricker, pg 83, footnote..

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- ¹⁸ I am indebted to the late Dr. William Guttman's niece, Renate Levine, for permission to quote from these unpublished memoirs. Guttman, born at Gleiwitz/Gliwice had been a childhood friend of my uncle.
- ¹⁹ Guttman.
- ²² Hans Woller "Machtpolitisches Kalkuel oder Ideologische Affinitaet" in Benz. Buchheim, Mommsen "Der Nazionalsozialismus" Frankfurt 1994. Pg.51
- ²¹ Wolfgang Schieder in "Faschismus in Italien und Deutschland", Wallstein Verlag, Goettingen, 2005 Pg.51 and 395.
- ²² Ulrich von Hassell, Tagebuecher 1938-1944. Aufzeichnungen vom Andern Deutschland." Sieder Verlag, pg 395.
- ²³ Woller pg 52
- ²⁴ Schieder pg 33/34
- ²⁵ Woller, pg. 52.
- ²⁶ Sefton Delmer "Die Deutschen und ich", Hamburg 1962 – quoted by Woller pg. 54.
- ²⁷ Fulvio Suvich "Memorie 1932 – 1936" as quoted in Woller, pg 65.
- ²⁸ Woller pg 53
- ²⁹ Woller pg 54. Renzetti's quoted dispatch is dated 19th October 1931.
- ³⁰ Goebbels diaries, 21.8.1932
- ³¹ Renzetti dispatch 05.03.1932 quoted in Woller pg. 55.
- ³² Jens Petersen "Hitler-Mussolini. Die Entstehung der Achse Berlin-Rom" Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tuebingen 1973.Pg. 111
- ³³ Petersen pg 114.
- ³⁴ Woller pg 49.
- ³⁵ Dino Messina, Corriere della Sera, 18th June 2004. Translation by Fausta Walsby
- ³⁶ Woller pg 47 and Petersen pg 115.
- ³⁷ Petersen
- ³⁸ Woller
- ³⁹ Petersen
- ⁴⁰ Petersen pg 127
- ⁴¹ Petersen pg 416
- ⁴² Dino Messina
- ⁴³ "Ueberfall auf den Sender Gleiwitz" in "Entfesselung des Zweiten Weltkrieges," pg 323. Fischer, Frankfurt 1967
- ⁴⁴ Johannes Hohlfeld 'Ansprache Adolf Hitlers' in 'Aufzeichnungen des Generaladmiral Boehm' as in 15 above.
- ⁴⁵ Hassel .
- ⁴⁶ Goebbels Diaries I,9 March 21 and March 31 1941
- ⁴⁷ "The Falls of Mussolini", Phillip Morgan, Oxford University Press, 2007.
- ⁴⁸ Hassel, pg 395
- ⁴⁹ Schieder pg.57/58
- ⁵⁰ Petersen, pg 17
- ⁵¹ Quoted in Schieder, pg. 37
- ⁵² "Blood and Banquets", Bella Fromm, publisher Geoffrey Bess, London 1942(?) pg 132.
- ⁵³ ??????
- ⁵⁴ Fromm, pg 90/91.
- ⁵⁵ Schieder pg 58
- ⁵⁶ E-mail from Mr. Ernest Kochmann to author dated 16.08.2009
- ⁵⁷ Koblenz B. Arch R56 I/93
- ⁵⁸ Eike Geisel in "Premiere und Pogrom" Siedler Verlag. No publication date given.
- ⁵⁹ E-mail from Prof. Schieder to author dated 07.09.2009
- ⁶⁰ E-mails (as above) dated 04.08.2009 and 07.08.2009.
- ⁶¹ Schieder, pg. 58.
- ⁶² Arturo Cusiél Porzecanski, <http://nw08.american.edu/~aporzeca/gliwice/gliwice.htm>]
- ⁶³ Porzecanski, as above
- ⁶⁴ Lexikon "Juden in Preussen", Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin 1981.
- ⁶⁵ Godfrey Scheele "The Weimar Republic", Faber & Faber, 1946. Pg 41.
- ⁶⁶ Schrickergp. 168. Schricker does not refer specifically to Kochmann's case but outlines the movement restrictions which would have affected him.
- ⁶⁷ Sitzungsberichte der Verfassungsgebenden Preussischen Landesversammlung (Prussian Constituent Assembly) Vol. 1, column 690, 25th March 1919.
- ⁶⁸ 26th October 1921 and 30th May 1922.
- ⁶⁹ Sitzungsberichte Vol 3 column 2698, 27th June 1919.

⁷⁰ Torsten Palmer & Hendrik Neubauer “Die Weimar Republik”, Könnemann, 2000.

⁷¹ Sitzungsberichte Vol.7, column 9943, 20th May 1922.

⁷² Erich Schlesinger “Geschichte der juedischen Gemeinde von Gleiwitz vom 31.1.1933 bis 24.1.1945”, typescript lodged with Leo Baeck Institute, New York.

⁷³ . Horst Bienek “Reise in die Kindheit. Wiederseh mit Schlesien” Carl Hansen publisher, 1988 pg 97 and “Gleiwitz. Eine oberschlesische Chronik in vier Romanen.”