

CHAPTER 6

A Nazi in Boston

MARY BRYANT PRATT BRANDEGEE INHERITED \$20 MILLION IN 1891, an amount that today would equate to well over half a billion dollars. By the time she met Herbert Wilhelm Scholz, she may have been Boston's wealthiest citizen. Scholz arrived in November 1938, to take up duties as Germany's consul in the city. An educated, good-looking man with perfect English, a cosmopolitan manner, and a charming wife, Scholz immediately won over Boston's elite. But Brandegee had her doubts.¹

In June 1940 Brandegee marched down from Faulkner Farm—her Brookline estate, which is now a National Historic Landmark—to the FBI field office in Post Office Square. “The present German Consul and his wife,” Brandegee explained, are “being lavishly entertained by the Back Bay Social Set.” Perhaps wondering if it was a crime to eat caviar and spill Margaux, Special Agent Virgil Peterson nonetheless listened graciously to Brandegee. Eventually she came to the point: this Scholz was a suspicious character. Outside the confines of official diplomacy, the consul was using his position to gain access to President Franklin Roosevelt's circle. For instance T. Jefferson Coolidge, Roosevelt's recently retired undersecretary of the treasury, consistently entertained Scholz in his Brookline home.²

Brandegee had been spooked for months by Scholz's quick entrée into Boston society and his closeness with influential figures in the political and business worlds, but what finally inspired her to report her worries was something Scholz said at a dinner party. The occasion came shortly after Hitler

had ordered unrestricted submarine warfare, a move that threatened US interests in the Atlantic and significantly ratcheted up tensions with Washington. The order also put the Germans and Soviets on a collision course in the Baltic at a time when the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact supposedly guaranteed peace between Berlin and Moscow. Brandegee was sitting across the table from Scholz when he “started to discuss the war with a friend of hers.” This friend told Scholz to his face that she was “decidedly pro-ally.” In response, Scholz stared across the table into the woman’s eyes and pronounced coolly, “Then we are enemies.” Shocked, the Back Bay socialites sat nervously fidgeting at the table until someone suggested, “We had better talk about the weather.” Brandegee’s message for Peterson was a harrowing one: Scholz was not a diplomat from a neutral power but rather an agent of a foreign adversary.³

Peterson did not bother to follow up. He had little concrete information about untoward activities involving Scholz and no basis for an investigation. In any case, the State Department preferred that the FBI stay out of Scholz’s business, and so did the president. During 1939 and 1940, the US government did not know it was on the brink of war with Hitler. Roosevelt was doubtful that the Nazis would cause much damage and was, in any case, ambivalent about whether Nazi successes were a serious problem for the United States. His strategy was to not “further enrage Hitler,” which meant treating German diplomats with kid gloves. James Clement Dunn, a political adviser at the State Department, told British diplomats that the United States had a policy of not paying attention to men like Scholz. The “federal government,” he explained, was “being careful to leave the task of watching it (Nazi activity) to local, state, or municipal authorities.”⁴

Few journalists were inclined to pick up the slack. One Bostonian who shared Brandegee’s concerns got nowhere prodding Arthur Conant, Jr., editor of the *Boston Evening Transcript*, to look into Scholz. “His case was the first where a Nazi Party member who had no training whatsoever in diplomatic service, had been appointed to an embassy of the Third Reich,” the correspondent wrote. “Dr. Scholz has never taken an attaché course, nor has he ever submitted to any of the diplomatic examinations every member of the diplomatic service customarily takes.” He had been appointed “solely on the basis of his membership in the National Socialist Party.” Conant ignored the letter, placing it in a file labeled “Nazis in the US,” where it languished for the next three years.⁵

It turns out that Scholz was exactly what Brandegee feared—he was a spy operating under diplomatic cover. In fact Scholz was on assignment from the Schutzstaffel (SS), where he was an officer in the espionage division known as the Liaison Staff. During his time in Boston, Scholz found a willing intelligence asset in Francis Moran. Desperate and rejected by the institutional Roman Catholic Church, Moran fell into the arms of Nazi Germany. Moran did not have classified information to pass along to Scholz, but he did do the consul's bidding, dedicating countless hours to causes Scholz directed: the defeat of Roosevelt in 1940, stirring up anti-Semitism in Boston, promoting the Nazi line, and even pushing the US military to take up operations that would benefit the German war effort. As discussed later in this book, the union between Moran and Scholz was a criminal one. Moran never registered as a foreign agent, as required by the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938. And his work for Scholz arguably violated the Smith Act of 1940. Their partnership would become one of the most effective espionage and secret propaganda relationships of World War II.

