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Marie Adelheid Mathilde Karoline Elise Alexe Auguste Albertine, Prinzessin zur Lippe-Biesterfeld (1895-1993), was born into a noble family whose roots can be traced to the twelfth century. On 19 May 1920 she was married to a descendant of a no less distinguished noble house, Heinrich XXXII (known as “Heino”), Prinz Reuß zu Köstritz, seventeen years her senior. Both the Reuß and the zur Lippe dynasties were connected with various royal houses in Europe, including those of Great Britain and the Netherlands. The marriage lasted less than a year, for the couple divorced on 18 February 1921. Not quite two months later, on 12 April 1921, the Princess was remarried in Bremen – to her former husband’s youngest brother, Heinrich XXXV (known as “Enrico”), Prinz Reuß zu Köstritz. In order for this second marriage to go forward Enrico had had, in turn, on 4 March 1921, to divorce his wife of ten years. A son Heinrich V (1921-1980), also named Heinrich like all the Reuß male children, was born to the newly wed couple six weeks later and named and numbered according to family tradition. The genealogies do not specify which of the brothers was the father. Within two years the Princess and her second husband had also divorced, and in 1927, in a clear act of defiance signaling her break with traditional aristocratic norms and, as we shall see, her embrace of the Revolutionary Right’s idea of a “new nobility,” the Princess took as her third husband a commoner named Hanno Konopath (originally Konopacki), a government official, who was a friend of R. Walther Darré – the future National Socialist Agriculture Minister and the advocate of a “Neuer Adel” or new nobility recruited from the volk – and who was soon to be a close
associate of Goebbels in the running of the Nazi propaganda machine. That marriage, during which the Princess signed herself simply Marie Adelheid Konopath, again ended in divorce, in 1936. The Princess remained active in extreme right-wing politics and literature, however, until her death in 1993, two years short of her hundredth birthday.

By the year 1921, when her long poem or collection of poems entitled *Gott in mir* was published, the threat of revolution in Germany had subsided, the main centers of insurrection – Berlin, Munich, and the Ruhr – having been brought to heel and the short-lived revolutionary regimes in the first two definitively crushed. Though all the German princes had abdicated along with the Kaiser in 1918 and some had even fled their residences, many princely houses appear to have successfully secured their fortunes. Even so, it was still, in 1921, a tumultuous time in Germany, marked by mass strikes and continued worker unrest. In addition, 1921 was the year of the Princess’s divorce, her remarriage to her erstwhile brother-in-law, and the birth of her child. There is thus good reason to suppose that the real historical experience of the author is echoed in the poetic voice of *Gott in mir*: that of a headstrong, fiercely independent woman, scornful of convention and of the class-determined concerns of most of the people in her milieu; inspired by nebulous but distinctly unorthodox religious ideas; filled with an ardent desire for change and heroic self-sacrifice in the name of vaguely defined high ideals, yet not without a degree of condescending, aristocratic compassion for the weak; not insensitive to the alternating pleas and threats of her family, but determined to live her life according to her own lights. Twenty years later, as we shall see, in the midst of the Second World War, the Princess created in the novel *Die Overbroocks* (1942) a heroine whose values and outlook are strikingly consistent with those of the speaker in the long poem of 1921. The chief difference between the earlier work and the later one lies in the fact that in 1942, after two tumultuous decades of political engagement and historical action, it was possible to recast the values and worldview, which in 1921 could only be expressed in vague, pseudo-philosophical and religious outpourings, in the form of a narrative with unmistakable historical references. Lyrical and rhapsodic language and form gave way to the language and form of the novel – even though, as will be seen later, the novel itself is still more poetic than strictly realist. After 1945, in the face of the historical collapse of the political project with which she had been wholeheartedly associated, the Princess reverted to the poetic mode of her first published work.
In hindsight, as was argued in Part I, the characteristic features of an extreme right-wing ideology are easily detectable in *Gott in mir*, and it seems likely that the Princess was either already moving in right-wing circles at the time of its composition or on the verge of doing so. She was by no means the only aristocratic figure to be found in such circles. Dismayed by the failure of their class to respond with conviction and courage to the turmoil that precipitated and followed the end of the Wilhelminian Empire and lacking confidence in the ability of traditional conservative forces to intervene effectively in the political arena, many younger members of the old princely families were drawn – along with the ruined and impoverished petty aristocracy – to radical right-wing ideologies and populist political movements in the 1920s and 1930s. Among the socially prominent early supporters of the NSDAP (the National Socialist German Workers’ Party) were two sons of ex-Kaiser Wilhelm II – Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm and his younger brother, the Kaiser’s fourth son, August Wilhelm. “Auwi,” as the latter was known familiarly, was later honored for his services to the Nazi cause by being made a *Standartenführer* (colonel) in the SA (*Sturmabteilung* [stormtroopers section], or paramilitary wing of the Party). Carl Eduard, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, born in England and educated at Eton, a grandson of Queen Victoria and first cousin of King George V, rose to the rank of *Obergruppenführer* (general) in the SA, conspicuously attending George V’s funeral in 1936 in his stormtrooper uniform. Prince Bernhard zur Lippe-Biesterfeld, later Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, whose grandfather was a brother of Marie Adelheid’s grandfather, joined the NSDAP in the early 1930s and became a member of the SA and the *Reiter-SS*.

