Central European History 41 (2008), 673–681.
Copyright © Conference Group for Central European History of the American Historical Association
doi:10.1017/S0008938908000885 Printed in the USA

SCHOLARLY NOTE

The Myth of Chancellor von Schleicher's *Querfront* Strategy

Henry Ashby Turner, Jr.

In the multitudinous accounts of Adolf Hitler's rise to power, one interpretation dominates with regard to the political strategy of his predecessor as Reich chancellor, General Kurt von Schleicher. Beginning with the pioneering books of the journalist Konrad Heiden in the 1930s and continuing through countless versions down to the most recent scholarly works, Schleicher has, with rare exceptions, been depicted as having sought to thwart Hitler by bringing behind his own cabinet a political bloc extending from a left wing split away from the Nazi Party to trade union elements of the republican Social Democratic Party.[1] Sometimes described as a *Gewerkschaftsachse*, this putative goal on the part of Schleicher has now usually come to be referred to as his *Querfront* strategy.[2] Long regarded by most historians as axiomatic, that version

I am indebted to Prof. William L. Patch for valuable suggestions regarding the source materials used here.

[1]A list of publications by professional historians that rely on the Querfront myth would require far more space than is available here. Its pervasiveness may, however, be gauged by its invocation in the biographical entries on Schleicher in such reference works as the *Dictionary of German Biography* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2001ff.); Ernst Klee, ed., *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003); Hermann Weiss, ed., *Biographisches Lexikon zum Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1998); *Ploetz Lexikon der Deutschen Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Komet MA-Service und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999); *Deutsche Biographische Encyklopädia* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1998); and Michael Fröhlich, ed., *Die Weimarer Republik. Portrait einer Epoche in Biographien* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2002), as well as in both the English and German versions of the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*.

[2]There is no record of Schleicher's having used either of these terms. Apparently a derivative of *Querverbindungen*, Querfront seems to have first been applied to the politically heterogeneous group that formed during 1932 around Günter Gereke, an advocate of vigorous governmental job-creation measures who became *Reichskommissar für Arbeitsbeschaffung* in Schleicher's cabinet; see his memoir, *Ich war königlich-preussischer Landrat (*East Berlin: Union-Verlag, 1970), 195. The term was subsequently popularized by journalists, among them the anti-democratic, pro-Schleicher editor Hans Zehrer; see his article, "Die Querfront," *Tägliche Rundschau*, Feb. 12, 1933; also Harry Schulze-Wilde's 1955 interview of Zehrer: Archiv, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ZS 1723. Despite its chimerical origins, Querfront has now become a generic political concept, invoked to characterize such convergences of opposites as the recent collaboration of German extremists of left and right in agitation against globalization; see Michael Schlieben, "Der Traum von der Querfront," *Zeit Online*, June 30, 2007.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the chancellor's intentions has seldom been subjected to critical analysis. It is, however, fundamentally erroneous and serves to obscure his actually very different aims.

The most conspicuously implausible aspect of Querfront theories is the contention that at the time of his appointment as chancellor in early December 1932 Schleicher believed he could gain parliamentary backing from the ranks of the democratic left. That proposition rests on the assumption that the chancellor's overtures to Germany's largest trade-union movement, the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (ADGB), were motivated by hope on his part of winning Reichstag votes from the Social Democratic Party. Some of the leaders of the ADGB were indeed impressed by Schleicher's pledges to combat mass unemployment by launching an extensive program of job creation. Some were even inclined to a kind of social truce with a Schleicher cabinet.[3] But contrary to Querfront theories, conciliatory attitudes on the part of the union leaders could not be translated into parliamentary support by the chancellor.

Although the ADGB was closely allied with the Social Democratic Party, the unions had no control over its policies. Some of the leaders of the SPD regarded Schleicher as a lesser evil when compared to his predecessor, Franz von Papen, but they remained resolutely oppositional. They bitterly remembered his involvement, as defense minister, in the staggering blow dealt their party months earlier by the Papen cabinet's deposition of the Prussian state government, their bastion throughout the republican period. They also knew that any political concessions the SPD made to Schleicher would predictably result in the loss of still more voters to the burgeoning Communist party. They therefore looked with disapproval upon the union leaders' flirtations with the chancellor. The most Schleicher could hope for by cultivating the ADGB was to rule out the danger of working-class protest demonstrations or a general strike, possibilities that had come to seem threateningly real as a result of the policies of the Papen cabinet. But as for the Social Democrats in the Reichstag, Schleicher told the French ambassador a few days before his appointment as chancellor that he was well aware that they would have no choice except to combat him if he formed a cabinet.[4]

The contention that as part of a Querfront strategy Schleicher sought to split off a left wing of the Nazi party and gain its support for his cabinet is based on misinterpretations of the chancellor's unsuccessful courtship of a prominent

[3]See the documents in Peter Jahn and Detlev Brunner, eds., *Die Gewerkschaften in der Endphase der Republik* (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1988), 770–74 and 814–18.