For quite a while, Moran got away with being an underground collaborator, despite Dunn's assertion that "local authorities manage[d] perfectly well" in unearthing Nazi activity on the home front.⁶ Dunn was apparently unaware of charges of police favoritism toward the Christian Front in both New York and Boston. Privately, Moran bragged to Derounian, reporting undercover, that "sixty per cent of the Catholic priests in Boston were with him, and that practically all of the cops were also with him." Derounian followed up on Moran's assertion and found that "later checking up seemed to confirm his declaration on the cops."⁷

Moran's reconciliation of Catholicism with Nazism was a complex act of moral flexibility, driven above all by his conviction that his faith enjoined anti-Semitism. John Franklin Carter wrote that Moran was drawn to "the Mystical Body of Hitler," but this overstates the case. As detailed in the next chapter, Moran did not embrace Nazism, much less substitute Hitler for Christ. He compromised with Nazism because he thought it was the right thing for a Christian to do in light of the Judeo-Bolshevist threat. And it was Scholz who gave Moran a reason to compromise. A detour through Scholz's story provides fascinating insights into a key figure in the tale of American Nazism, albeit one as dim in historical memory as Moran, Cassidy, and the Christian Front. It was not just any Nazi who could have won Moran over.

Scholz was a powerful believer in the rightness of the Nazi cause, who articulated his views in the kind of philosophical terms that Moran appreciated. Moran, after all, was a “lecturer,” an “expert,” and a “student.” Scholz spoke the activist-intellectual language.⁸

And perhaps Scholz noted a kindred quality in Moran. Their backgrounds were quite different—Moran the son of working-class immigrants, Scholz the scion of the cultured upper-middle classes. But both men spent their early years looking for a way to believe in themselves, and both found the answer in varieties of nationalism and anti-Semitism. Both also knew what it meant to be lucky. When Moran met Scholz, the Bostonian had repeatedly been saved from irrelevance by the intercession of a patron and was on the lookout for a new one. Scholz had had many patrons, too, politically connected men who gave him opportunities he had not earned and who may even have saved him from death during the infamous Night of the Long Knives in 1934. Scholz had a knack for knowing the right people and being in the right place at the right time. This good fortune, combined with a real intelligence, helped Scholz navigate the competitive world of the Nazi bureaucracy, in which power plays were as constant as they were violent. It can seem as though the Nazi upper echelon trained for the Holocaust by first murdering each other. For Scholz, Boston would be a refuge from the infighting of Munich and Berlin and an opportunity to bring new supporters into Hitler’s fold.

A Spy Is Born

Herbert W. Scholz was astute and circumspect, manipulative and inspiring. He was a survivor. Journalists were cautious about probing into his story, for he always fought back. But if there was not much written about Scholz in his own time—and a good deal of what was written is suspect or contradicted by other sources—his biography can be pieced together from assorted writings in German and English.

Scholz was born on January 29, 1906, in the southwest German city of Karlsruhe. His family was one of wealth and standing. His father, Wilhelm Gustav Scholz, was technical director and part owner of Waggonfabrik Jos. Rathgeber, a Munich-based producer of railway and street cars. Companies like Rathgeber led Munich’s industrialization in the years prior to World War I, and the executives of such firms were highly esteemed. As the son of a prominent German businessman, Herbert Scholz was expected to be well edu-

cated and was sent to the Realgymnasium München, a school established by King Ludwig II of Bavaria in 1864 as an advanced and experimental “new language high school.” Accordingly, Scholz mastered multiple foreign languages from an early age—French, Italian, Hungarian, and English. But Scholz was rebellious. He seems to have been unsure of what direction to take next. After finishing his course at the Realgymnasium at age eighteen, he spurned the liberal arts and instead chose legal studies. A year later he quit and became a volunteer at a bank in Munich. Whether in law or banking, Scholz seemed reluctant to tie himself to either track.⁹

In 1925 the nineteen-year-old Scholz became politicized and joined the Freikorps Oberland, a “free” regiment of paramilitary militia fighters who famously battled against the short-lived Munich Soviet Republic in April 1919. The Freikorps’ “citizens’ guard” joined hands with the Reichswehr—the regular German army—in fierce fighting that cost hundreds of civilian lives, alongside a similar number of combatants. The suppression of the Munich Soviet was politically significant; Hitler viewed the destruction of the short-lived republic as the first inkling of “the resurrection of the German people.” Communists were tried and executed on the judgment of Freikorps leaders. In 1921 the Weimar government banned the Freikorps, but it lived on unofficially as the Bund Oberland Club. In 1925 the militia was reorganized and allowed to return to operation under its original name.¹⁰

The Freikorps was a formative institution for a number of high-ranking Nazis. The Freikorps’ logistical mastermind during the Battle of Munich was Rudolf Hess, who would go on to become the Nazi Party’s deputy führer. Heinrich Himmler was an agricultural student at Munich’s Technical University and Freikorps member in 1919. Later he served for sixteen years as the chief of the SS and was a key planner of the Holocaust. As Hitler biographer Allan Bullock put it, “The Freikorps were the training schools for the political murder and terrorism which disfigured German life up to 1924, and again after 1929.” Scholz’s induction into the Freikorps was thus a critical career decision. Too young to have gained heroic status serving in World War I, he made his way upward by joining a paramilitary group whose political ideals were well aligned with those of the Nazis. Service in the Freikorps also showed a willingness to fight and possibly die for those ideals, enhancing Scholz’s credibility as a far-rightist.¹¹