Closer to home, two members of the Princess’s immediate family were also active on the extreme Right, one on the Reuß and one on the zur Lippe side. Her older brother, Friedrich Wilhelm, Prinz zur Lippe-Biesterfeld (1890-1938), made a reputation for himself in radical right-wing circles as the author of *Vom Rassenstil zur Staatsgestalt: Rasse und Politik* [From Racial Style to State Structure: Race and Politics] (1928). He was also a friend of Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß, a well-known specialist in questions of race and so-called “Völkerpsychologie,” whose *Die nordische Seele* [The Nordic Soul] (1923; eight editions by 1940) and *Rasse und Seele* [Race and Soul] (1926; 18 editions by 1943) were among the most influential literary products of the so-called *Nordic Movement*, in which the Princess was also soon involved. An exact contemporary of the Princess on the Reuß side, from the zu
Schleiz branch of the family, Erbprinz (Hereditary Prince) Heinrich XLV (1895-1945), was “won over completely” to the National Socialist cause by Goebbels, after the latter met him at a dinner party hosted by another friend of the Princess’s, Freifrau (Baroness) Viktoria von Dirksen, an important intermediary between the old nobility and the National Socialists, in May 1930. “He immediately understood us,” Goebbels reported of his encounter with Reuß. Later Goebbels seems to have put him in charge of programs for the theater. At any rate, he was sufficiently prominent in Nazi circles to have been arrested by the Russians in 1945, after which he was never heard from again.

Somewhat more distantly connected to the Princess, but very close to her in underlying motivation, in his unwavering adherence, until his death in 1983, to National Socialist and racist doctrines, and in his use of his literary talents for the propagation of these doctrines well into the post-World War II period, was Friedrich Christian, Prinz zu Schaumburg-Lippe (a rival branch of the House of Lippe). The prince was drawn to the Nazis in the mid-twenties, served as an aide to Goebbels from 1932 until 1935, campaigned vigorously to enlist the nobility behind Hitler, was sent on a mission to Sweden to drum up support for the regime in 1938, and, as both the text and the photographs in his published diaries testify, stood high in Hitler’s favor as well as in that of his chief at the Ministry of Propaganda. Like the heroine of the Princess’s later novel Die Overbroocks, he had been disillusioned and disgusted by the unheroic abdication and flight of the Kaiser, by the – in his view – even more cowardly abdications of the German princes and their spineless surrender to the revolutionaries of 1918, and finally by the ease with which, according to him, some sections of the old nobility abandoned ancient principles of honor and fidelity and accommodated themselves to the egoistical, materialist values of the despised Weimar Republic. Raised by tutors who combined traditional views of the prerogatives and obligations of the nobility with Frederician Enlightenment ideas about the education of princes and Nietzschean notions of heroic aristocracy, he had come to believe, as had the Princess, that neither the old conservatism nor the elitism of rightwing radicals like Moeller van den Bruck was adequate to the times. If there were ever to be a monarchy in Germany again, he held, it could not bear any resemblance to the old one. “Hitler,” he noted optimistically in his diaries, “was in principle for the Monarchy.” “But not,” he added, “for the continuation of that which, in his opinion, had failed totally.” By the mid-1920s the Prince
was convinced that those who still held to the values of the nobility had to break down the old barriers separating them from the common people, reach out to the masses, and “für die Straße entscheiden” [decide in favor of the street], that is, side with the National Socialists and accept their demagogic methods. Like a substantial fraction of the nobility, he liked to think of his own class as a kind of avant-garde of National Socialism and of the National Socialists as the true heirs of the old nobility.¹³