[4]François-Poncet to Herriot, Nov. 29, in *Commission de publication des documents relatifs aux origins de la guerre 1939–1945. Documents Diplomatiques Français 1932–1939* (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1963–86), Série 1, tome 2, 89.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press

figure in that party, Gregor Strasser.[5] Although Strasser had attracted favorable attention in some labor circles during 1932 by advocating governmental measures to provide work for Germany's millions of unemployed, it is highly questionable whether he belonged to what might qualify as a Nazi left wing. He did, however, object to Hitler's all-or-nothing stance and favored settling for a share of power for the party by participation in a cabinet headed by someone other than the Nazi leader. That stance made Strasser politically attractive for Schleicher, who held out to him the prospect of high governmental posts and introduced him to President von Hindenburg. This led some observers to assume at the time that the chancellor was seeking to win over Strasser in order to split the NSDAP, among them Joseph Goebbels, who feared that Strasser would betray the party by siding with Schleicher.[6] That assumption became a staple in early publications about Hitler's rise and would, to varying degrees, be echoed in the memoirs of prominent political figures. But since none of those memoirists can be regarded as confidantes of the secretive Schleicher, their later views are of dubious value for an assessment of his strategy.[7]

The evidentiary basis for interpreting Schleicher's cultivation of Strasser as an effort to split the NSDAP is weak and marked by contradictions. Support for that view has been seen in the memoir published twenty years later by Franz von

[5]That misinterpretation has already been effectively discredited in what remains the best analysis of Schleicher's career during the republic: Peter Hayes, "'A Question Mark with Epaulettes?' Kurt von Schleicher and Weimar Politics," *Journal of Modern History* 52 (1980): 55f. and 58.

[6]Diary entries of Dec. 29, 1932, and Jan. 14, 1933, in *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, ed. Elke Fröhlich, Teil 1, Band 2 : 3 (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2006), 92, 105.

[7]Otto Braun, the deposed SPD premier of Prussia, reported in his memoir that Schleicher told him soon after his appointment as chancellor that he was planning to use Strasser to split the NSDAP: Otto Braun, *Von Weimar zu Hitler* (New York: Europa Verlag, 1940), 431f. It seems doubtful, however, that whereas Schleicher disclosed no such plan to his cabinet, he would have confided it to a leader of a party that was irreconcilably opposed to him. Lutz Graf Schwerin von Krosigk, Schleicher's finance minister, gave conflicting versions of the chancellor's intentions regarding the NSDAP in his three memoirs. Although he attended cabinet meetings at which the chancellor spoke of his hopes for parliamentary support from the entire Nazi Reichstag delegation (see notes 14 and 16, below), Schwerin von Krosigk claimed in his *Es geschah in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag, 1951), 117f., that Schleicher wanted to split the party. In his *Staatsbankrott. Die Geschichte der Finanzpolitik des Deutschen Reiches von 1920 bis 1945* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1974), 156, he wrote that the chancellor pursued the "double goal" of bringing the Nazis to accept a share of responsibility and splitting their party. But in his *Memoiren* (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1977), 154f., he rejected the view that Schleicher sought to split the NSDAP. Hjalmar Schacht reported in his memoir, *76 Jahre meines Lebens* (Bad Wörishofen: Kindler und Schiermeyer, 1953), 374, that Schleicher had, as chancellor, confided to him that he placed his "final hope" on a split in the Nazi Party. Doubt is, however, cast on the accuracy of that statement by Schacht's claim in the same paragraph that Schleicher had offered to make him chancellor. It is unlikely that Schleicher would have confided in Schacht, who was known to be in league with Hitler and whom Schleicher suspected of having instigated Papen's covert meeting with the Nazi leader in Cologne on Jan. 4, 1933; see the report by Max Reiner of the *Vossische Zeitung* on his conversation with Schleicher on Jan. 10, 1933: Schäffer Papers, Archiv, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ED 93, Bd. 33.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Papen, who wrote that at a meeting he and Schleicher had with Hindenburg on the evening of December 1, 1932, the general had proposed to bring about such a split if the president would appoint him to replace Papen as chancellor.[8] There is, however, no mention of such a proposal in the *Aktennotiz* on that same meeting written by Hindenburg's State Secretary, Otto Meissner, who was also present that evening.[9] Nor did Schleicher express an intent to split the NSDAP when he speculated, during a conversation with the French ambassador on the evening of November 28, about possible difficulties for the Nazis if, without Hitler's permission, Gregor Strasser accepted his offer to serve as his minister of the interior should he become chancellor.[10] Papen's memoir version is, moreover, rendered implausible for reasons set forth above by his claim that Schleicher proposed at the December 1 meeting to attain a parliamentary majority that would include not only some sixty Nazi followers of Strasser but also the Reichstag deputies of the Social Democratic Party.