In 1927, after two years in the Freikorps, Scholz relocated to Leipzig to attend university. On the face of it, this move looks like a sign of obedience to

his father, a way to placate the family, and possibly even a rejection of Nazism. Instead of nationalism and bullying, the twenty-one-year-old Scholz was turning to the life of the mind—a peaceable dedication to thought and learning rather than a zealous commitment to the fatherland. But Scholz had other ideas. He did wish to become a student again, but what he wanted to study was the philosophy underlying Nazism. Still, Scholz took an intellectually flexible approach, taking in lectures on a range of topics and from professors with widely varying views. For instance, he took classes with Hans Driesch, a renowned biologist who undertook philosophical studies of embryology. A pacifist and Nazi critic, Driesch was eventually removed from the classroom by Hitler's censors. Scholz also took courses with Hans Freyer, who combined philosophy with sociology and was at times an overt Nazi. Freyer was known for supporting purges of anti-Nazi colleagues and, even when he was not directly involved in politics, for writings propounding racism, anti-Semitism, and authoritarianism.¹²

Sometime in the late 1920s, presumably during his years in Leipzig, Scholz joined the Sturmabteilung (SA), the brown-shirted “storm troops” of the Nazi Party. The SA was a kind of successor to the Freikorps and the Bund Oberland Club, members of which “constituted the core of the Sturmabteilung in Bavaria” by 1925. Like the Freikorps, the SA was a right-wing militia. The difference was that the SA was officially aligned with the Nazi Party, whereas the Freikorps had been an unofficial supporter of the German army. Historian Daniel Siemens describes the SA as “a highly centralized, nationwide organization that ultimately challenged the state’s monopoly on violence.” Commanded by Ernst Röhm, “a barrel-chested, scar-faced desperado” and former mercenary, the SA allowed Hitler to “cut out any dissent in the streets and portray himself” as “the strong arm needed to control the nation.” Röhm saw the SA as “the most effective protection against the Bolshevizing of Germany and the rest of Europe” and deployed his forces to prevent Communists from disrupting Nazi Party speakers.¹³

Scholz’s SA membership put a definitive end to the possibility that he would follow his family’s expectations. The Scholz family were members of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, who emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by accumulating material wealth through industry and thereby gaining social position. These privileged Germans were anchored in cities and emphasized education and the appropriation of elite culture and manners. They

were, in other words, Germany's successful strivers: they had the wealth to compete with the upper class but not the breeding. The Bildungsbürgertum had to work for their place in society.¹⁴

The wearing of the brown shirt represented the ultimate rejection of Wilhelm Gustav Scholz's project, and of the Bildungsbürgertum. Wilhelm wanted his son to become a captain of industry; Herbert wanted to be a captain in the SA. Perhaps Herbert's political activity was a psychological rebellion aimed at his family and its values. And certainly the SA offered something precious to a searching youth like Scholz: a supportive community and a sense of identity—a connection to a project that mattered. "Today I attended the general mustering of the SA," Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary in early 1931. "We can set ourselves to the great work now. Assault is followed by assault. Blood pours. Binder for the new community!" That blood, the binding agent of the SA, was the blood of Communists.¹⁵

It is difficult to recreate a profile of Scholz's work in the SA. His Nazi Party file at the Berlin Document Center contains no reference to his party status prior to June 1933. A US State Department interrogation of an unnamed source from July 1945 indicated that much of Scholz's efforts in the SA prior to 1933 consisted of "work for Hitler . . . outside of Germany," suggesting that the SA was putting his language skills to work. Such activities would have been in keeping with Röhm's view of his organization as an agent for the "Germanization" of Eastern Europe. Young Scholz's fluency in Hungarian would have been useful in this respect. While Scholz never had official diplomatic training, he may have had his introduction to the craft in the SA.¹⁶

But before Scholz was a diplomat—or, rather, a spy posing as a diplomat—he was a philosopher. He began writing his dissertation in 1930, under the direction of Werner Schingnitz, a student of Dreisch's who never reached the professional level of his mentor. In fact, of all the scholars on Scholz's dissertation committee, Schingnitz ranks last in order of distinction. But working with Schingnitz would prove a shrewd decision, although Scholz could not have foreseen this. What Scholz did know was that Schingnitz shared his own zeal for National Socialism. Schingnitz was arguably the top Nazi at the University of Leipzig and in November 1933 was appointed Nazi Party official responsible for *Philosophie und Weltanschauung* at the university. Shortly thereafter, he became head of the National Socialist Teachers League for Saxony. By the time he finished directing Scholz's thesis, Schingnitz had fully

subordinated his intellectual life to Nazism. As a disciple of Schingnitz, Scholz was abandoning scholarly inquiry in favor of propagandizing on behalf of Nazi power.¹⁷

