

NSDAP Report on a Mass Rally in Berlin (February 1927)

Abstract

After constant inner-party quarrels – in particular fights between the *Gau* leadership and the intentionally provocative local SA leadership – Joseph Goebbels was made *Gau* leader [*Gauleiter*] of the Berlin NSDAP in November 1926. He immediately made SA leader Kurt Daluege his deputy and embarked on an offensive, action-oriented political course that was thoroughly in keeping with the expectations of the Berlin SA. Through propaganda work – for instance, election campaigns and marches – and by providing security at party events, the SA intentionally provoked political enemies and employed focused terrorist violence. The ultimate goal of all of this was to seize control of the public arena.

The following account of the brawl in the Pharus Beer Hall illustrates the aggressive and confrontational political “style” of the NSDAP and SA. Pharus Hall, located in the working-class neighborhood of Wedding in Berlin, was a traditional venue for KPD events. Moreover, the subject of Goebbels’ speech made it clear that he aimed to speak on behalf of a “socialist” workers’ party, which must have been an additional provocation for KPD members.

[Please note: the name Reinhold Muchow does not appear in the text reprinted in the Broszat article. But as he compiled all of the other quoted reports, and as the diction in the present report resembles that of the others, one can assume that he authored this report as well.]

Source

[...]

On the 11th of this month the Party held a public mass meeting in the Pharus [Beer] Halls’ in Wedding, the real working class quarter, with the subject: ‘The Collapse of the Bourgeois Class State’. Comrade Dr Goebbels was the speaker. It was quite clear to us what that meant. It had to be visibly shown that National Socialism is determined to reach the workers. We succeeded once before in getting a foothold in Wedding. There were huge crowds at the meeting. More than 1,000 people filled the hall whose political composition was four-fifths SA to one-fifth KPD. But the latter had gathered their main forces in the street. When the meeting was opened by Comrade Daluege, the SA leader, there were, as was expected, provocative shouts of ‘On a point of order!’. After the KPD members had been told that we, not they, decided points of order, and that they would have the right to ask questions after the talk by Comrade Dr Goebbels, the first scuffling broke out. Peace seemed to be restored until there was renewed heckling. When the chairman announced that the hecklers would be sent out if the interruptions continued, the KPD worked themselves into a frenzy. Meanwhile, the SA had gradually surrounded the centre of the disturbance, and the Communists, sensing the danger, suddenly became aggressive. What followed all happened within three or four minutes. Within seconds both sides had picked up chairs, beer mugs, even tables, and a savage fight began. The Communists were gradually pushed under the gallery which we had taken care to occupy and soon chairs and glasses came hurtling down from there also. The fight was quickly decided: the KPD left with 85 wounded, more or less: that is to say, they could not get down the stairs as fast as they had calmly and ‘innocently’ climbed them. On our side we counted 3 badly wounded and about 10–12 slightly. When the police appeared the fight was already over. Marxist terrorism had been bloodily suppressed. [...]

Source: Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945*, Vol. 1, *The Rise to Power 1919–1934*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998, pp. 53–54.

Source of original German text: Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei, Ortsgr. Berlin – Sektion Neukölln (Propaganda Zelle), Situations-Bericht (Februar 1927), “Allgemeine politische Lage in Berlin und der Kampf der N.S.D.A.P.,” reprinted in Martin Broszat, “Die Anfänge der Berliner NSDAP 1926–27,” in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 8 (1960), pp. 110–12.

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