Despite the dubious aspects of Papen's version of the meeting of December 1, it stands confirmed with regard to Schleicher's estimate of Strasser's Nazi followers at sixty, for on the evening of January 13, 1933, in the course of a dinner with a group of journalists, Schleicher himself used that same number

[8]Franz von Papen, *Der Wahrheit eine Gasse* (Munich: P. List, 1952), 244. In his ground-breaking study, Thilo Vogelsang concluded that Papen's claim that Schleicher had laid out a plan to split the NSDAP at the meeting was dubious. See his *Reichswehr, Staat und NSDAP. Beiträge zur deutschen Geschichte 1930–1932* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1962), 332 and 340, note 1617. In a written statement of Nov. 12, 1957, Papen contested the authenticity of Meissner's Aktennotiz of Dec. 2, 1932, on the meeting on the evening of Dec. 1 with Hindenburg and professed having no memory of the State Secretary's presence at that meeting. See Papen's statement in Thilo Vogelsang, ed., "Zur Politik Schleichers gegenber der NSDAP 1932," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 6 (1958): 112.

[9]See Meissners Aktennotiz of Dec. 2 in Vogelsang, ed., "Zur Politik Schleichers," 105–07. Although Meissner attended the cabinet meeting of Dec. 7 at which Schleicher held out the prospect of support from a parliamentary majority that would include the entire Nazi Reichstag delegation (see note 14, below), he told a German Nationalist politician nine days later that Schleicher "rechne auf Spaltung der Nazi": *Die Deutschnationalen und die Zerstörung der Weimarer Republik. Aus dem Tagebuch von Reinhold Quaatz 1928–1933*, ed. Hermann Weiss and Paul Hoser (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1989), 218. In his post-war memoir, Meissner—who would conspire with Papen and Hitler against Schleicher in January 1933—wrote that the chancellor at first sought to use Strasser's influence to bring Hitler to allow Strasser and other moderate Nazis to join the Schleicher cabinet, but that after Hitler blocked that plan, the chancellor resolved to split the NSDAP: Otto Meissner, *Staatssekretär unter Ebert, Hindenburg, Hitler* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1950), 251f.

[10]In his dispatch to Paris of the next day (see note 4, above), the ambassador quoted Schleicher as having said, "Strasser will want Hitler's authorization. But if Hitler doesn't give it, he may go ahead anyway, and that could cause new unrest in the Nazi ranks that could have great importance for the future" ("Strasser voudra recevoir l'autorisation d'Hitler. Mais si Hitler ne la lui donne pas, il est possible qu'il passe outre; et cela jetterait dans les rangs des nazis un trouble nouveau, qui aurait, pour l'avenir, une grande portée"). François-Poncet to Herriot, Nov. 29, 1932.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in response to a question about Strasser.[11] On the latter occasion, he made no mention of a possible split in the NSDAP, however. Had he done so, the assembled journalists would have recognized it as implausible, for even if sixty Nazi deputies were to join Strasser in breaking with Hitler to support the Schleicher cabinet, the opposition of the remaining 136 Nazi deputies would, in combination with the 121 Social Democrats and 100 Communists, have sufficed to provide a sizeable majority for adoption of a no-confidence measure in a Reichstag of 584 deputies.