Scholz was to take part in Schingnitz's great project: the crafting of *Philosophisches Wörterbuch* (*The Philosophical Dictionary*), a survey history of German philosophy driven by the conviction that subordination to Nazism was the people's natural state. The work would outline advancements in "pure" German thinking and rescue it from Jewish influence. For instance, Schingnitz wrote an entry on Henri Bergson, arguing that the French-Jewish philosopher plagiarized his views from Arthur Schopenhauer and made this theft and bastardization palatable to unwitting Germans by employing "positivistic, Jewish mysticism." Schingnitz also attacked Edmund Husserl, the architect of what would become known as phenomenology, for engaging in "typical Jewish rationalism." Husserl had to be struck from the pantheon of German thinkers and in fact was ejected from his emeritus chair at the University of Freiburg in early 1933 "for being a Jew."¹⁸

Scholz's contribution would be to study the obscure nineteenth-century psychologist Oswald Külpe and write a dissertation that would serve as the basis for an entry in the dictionary. Külpe receives little attention today, but he was a significant early theorist of cognition and reflection—specifically, the role of thought processes in carrying out action. Formally speaking, Scholz's topic was Külpe's concept of "imageless thought": the effect of linking introspection and awareness to sensory content. But evidence suggests that Külpe was a Jew, so Scholz's real task was to prove Külpe's unworthiness as a German philosopher. Scholz's thesis was a brilliant piece of falsehood—impressive in its methods, with each claim leading inexorably to the next, but premised on an extremely unsound foundation. He accused Külpe of "duplicity" and deemed the man's entire corpus "problematic" and "illogical." Later, in his dictionary entry, Schingnitz charged that Külpe tried to "justify" an essentially Jewish philosophical system and impose it on Germans. Scholz submitted his thesis in April 1932 and was granted his doctorate.¹⁹

With his credential in hand, Scholz prepared to move into the public realm. "Herbert had some political aspirations," Ruth Dwight McVitty, heir to the Arm & Hammer baking soda fortune and a one-time girlfriend of Scholz, wrote after their break-up around 1930. His goal had never been to work as an academic but rather to gain firm grounding in Nazi political phi-

losophy and put a Nazi seal on his education, thereby positioning himself for upward mobility in Hitler's regime.²⁰

Scholz's first job after receiving his doctorate may seem quite menial, but, in a stroke of good fortune, he wound up in the perfect position for a young Nazi on the make. Scholz became a secretary to the Deutsch-Japanische Gesellschaft—the German-Japanese Society in Berlin, which managed Japanese and German scholarly exchanges and sought to tighten cultural relations between the two countries. Scholz had no expertise concerning Japan, and the job placed him outside the loop of Nazi bureaucracy. But the German-Japanese Society happened to be run by Hitler's private secretary, Rudolf Hess. Unlike Scholz, Hess had a genuine interest in Japan and was a kind of Nazi resident expert on the country and its place in global affairs. But if Scholz was ignorant of Japan, he was carefully attuned to power. Reporting directly to Hess, Scholz was routinely face-to-face with the man who was always by the führer's side.

Indeed, soon after Scholz arrived at the German-Japanese Society in 1932, Hess became an even more important figure. That summer Hitler broke with the powerful socialist-leaning Nazi politician Gregor Strasser, forced Strasser out, and consolidated his own grip on the party. One of his first moves was to name Hess chair of the party's Central Political Commission. Then, shortly after Hitler gained the chancellorship in 1933, Hess was appointed deputy führer. Scholz's entry-level job was now a direct conduit to the second most powerful person in Germany.

But Scholz was also stuck between two camps engaged in an epic power struggle. On one side was Röhm, who sought a socialist restructuring of the German economy and wanted to amalgamate the SA into the Reichswehr, Germany's regular army. On the other side were Hess and Himmler. Both opposed socialism as an existential threat to the regime. They also had different plans for the military and the future of German rearmament, as the country's forces were still limited by the terms of the Versailles Treaty. As SS commander, Himmler wanted his own troops to reconstitute the military, and Hess was in his corner. Scholz was torn between allegiance to Röhm and the SA, on one hand, and Hess on the other. But Scholz ultimately put his lot in with Hess and Himmler. When Scholz began at the German-Japanese Society, he was also "foreign policy officer in the ministerial office of the supreme SA leadership." By the time he ended his association with the society in 1933, he was an officer in the SS.²¹

This transition was a complex one, and it is not entirely clear how Scholz became deregistered with the SA and signed up with the SS. The move certainly came at the right time, though. In 1932, just as Scholz was finishing his dissertation, it was revealed that Röhm was gay. Hitler, a long-time Röhm ally, downplayed his sexual activity in private, but Hess, Himmler, Goebbels, and other Nazi potentates lined up against Röhm and pressed Hitler to be rid of the SA chief. Germany was a democracy at the time, and the revelation of Röhm's homosexual acts was weighing the party down, not least because gay sex was a crime according to Germany's Basic Law. The Nazis were not Germany's only nationalistic or conservative party, which meant that a scandal had real potential drive voters into the ranks of the competition.²²