I have not been able to ascertain whether the Princess attended the Thursday evening meetings of the National Club hosted in the 1920s by the wealthy Baroness Viktoria von Dirksen at the old Hotel Kaiserhof (Hitler’s headquarters in Berlin as of 1932) and patronized by eminent conservatives. She was, however, a regular, in the late 1920s, at meetings of the Nordic Ring, for which the Baroness provided space in the imposing Palais Dirksen on the Margaretenstraße, after the death in 1928 of her more traditionally conservative husband, Willibald Dirksen.¹⁴ These meetings were a forum for the discussion of issues of race and eugenics and for promoting the “Nordic idea” [Der Nordische Gedanke], the proponents of which held that Occidental culture in general and Germanic culture in particular were a creation of the “Nordic race,” that this long dominant racial strain in the population had been losing ground rapidly in the new industrial age through an influx of inferior races drawn by employment opportunities in the rapidly expanding cities, and that this trend would have to be reversed or at least arrested if Germany and the Northern countries, and along with them the entire culture of the West, were not to follow France, Spain, and Italy (where the Nordic element of the population had already shrunk catastrophically) into decline.¹⁵

The Nordic idea – essentially a special version of the obsession of the age with “decadence” – was widespread in the German middle and upper middle classes in the early decades of the twentieth century. As early as December 1907, for instance, Walther Rathenau – the son of the director of the AEG (Allgemeine Elektrische Gesellschaft), one of the most progressive industrial enterprises in Germany, the future Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic, and a Jew (he was assassinated in 1922 by nationalist, anti-Semitic fanatics, who were memorialized after Hitler came to power) – announced in the magazine Zukunft [Future], the editor of which, Maximilian Harden, was also Jewish,¹⁶ that if it was not to suffer drastic decline, Germany would have to reinforce the Nordic element in its population culturally and biologically. Six years later, on the eve of the First World War, Rathenau,
himself a competent scientist and gifted business manager, repeated his call for such a “Vernörlichung” [northernizing] or “Nordifikation” of the nation in his Zur Mechanik des Geistes [On the Mechanics of the Spirit] (1913), a long meditation on the decline of culture in an age of increasing rationalization and utilitarianism.\(^{17}\) The high value Rathenau placed on the “Nordic” involved an implicit, often explicit antithesis, in his pre-war writings, of “Nordic” or “Western” and “Oriental,” of “Aryan” and “non-Aryan,” of “blond” and “dark” races, of “men motivated by courage” [Mutmenschen] and “men motivated by fear” [Furchtmenschen], of “soul” and “intellect.” These antithetical pairs in Rathenau’s work correspond to others that were popular at the time, such as “culture” and “civilization” or Werner Sombart’s “heroes” [Helden] and “tradesmen” [Händler]. Given this style of thinking in antitheses, it was virtually inevitable that anti-Semitism would become an inseparable component of the Nordic idea. The “Oriental,” urban, “wandering” Jew, subservient to his tyrannical God and pursuing only his own selfish gain was the obvious foil for the true-hearted, free-spirited, courageous Nordic peasant or farmer rooted in his soil and his community. Even the somewhat less despised and hated Jew of the Old Testament, leading a nomadic existence in boundless, featureless deserts was seen as the polar opposite of the sedentary man of the North in his rolling green pasturelands and fertile, well-tilled fields.\(^{18}\)

The anti-Semitic potential of the Nordic idea was reinforced by the claim of most of its adherents, that it also had a religious component and that religion was crucial to a people’s life and culture. Germany – and with it the culture of the Occident as a whole – would be saved, it was argued, not only by revitalizing the Nordic racial strain in the nation but by renewing the original religion of the Nordic peoples and eliminating “oriental” faiths foreign to the Nordic race and Nordic “blood.” To some, as noted in Part I, this meant building on supposed racially inherited, pre-Christian beliefs, to others, considerably more numerous, removing the “foreign” (i.e. Judaic) element from Christianity and retaining only that part of it that was held to be the natural religion of Aryan Germans, indeed – on the basis of Houston Stewart Chamberlain’s assertion that the people of Galilee were Aryans and that Jesus was therefore not of Jewish stock – an Aryan creation. The new-old Savior of some champions of the Nordic idea was Wodan (or Wotan or Odin) or Wodan’s son Baldur, of others a heroic, virile, Aryan warrior-Christ.\(^{19}\) Needless to say, salvation was envisaged as this-worldly – the flourishing of the living volk and the self-empowerment of the living
individual; not as otherworldly, the redemption of the sinner.