Other contemporaneously recorded statements by Schleicher reveal that he regarded it as impossible to split the NSDAP and placed his hopes instead on winning its political support. In early November 1932 he told the Papen cabinet that only Hitler could decide whether the NSDAP would support a government and that no other Nazi would break with him on that question.[12] Later that month, after meeting with Hitler, he reported to Papen's cabinet that the Nazi leader had not only refused to enter a cabinet headed by Schleicher or to allow any member of his party to do so but had also announced his opposition to such a cabinet.[13] In early December Schleicher nevertheless held out to his own cabinet the prospect of a cooperative Reichstag majority consisting of the Catholic Center Party, the small middle parties, and the NSDAP, a formula that was arithmetically feasible only if it included the putative sixty followers of Strasser.[14] In mid-December the chancellor explained to a gathering of army officers that his goal was "cooperation by the Nazis under Strasser with the Messiah's blessing" of Hitler.[15] A month later, he told the members of his cabinet that he was still hopeful of adding Strasser to their ranks even though the latter lacked many followers and did not want to break with the NSDAP. The backing of a parliamentary majority, the chancellor added on that occasion, would be

[11]See the anonymous report written immediately afterward by one of the journalists present at the dinner, in the Papen papers located in the Tsentralnyi Gosudartsvennyi Arkhiv, Moscow, folder 5; the full text appears as an appendix in my *Hitlers Weg zur Macht. Der Januar 1933* (Munich: Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 1996), 247–54. Afterward, the journalists agreed among themselves that Schleicher's estimate of Strasser's followers was much too high.

[12]See the cabinet minutes of Nov. 11, 1932, in Karl-Heinz Minuth, ed., *Akten der Reichskanzlei. Weimarer Republik. Kabinett von Papen* (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt Verlag, 1989), vol. 2, 903.

[13]Minutes of Nov. 25, ibid., vol 2, 1013.

[14]At the meeting of Dec. 7, Schleicher said that even if the German Nationals withheld their support from the cabinet, a majority in favor of toleration could be attained with the backing of the Center Party (70 seats), the Bavarian People's Party (20 seats), the so-called *Technische Arbeitsgemeinschaft* of smaller parties (20 seats), and the NSDAP (196 seats). Such an alignment would have yielded a majority of 306 in the Reichstag of 584. See Anton Golecki, ed., *Akten der Reichskanzlei, Weimarer Republik. Das Kabinett von Schleicher 1932/33* (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt Verlag, 1986), 22–24.

[15]Quoted in handwritten notes taken by Gen. Lt. Liebmann at meetings of Schleicher with senior army officers at the Reichswehrministerium, Dec. 13–15, 1932. See the text in Thilo Vogelsang, ed., "Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr 1930–1933," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 2 (1954): 428.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press

possible only with Hitler's support.[16] As these and other statements by Schleicher leave little doubt, in pursuing Strasser he was seeking to gain the support not of a left wing of the Nazi party but of its entire Reichstag delegation, either in the form of passive toleration by abstention from no-confidence votes or active participation within his cabinet. Moreover, he was well aware that this would be possible only with Hitler's consent.

Still other statements by Schleicher reveal that he viewed the NSDAP in a positive light and had no intention of weakening it. Apparently impervious to the Nazis' fanaticism and ruthlessness, he looked with favor on their ardent patriotism and viewed their 400,000-man paramilitary auxiliary, the SA, as an asset for his plans to rearm Germany as soon as possible. In a letter of March 1932 to his predecessor as defense minister, he described the Nazis as "troublesome types" but a useful counterweight to the SPD. "If they were not there," he added, "one would have to invent them."[17] One of his aides in the defense ministry later recalled that the general regarded the Nazi movement as "an essentially healthy reaction of the *Volkskörper*" and "the only party that could attract voters away from the radical left and had already done so." That same associate also recalled that Schleicher, who personally met with Hitler on several occasions during 1932, had described him as "an interesting man with unusual rhetorical gifts" who "gets easily carried away with his own plans."[18]