It may have been Schingnitz, Scholz's academic advisor, who engineered Scholz's move from Röhm's SA to Himmler's SS. The source of the outcry surrounding Röhm was his leaked correspondence with Karl-Günther Heimsoth, a physician and astrologer based in Leipzig. As the Nazi cultural-political officer in that city, Schingnitz was involved in the official response. When it became clear that Röhm had asked Heimsoth to decipher whether the time and date of his birth caused his homosexuality, Schingnitz was ordered to purge the Leipzig-based Astrological Society. This is how Schingnitz became privy to the inner circle's opinions of Röhm. Naturally, Schingnitz would have wanted his recent star graduate to get out from under Röhm's aegis. It is possible, then, that Schingnitz pulled strings on Scholz's behalf, resulting in the appearance of a peculiar May 26, 1933, letter in Scholz's personnel file. There is no letterhead or return address on the document, and the signature below the closing "Heil Hitler" is indecipherable. The letter, addressed to no one in particular, states that Scholz had been moved into the "Brown House Group" and would "therefore leave . . . his previous *Ortsgruppe*"—that is, his local branch of the SA.²³

Wherever the opportunity came from, the chance to move into the Brown House was not to be missed. A freshly renovated palace just off the Königsplatz in Munich, the Brown House was the headquarters of Nazi leadership. Hitler, Himmler, Hess, Goebbels, and top Nazi politician Hermann Göring all maintained offices in the Brown House. On special occasions, a quasi-shrine on the first floor displayed the *Blutfahne*, the blood-stained Swastika flag carried during the Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923—the failed Nazi coup attempt against the Weimar regime, which introduced many Germans to Hitler and became a galvanizing moment for the young party. Scholz had

arrived at the nerve center of Nazism. On a daily basis, he was face-to-face with the “true believers,” as historian Arnold Krammer called them. People “whose blind faith, considerable administrative skills, and public appeal helped make Hitler successful.” As for Röhm, his presence at the headquarters was “as good as never,” according to Ernst “Putzi” Hanfstaengel, a Hitler confidante and Nazi press secretary who also had an office in the Brown House.²⁴

On June 26, 1933, exactly one month after his removal from the SA, Scholz accepted an appointment as *Sturmbannführer* in the SS, a rank similar to that of an army major. Himmler was seeking educated men for leadership positions in the SS, and Scholz took the opportunity. Here was a signal of Scholz’s political acumen. At this point it was not yet clear whether the SA or SS, Röhm or Himmler and Hess, would win the day. Hitler and Röhm were devoted friends, and Röhm was doing all he could to maintain his influence. His SA was also popular with the public and vastly larger than the SS; whereas the SA had more than 3 million members in 1934, just two years earlier the SS numbered only 50,000. The SS also had not yet achieved its vaunted place within the wider Nazi organizational structure and was still proving itself as the locus of unconditional loyalty to Hitler. For Scholz, sticking with Röhm would have been a big risk, but casting his lot with Himmler and Hess was no sure thing, either. Scholz’s gamble would pay off.²⁵

It was in his role at the SS that Scholz became involved in espionage. Himmler assigned him to the Berlin-based *Verbindungsstab*, the Liaison Staff of the deputy führer, which was Hess’s personal office. “Among other duties,” the office “oversaw the activities of German agents abroad.” Scholz also was the SS reporter on the ideological devotion of German Foreign Office representatives, many of whom were career civil servants without Nazi connections and so were politically suspect. It was Scholz’s job to gauge the zeal of each German diplomat and suggest remedies if their dedication to Nazism was insufficient. Scholz thrived in the role, and less than six months after joining the *Verbindungsstab* was promoted to the rank of *Obersturmbannführer*, equivalent to a lieutenant colonel in the German army.²⁶

The work of the *Verbindungsstab* included domestic matters, such as pressing for the union of industry and the state. But many historians see the agency primarily as a spy hub. This function was created by Hess, who considered himself an espionage specialist. Whereas other offices, such as Reinhard Heydrich’s *Sicherheitsdienst*, handled domestic intelligence, foreign intelligence and surveillance of party members abroad were the *Verbindungsstab*’s

brief. British Intelligence described the Verbindungsstab simply as “the intelligence agency set up by Hess.” Curt Riess, one of the few German anti-Nazi journalists fluent in English, had a more revealing take. In 1941 he wrote, “The Liaison Staff had three basic principles: Everyone can spy; Everyone must spy; Everything can be found out.”²⁷

Herbert Scholz had not set out to be a spy, but life took him in unexpected directions.

A Family Affair

“She is a lovely looking creature,” William Castle, a former US ambassador to Japan, wrote of Liselotte von Schnitzler after meeting her at a resort hotel in Hot Springs, Virginia. Her uncle, Herbert von Dirksen, had been the German ambassador to Japan, and from 1938 to 1939 served Hitler as ambassador to Great Britain. Lilo, as she was known, possessed a keen mind, impressive language skills, and was “tall and blonde, with beautiful blue eyes.” In the late 1920s she spent two years in London studying English, and in the early 1930s she moved to Paris and spent two more years at the Sorbonne, receiving a diploma in “the study of French Civilization.” At Hot Springs in 1938, she conversed with Ambassador Castle about Hitler’s recent meeting with Mussolini. “She wanted me to know there was perfect harmony in every way,” Castle wrote of his chat with the beguiling Lilo. “She’s a pretty good politician.”²⁸

