

Martin Bormann's Directive 55/43 (September 29, 1943)

Abstract

One particularity of Hitler's regime was the lack of any formal regulation of the relationship between party and state. As a result, that relationship was characterized by turf battles and conflicts over spheres of authority. The NSDAP's primary source of strength, however, was its ability to educate a Nazi leadership elite and, especially after the start of the war, to mobilize the general population under the flag of ideology. Martin Bormann's (1900–1945) memo of September 29, 1943, speaks to these points.

Source

The Head of the Party Chancellery
Führer's Headquarters, 29.9.43
Directive No. 55/43

With the increasing intensity of the war, the defensive strength of the home front is being subjected to an ever-growing burden. The NSDAP must, therefore, continually steel the offensive morale of the German people; it must constantly influence the formation of public opinion in a positive direction and vigorously oppose all negative phenomena.

In order that all Party comrades can be deployed for this important task and appropriately prepared for it, I hereby decree the following:

From 15 October onwards, all local branches will hold general meetings for the whole membership: where possible they should be held within four weeks. The cadres are responsible for holding these meetings in an effective manner and should call upon the cooperation of all available propaganda and indoctrination personnel. The Reich head of organization [Dr. Ley] and the Reich head of propaganda [Dr. Goebbels] will provide the necessary speakers for this internal Party action.

The Gauleiters should, if possible, speak in one meeting in each district of their Gau; the district leaders are expected to conduct the meetings of the local branches in person. In those Gaus in which the number of districts and branches creates difficulties for the carrying out of this directive within the allotted time, the meetings should be combined in an appropriate manner.

Attendance of all Party comrades at these meetings is compulsory. The meetings themselves should be carried out in a dignified and above all focused manner. The individual Party comrades must be urgently and emphatically reminded of their obligation to act as a positive influence on the country's morale. Particular emphasis should be placed on the need for the exertion of greater influence on the mood and attitude of the population through personal contact. The bigger the impact of the enemy and of the current difficulties on our national comrades, the more vigorously must the NSDAP, acting through all its members, strengthen belief in the correctness of our actions and in the certainty of a German victory. The ideas expressed in the enclosure should form the main theme of the meetings.

I request the Gauleiters to pay particular attention to these meetings. Further instructions will be given out centrally by the Reich head of organization and the Reich head of propaganda, who will oversee the implementation of the directive.

[signed] M. Bormann

Ideas for the General Membership Meetings

The national socialist movement has so far mastered every situation! It has never allowed itself to be put off its stroke by occasional setbacks and problems. On the contrary, it has always risen to the tasks and emerged the stronger from all the challenges. Now, once more, the Party is faced with a historic challenge.

If the leadership remains firm and tough during this very difficult period, the bulk of the nation will remain unshaken. But the absolute prerequisite is for the leader himself to give the best example of strength of faith and resolution. The personal behavior and quality of character of all Party comrades must always be irreproachable, especially at this time. The Führer requires, as he particularly emphasized in his last address, that the Party set an example in everything. Never before have so many critical eyes been focused on it as today.

The Party is the political elite of the nation. In it, those Germans with the greatest faith and political fanatics have come together. In becoming a member of the Party, every Party comrade has taken on a particular responsibility towards the leadership and the nation. We conquered this state with incomparable toughness and energy. We must defend it with no less determination and doggedness. Every Party comrade must, especially now, feel himself to be a confidant of the Führer and an intermediary between leadership and people. The Party must now, in these testing times, take the leadership of the people particularly firmly in hand. Our compatriots want to be led decisively and reliably, also in the formation of their opinions. Thus, the movement must not allow itself to be diverted for one moment by the accumulation of other tasks, from the important task of the leadership and influencing of the people. The persuasion and political direction of our compatriots is one of the most fundamental tasks of the Party. In the time of struggle, it was an honorable duty of the National Socialists to wrestle with every single person for the dissemination of our ideas. The same must still be true now! We must keep reminding our compatriots of the destructive aims of our enemies, which already emerged before the First World War in the encirclement policy of King Edward VII, in the fight against the German colonies, etc. If the German people want to live then they must fight for their right to live until a victorious end to the war. Let us remember the post-war period, which, despite the fulfillment policy from Bell to Stresemann, imposed tougher and tougher conditions, concessions and debts on the German people. Every Party comrade must once more be persuaded to become an active participant in the movement. Only then will he feel that he is fully involved in what is happening today. More than ever before, the Party must be a sworn band of fighters. Party comrades who have weakened or grown tired must once more be galvanized by the most active and fanatical ones. The élan and fighting spirit of the whole movement must at this time above all not waver for a moment.

It is essential that Party comrades remain unaffected by any fluctuation of mood. The flood of rumors and defamatory statements, which are systematically spread by the enemy in order to unsettle our people, must break against the calm and unshakeable spirit of all Party comrades! We have on occasion put up with much too much in the way of insults and abuse of our national socialist leadership. Any Party comrade who does not straight away and publicly stand up to fainthearts, weaklings, and defeatists thereby brands himself as the greatest political weakling and, through his pathetic example, encourages the enemy's attempts to undermine morale. Now more than ever, everything depends on the influence of every man and every woman on their fellow men and women. We must expect that every Party comrade has the guts and civil courage to shut up all malicious gossips. Every rumor-monger and unreliable compatriot must at once be confronted by a committed and combative Party comrade. Unfortunately, a number of Party comrades have become too comfortable and too posh to oppose the insidious weaklings with the requisite vigor.

We want to continue to help compatriots who are genuinely in search of advice and assistance. Fainthearts and despondent compatriots will be most effectively convinced by the example of the

strength of our faith and our calm confidence in victory. But, in the case of shameless rumor-mongers and thoughtless gossips, politeness and restraint are out of place. They must be firmly put in their place or handed over to the police.

The leadership cannot always respond directly to every conceivable rumor and question that comes up. It gives out a line on the most important issues as far as possible. But, if no directives come from the top, then the resourceful Party comrade will have to look out for himself.

The movement can no longer be bothered with passengers and observers. The Party leadership makes no bones about the fact that it is ruthlessly determined to part company with insecure and fickle elements. Anyone who today no longer has the courage to declare their commitment to National Socialism is no longer one of us. But, if anyone is excluded from the movement, it is not as if they were being expelled from some association; they are being thrown out of the political order of the German people, in its critical hour, in disgrace.

If every Party comrade clearly and decisively exerts the necessary influence on the formation of the mood and opinion of his acquaintances and the section of the population led by him, then our nation's attitude and will to resist in this fateful struggle can never decline.

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