In a statement dated one year to the day after his replacement by Hitler that was originally intended for publication in the press, Schleicher asserted that he had "consistently and persistently sought to include the Nazis in the government" since the autumn of 1930.[19] In view of the political circumstances under which that statement was written in January 1934, it might seem self-servingly suspect. But although Schleicher may have antedated his active interventions on behalf of the NSDAP, his actions from the spring of 1932 on bear out his claim. As he correctly pointed out in that same statement, he had been instrumental in bringing about the deal whereby the ban on the Nazi stormtroopers was lifted and, in return for Hitler's empty promise to withhold his opposition to the new Papen cabinet, his demand for a national election in July was granted. Again correctly, Schleicher pointed out in his statement of 1934 that after the resulting electoral gains by the NSDAP he had favored Hitler's appointment as chancellor until Hindenburg ruled that out. In mid-December 1932, after his own appointment as chancellor, he told a gathering

[16]Golecki, ed., *Akten der Reichskanzlei, Weimarer Republik. Das Kabinett von Schleicher*, minutes of Jan. 16, 1933, 11:15 a.m., 230–35.

[17]Schleicher to Wilhelm Groener, Mar. 25, 1932, in Gordon A. Craig, ed., "Briefe Schleichers an Groener," *Die Welt als Geschichte* 11 (1951): 130.

[18]See the manuscript of 1946 by Hans-Henning von Holtzendorff, "Die Politik des Generals von Schleicher gegenüber der NSDAP 1930–33," Archiv, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ZS/A 36/1.

[19]Vogelsang, ed., "Zur Politik Schleichers gegenüber der NSDAP 1932," 89f. The statement was in the form of a letter to the editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, but it was apparently never sent.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of army officers that destruction of the NSDAP was not in the interest of the state.[20] A week later he informed the British ambassador that "he would regret the collapse of the Hitler movement" since it would entail "positive dangers," including an exodus of disappointed Nazis to the Communist ranks. What was necessary, he explained, was "to harness the movement in service to the state."[21]

If Schleicher was not seeking to split the NSDAP in order to align a political Querfront behind his cabinet, what did he actually want? Reliable evidence indicates that he sought to tame the Nazis by co-opting them. One of his closest military aides later wrote that his goal had been to "integrate the movement into the Reich government with the double goal of making use of its power of national attraction (*nationale Anziehungskraft*) and gradually silencing its demagogy through shared responsibility for the work of governing (*Staatsarbeit*)."[22] Even after Strasser's resignation from his party posts in December 1932 in the face of Hitler's rejection of Nazi participation in the Schleicher cabinet, the chancellor continued to place his hopes on making the NSDAP a subordinate partner that would accord either active or passive support to his cabinet. An article planted in the press in mid-December, apparently by Schleicher's closest aide, amounted to an invitation for such an arrangement. Denying that the chancellor sought to destroy the NSDAP, the article stated that a renewal of the Reich could be achieved only if "the greatest national freedom party" entered into alliance with "those forces which have always formed the core of the Prussian-German state"—an obvious reference to the military—and accepted the latter's leadership.[23] In mid-January 1933 Schleicher told a journalist that his paramount aim was to bring the Nazis to abandon their "messianic beliefs" and accept integration into "a new extra-parliamentary front in support of an authoritarian regime."[24]

In pursuit of his goal of harnessing the Nazis, Schleicher resorted in January 1933 to the tactic of seeking to bluff Hitler into accepting his terms by holding

[20]Vogelsang, ed., "Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr," 428.

[21]Rumbold to Simon, Dec. 21, 1932, in Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, 11 vols. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1947–1970), 2nd series, vol. 4, 383–86.

[22]Eugen Ott, "Ein Bild des Generals Kurt von Schleicher," *Politische Studien* 10 (1959): 367. In his memoir, Günter Gereke, Reichskommissar für Arbeitsbeschaffung in Schleicher's cabinet, attributed a "Zähmungskonzeption" to the chancellor: Gereke, *Ich war königlich-preussischer Landrat*, 213.

[23]A clipping of this article, which was published in the *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* on Dec. 14, 1932, is in the files of the Reichskanzlei, R43 I/1504, Bundesarchiv Berlin. Its text is identical to a seven-page typescript entitled "Was will Schleicher?" in the papers of Hans Schäffer of the Ullstein Verlag, who declined to publish it but wrote on it that Schleicher's State Secretary, Erwin Planck, had given it to him but that he, Schäffer, suspected that the chancellor had written it himself: Archiv, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ED 93, vol. 33.