In addition to her intellect, beauty, and political skills, Lilo possessed stature in Berlin society. Her grandfather, Paul Wilhelm Schnitzler, was a member of the hereditary Prussian aristocracy and sat on the supervisory board of IG Farben, the multinational chemical concern that would become a key industrial ally of the Nazi war effort, manufacturing fuel, explosives, rubber, plastics, medicine, and the Zyklon B gas used to murder Jews and others during the Holocaust. In 1945 General Lucius Clay, the American deputy military governor of Germany, called Farben “the largest and most influential chemical company in the world.” Lilo’s father Georg followed in his father’s footsteps at Farben and by 1934 was a board member and its chief sales director, making him a man of consequence in prewar Germany.²⁹

Lilo was an early adopter of Nazism. By the early 1930s she was “almost a steady guest at the [Reich] Chancellery.” Hitler was not yet in power, or fully accepted by Berlin society, but, according to Curt Riess, Lilo “was philosoph-

ical about it.” For her, “it was perhaps just as well to be on the inside” in case the Nazis did take over. Journalist Bella Fromm claimed that both Lilo and her mother Lilly, a Berlin socialite, “asserted themselves as ardent Nazis.” The Nazis, of course, kept rising, and by 1933 Lilo had had her pick of the Berlin bachelor scene. *Washington Post* society reporter Evelyn Peyton Gordon even hinted at a brief flirtation with Hitler. While at the Frankfurt train station in 1933, Lilo suddenly looked up to see Hitler sitting in a car across the platform. The führer was staring at her intently with a “penetrating gaze,” which “made her heart nearly stop beating.” She wished to greet him, but “emotion choked me,” she recalled. Later, when they met again in Berlin, Hitler referred to Lilo as “lovely,” and she called him “wonderful—just too wonderful.” Riess suggested that Lilo was “a presence in Hitler’s house” and that this is where she met Herbert Scholz. They quickly fell in love and decided to marry.³⁰

As an SS officer, Scholz could not marry just anyone. In late 1931 Himmler had issued an “engagement and marriage order,” which sought to ensure that members of the SS created “hereditarily healthy” and “Nordic” families. The SS considered German women to be “the protectors of the most holy source of blood and life,” historian Lisa Pine has written. In practice this meant that Scholz and other SS men were obliged to have their fiancés vetted by Himmler’s office for racial suitability.³¹ The process was not a smooth one, as Himmler’s aides became obsessed by a potentially non-Aryan ancestor of Lilo’s, one Jean David of Boezinge, Belgium, who sounded like he could be a Jew. Much sleuthing only left more questions, but eventually a Belgian curate sent a notarized copy of the Roman Catholic baptismal certificate of Matheus Benedictus David, Jean David’s son. It was not definitive proof of Lilo’s Aryan bloodline, but it was enough to satisfy the administrative requirement, and on March 26, 1934, Himmler granted his permission. Scholz and his intended had no idea what was going on behind the scenes; all they knew was that their request to marry was approved. It was another moment of good fortune for Herbert Scholz, not least because the relationship with Lilo and her family would be integral to his future and may even have saved his life.³²

Scholz’s peril was a product of his SA background, and Röhm was trying to make a case of it. It took Röhm some time to discover that Himmler had poached Scholz, but when Röhm found out in June 1934, he exploded with rage. In a scathing letter to Himmler, Röhm complained bitterly that Scholz had been commandeered. Scholz, Röhm argued, had been “lifted” by the SS in a manner both “illegal and illegitimate” because the SA had not

approved the decision. Ever the devious administrator, Himmler replied that the move “was not . . . against the norms of the SA because Scholz was not officially listed as a member of the SA on the day of his promotion.”³³ This of course was a consequence of Scholz’s mysterious deregistration the previous year. Himmler had covered all his bases. On its face, the exchange is hardly extraordinary, but it does reveal something important: Röhm’s utter naïveté about what was coming next for him. At this very moment, Himmler and Göring were assembling a hit list of Nazis who had to be gotten rid of in order to firmly and finally establish the supremacy of the SS and its leadership within the party. High on the list was Röhm, who, oblivious to the threats against him, was busy warring with Himmler over the departmental status of Herbert Scholz. The question for Scholz was whether his new status would save him, or whether Himmler would turn on him as well.³⁴

In short order Himmler convinced Hitler that Röhm was plotting to overthrow him and take over the party. Historians doubt that there was any substance to the allegation; nevertheless, from June 30 to July 2, at Himmler’s direction, “the Schutzstaffel executed without trial an unknown number of Sturm Abteilung members.”³⁵ The SS also targeted three of the most recent chancellors of the Weimar Republic, resulting, respectively, in their arrest, exile, and murder. In total, thousands were arrested and hundreds executed. Concentration camps began to open to take in the detainees. Röhm was executed in dramatic fashion at Munich’s Stadelheim Prison on July 1. The purge became known as the Night of the Long Knives.