[24]Georg Dertinger, "Informationsbericht vom 14. Januar 1933," Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Sammlung Brammer, ZSg 101/26, 41.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press

out the threat of a Reichstag dissolution and another national election that would add to the growing string of Nazi losses.[25] Unwilling to assume the role of a supplicant by inviting Hitler to meet with him, the chancellor repeatedly let his readiness to receive him be known. But although Schleicher had by mid-January convinced himself that Hitler did not really want power, the Nazi leader's nerves proved the stronger, and he frustrated the chancellor by maintaining his distance. Buttressed by Nazi electoral gains in the dwarf state of Lippe in mid-January, Hitler broke definitively with Strasser and put an end to Schleicher's hopes of using the latter to win the backing of the NSDAP. Faced with a certain vote of no confidence when the Reichstag reconvened and unwilling to risk an election in which no major party would stand behind his cabinet, Schleicher finally abandoned hope of co-opting the Nazis. Blundering into the trap being laid for him by his embittered erstwhile protégé Franz von Papen, he asked President von Hindenburg to dissolve the Reichstag and violate the constitution by not scheduling a new election within the constitutionally mandated sixty days. Forced to resign the chancellorship when the president rejected his request, he clung to the vain hope of retaining control of the army as defense minister and recommended that the president appoint Hitler as his successor if the Nazi leader could muster a Reichstag majority.

This assessment of Schleicher's role in the developments that brought Hitler to power differs sharply from those found in the many versions based on the non-existent Querfront project. That myth has accorded him the status of a failed but well-intentioned chancellor who strove in vain to keep power beyond Hitler's grasp—as virtually an anticipatory *Widerstandskämpfer*. Stripped of that myth, he emerges as a political incompetent who sought in vain to tame the NSDAP by offering it a subordinate role in an authoritarian regime he himself intended to head, an arrangement that would unavoidably have entailed extensive policy concessions to Nazi ideology.[26] In his vain pursuit of that goal, Schleicher maneuvered himself into a political *Sackgasse* that resulted in his fall

[25]I have dealt with the following in greater detail in my *Hitler's Thirty Days to Power* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996), 79ff.

[26]The claim that Schleicher's goal in Jan. 1933 was a "presidential, constitutional democracy" is unconvincing: Wolfram Pyta, "Konstitutionelle Demokratie statt monarchischer Restauration," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 47 (1999): 417–41. The documents presented there in support of that claim contain no evidence that Schleicher ever read, much less endorsed them. The military aide on whom he relied in constitutional matters was, to be sure, in contact with the authors of those documents. But when presented with a defense ministry memorandum that included, as one of several options, the strategy proposed in those documents—continuation of his cabinet in office despite a no-confidence vote by a Reichstag majority incapable of uniting to form a new cabinet—the chancellor rejected it: Golecki, ed., *Akten der Reichskanzlei, Weimarer Republik. Das Kabinett von Schleicher*, 241–243. As Schleicher correctly pointed out to a group of journalists in mid-January, that course would enable a divided but hostile Reichstag majority to cripple the cabinet's economic policies by joining together to rescind the presidential emergency decrees on which it would be necessary to rely to govern; see the report on his dinner with journalists on Jan. 13, 1933, cited in note 11 above.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and cleared the way for the success of Papen's intrigues on behalf of Hitler's appointment as his successor. Taken together with his earlier part in the transfer of power from the parliament to the presidency and his complicity in the destruction of the Prussian anchor of Weimar democracy, Schleicher's pursuit as chancellor of a partnership with the Nazis entitles him to a place high on the list of *Totengräber* of the republic.

By casting Schleicher in a benign, if ineffectual, anti-Hitler role, Querfront theories distort the historical record in numerous ways. Most damagingly for an understanding of the demise of the Weimar Republic, they divert attention from the sources of Schleicher's political prominence. His rise to the top of the German government was made possible only by the failure, after the revolution of 1918, to replace the old Prussian-German army with a republican defense force and the election, seven years later, of former Field Marshall von Hindenburg as president. The resulting resurgence of military influence at the top levels of politics—exercised in large measure behind the scenes by Schleicher himself—played a major role in undermining Germany's first attempt at democracy and reached its disastrous denouement during his ill-fated chancellorship.

As for the Querfront myth itself, its persistence, despite abundant contrary evidence, bears testimony to the authoritativeness bestowed by one of the most potent determinants of how the past is perceived, even by professional historians: sustained repetition.

YALE UNIVERSITY

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938908000885 Published online by Cambridge University Press