As for Scholz, Columnist Helen Lombard contended that he “barely escaped assassination.” According to Fromm, this was thanks to Himmler, who “seems to have saved Scholz’s skin from the general purge.” Riess, however, put the credit elsewhere, arguing that Scholz’s survival was only “due to Schnitzler’s influence”—Georg von Schnitzler, that is, Lilo’s father. All we know for certain is that Scholz and other SS men with former SA connections were sidelined for nearly a month. Scholz’s personnel file states that he “left Berlin in a hurry, hiding out in Bavaria, in the vicinity of [Lake] Chiemsee” from June 30 to July 27.³⁶

There is some reason to believe that it was the Schnitzler connection that saved Scholz. Most importantly, Schnitzler was a major donor to the Nazi cause. In February 1933, with Nazi coffers running dry just ahead of a crucial round of elections, Hitler asked a group of leading industrialists for donations. At the time, big business was flocking to the Nazis as a bulwark against

the Communists, who had made gains in the 1932 election. Schnitzler was one of the businessmen who stepped up. “While others hesitated, von Schnitzler made the first substantial contribution . . . without even bothering to consult his board,” columnist Sylvia Porter wrote, alleging that Schnitzler promised a million Reichsmarks on the spot. More recently Adam LeBor and Roger Boyes put the figure at 400,000 Reichsmarks. Whatever the exact sum, it was “the largest single contribution from German industry to the Nazi coffers.” Hitler owed debts to Schnitzler, which would tend to improve the standing of his future son-in-law. On July 27 Himmler ordered Röhm’s successor, Viktor Lutze, “to return [Scholz] to the Reichsführer-SS for further use.”³⁷

Another reason to believe that Scholz received special treatment is that Rolf Reiner, a friend and former SA member who defected to the SS with Scholz, seems to have met with a very different fate. Unlike Scholz, Reiner was arrested and imprisoned. Journalist Martha Dodd insisted that Reiner was eventually released from prison and “came out pale, with his hair shorn, having missed execution by the skin of his teeth.” Stephen H. Roberts disagreed, claiming that Reiner was executed after an extrajudicial hearing. What we do know is that Reiner’s name is conspicuously absent from an August 22 memo confirming the final transfer of Scholz and two other former SA members back to SS ranks.³⁸ Scholz certainly was the luckier. This latest round of good fortune behind him, he married Lilo on September 22, 1934.

The day of the wedding coincided two events that testify to the Nazi effort to subordinate Christianity to the state. In the Berlin Sportpalast, Dr. Ludwig Mueller, of the Nazi Protestant German Christians, was consecrated *Reichsbishop* in a ceremony laden with “hundreds of swastika flags.” The *New York Times* reported, “There was literally nothing in the hall to remind an observer that they were in a Christian assembly.” Christians in brown Storm Troop uniforms shouted, “Heil!” and again ‘Heil!’ and on all sides arms were raised in the Hitler salute.”³⁹

If some Protestants were moving closer to Hitler, Roman Catholics were finding only distance. Across town, at the Reich’s Chancellery, diplomatic negotiations between Hitler’s government and the Holy See collapsed. Vatican Secretary of State Eugenio Pacelli was infuriated by Hitler’s refusal to abide by the 1933 German-Vatican Concordat, which guaranteed the rights of the Catholic Church in Germany, in exchange for political quiescence to the Nazi state. But the Germans violated the agreement routinely, and Cardinal Pacelli threatened a papal denunciation of Hitler’s tactics. By 1934 Pacelli

considered Nazi persecution of Catholics to be “of greater harshness and arbitrariness” than Bismarck’s Kulturkampf.⁴⁰

Yet the Christian Front never seemed concerned that the Nazis were bridling Christianity and undermining Catholic institutions, thus Moran could embrace the likes of Scholz when the chance came. Within a few months of his wedding, Scholz was posted to the United States, a respite from the backstabbing of Berlin and Munich and a means to escape scrutiny after the Night of the Long Knives, which quickly was becoming known as the Röhm Putsch. For Moran, inculcated as he was in German nationalism and the German language, Scholz was a gift from the heavens—no matter that the Nazis were, in their own way, cleansing Christianity from their realm as effectively as the Soviets or the Popular Front.



Father Coughlin, speaking in Boston at the former Braves Field in 1936.

Boston Herald-Traveler Photo Morgue, Boston Public Library



Five members of the Christian Front pose with their rifles during target-shooting practice in Narrowsburg, New York, fall 1939. Macklin Boettger (second from left) and John Viebrock (second from right) were two of the group's top organizers and leaders of its paramilitary wing. Bettmann/Getty Images



A cache of weapons, ammunition, and homemade bombs found by the FBI in the Brooklyn home of Christian Front member John Viebrock. Bettmann/Getty Images



John Cassidy (left) and William Bishop, two key members of the alleged Christian Front plot to overthrow the US government, on January 15, 1940, after their arrests. *New York Post Archives / Getty Images*



Members of the Christian Front on trial in New York, April 3, 1940. Lawyer Leo Healy, holding a sheet of paper, poses with defendants. *Shutterstock*



Francis Moran. New England director of the Christian Front, on January 16, 1940, the day after the New York Christian Front arrests were reported in the press. *Boston Herald-Traveler* Photo Morgue, Boston Public Library



Father Charles Coughlin shakes hands with Massachusetts Governor **James Michael Curley** at the State House, Boston, on August 13, 1935. *Boston Herald-Traveler* Photo Morgue, Boston Public Library



Father Coughlin (right) receives a headdress, making him chief of the Tea Party group of Massachusetts, August 17, 1936. *Boston Herald-Traveler* Photo Morgue, Boston Public Library



The German Consulate in Boston at 39 Chestnut Street, where Christian Front leader Francis Moran secretly met with Consul Herbert W. Scholz, an SS officer and Nazi spy, in July 1940. Courtesy of Revolutionary Spaces



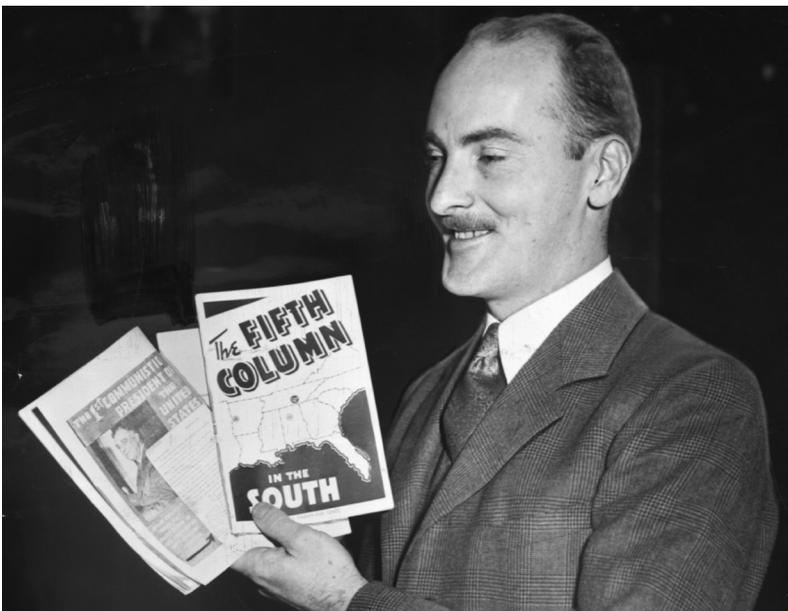
Ernst Röhm, cofounder with Adolf Hitler of the militia Sturmabteilung (Storm Battalion), was a mentor to Herbert Scholz, the German consul who provided direction to the Christian Front in Boston. ullstein bild Dtl. /Getty Images



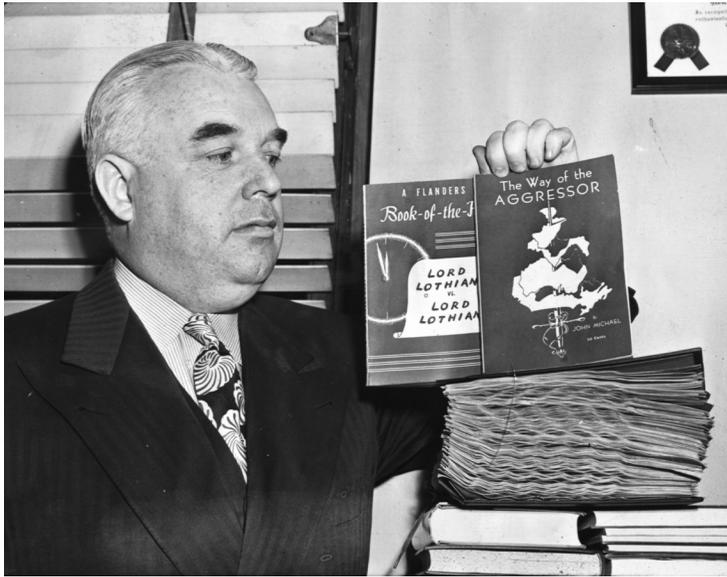
Herbert Scholz with his American girlfriend Ruth Dwight McVitty at Zugspitze, Germany's highest peak, in 1930. McVitty was heir to the Arm & Hammer baking soda fortune. Courtesy of Antony Taquey



Herbert Scholz, reading the news of President Roosevelt's order closing all German consulates on June 16, 1941. Times Wide World/Redux



Boston Christian Front leader Francis Moran shows off the group's pamphlets. In January 1942 police seized these and other materials from Hibernian Hall in Roxbury. *Boston Herald-Traveler* Photo Morgue, Boston Public Library



Boston Police Commissioner Joseph Timilty displays two books distributed by the Christian Front, which were declared Nazi propoganda and banned from sale in the city on January 5, 1942.

Boston Herald-Traveler Photo Morgue, Boston Public Library



Father Edward Lodge Curran, president of the International Catholic Truth Society of Brooklyn and principal theologian of the Christian Front. Curran, who was also a lawyer, developed the defense strategy used by the New York frontiers at their 1940 trial and worked frequently with the front's Boston unit during the group's public, underground, and postwar phases. Irving Haberman/IH Images/ Getty Images