A previous version of the *Nordic Ring* had been founded as a secret society, the *Ring der Norda*, as early as 1907 by the eugenicist Alfred Ploetz (1860-1940), who claimed to be a socialist but also believed in the superiority of the Nordic or Germanic race. In the 1880s he had organized a society called *Pacifica*, the aim of which was to establish a community of men and women of pure Germanic descent on socialist principles in the American West, and to that end, in 1891, he and his wife had tried out life in a commune in Iowa based on the ideas of the mid-nineteenth-century French utopian socialist Etienne Cabet (*Voyage en Icarie*, 1842). The object of this early *Nordic Ring* — refounded in 1910 as *Nordischer Ring* — was to save the Nordic or Germanic race (the two terms were still interchangeable for Ploetz at this time) from the depredations of modern urban and industrial society and to promote what in Germany is usually referred to as “Racial Hygiene” — that is, population policies favorable to maintaining the strength of the race. In a 1911 pamphlet entitled *Unser Weg* [Our Road], Ploetz defined his and his associates’ goal as the implementation of a “nordisch-germanische Rassenhygiene.” When the *Nordic Ring* was expanded the following year into an athletic club and renamed *Bogenklub München* [Munich Archery Club], Ploetz made clear to his friend, the well-known and highly successful writer Gerhart Hauptmann, that the goals of the organization had not changed. The archery club was “more than a sports club,” he told Hauptmann. It was “a shoot from which a true program of eugenics [rassenhygienische Betätigung] would grow.” In the revolutionary aftermath of the 1918 defeat, the *Archery Club* was in turn reconstituted as *Deutscher Widar-Bund* [German Widar Association], the aim of which was still “die Pflege deutschen Menschentums” [the fostering of the German human type]. The basic racialist orientation of the old *Nordischer Ring* was thus retained, with a more explicit but still relatively contained anti-Semitic strain, in the *Widar-Bund*. By the early 1920s, however, these earlier formations appear to have broken up so that the *Nordischer Ring* established in 1926 and supported financially by Viktoria von Dirksen (and probably by the Princess also) represented a new association rather than a direct continuation of Ploetz’s earlier one.

Along with Hanno Konopath, the government official with radical right-wing sympathies whom she married the following year, the Princess appears to have been one of the founding members of the new *Nordischer Ring*. (Others included Professor Hans F. K. Günther, known as “race-
Günther,” and the architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg, an early critic of the pompous historicism of the late Wilhelminian period and champion of a simpler vernacular building style, who had become a fierce opponent of Bauhaus modernism and internationalism). The author of a pamphlet entitled *Ist Rasse Schicksal? Grundgedanken der völkischen Bewegung* [Is Race Destiny? Fundamental Principles of the Völkisch Movement], which was published in 1926 by the Munich-based Lehmann-Verlag, a notorious breeding-ground of right-wing writers and ideologies, Konopath was fully committed to the Nordic idea and its goal of Aufnordung or reinforcing the component of Nordic blood in the general German population. Thus in 1928 – again probably in collaboration with the Princess – he set up a so-called *Nordische Vermittlungsstelle* [Nordic Exchange] with the aim of bringing together pure-blooded Nordic youths and maidens. Notices were placed in right-wing periodicals such as *Die Sonne, Volk und Rasse*, and *Deutschlands Erneuerung* offering assistance to Nordic men and women who had not succeeded in finding a biologically appropriate mate. In the same year, acting on behalf of the *Werkbund für deutsches Volksstum und Rassenforschung* [Working Association for German Popular Culture and Race Research] and the *Jungnordischer Bund* [Young Nordic Alliance], Konopath encouraged a racially motivated interest in family genealogical tables by instituting a public competition for the best *Ahnentafel* or family tree. The drawing up of such genealogies had been strongly urged on his readers and followers by Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, one of Hitler’s Viennese mentors and a major voice in German racist circles. In the aristocratic camp, the new racial stringency had found expression in the so-called *Edda* (*Eisernes Buch des deutschen Adels deutscher Art*), a new registry of noble families from which any family having admitted more than one Semite or non-European person since the year 1800 was explicitly excluded.

In 1931 Lehmann issued a second edition of Konopath’s *Ist Rasse Schicksal?*, which doubtless led to his being recognized by the Social Democratic *Münchner Post* as “the well known ‘Rassenforscher’ [race researcher], Chief Councilor R. Hanns [sic] Konopath” in a satirical article entitled “Neue Scherze des Rasselclowns” [The Latest Jokes and Tricks of the Race Clown]. His racist credentials can only have been further enhanced when, through the *Nordischer Ring*, he organized a celebration to mark the hundredth anniversary of the death of Arthur de Gobineau, usually considered the founder of modern racism, in Berlin on 13 October, 1932. Major National Socialist Party figures like Wilhelm Frick and
R.Walther Darré took part in this event.

Meanwhile, as a NSDAP official, Konopath turned out numerous articles for the weekly *Nationalsozialistische Partei-Korrespondenz* with titles like “Wir haben die jüdische Kunst satt” [We Have had Enough of Jewish Art]. He also contributed regularly to the extreme rightwing monthly *Die Sonne* [The Sun], the subtitle of which was *Monatsschrift für nordische Weltanschauung und Lebensgestaltung* [Monthly Magazine for Promoting the Nordic Worldview and Way of Life].

An article in this journal gives an account of one of the more picturesque activities of the *Nordischer Ring*. It describes a Wagnerian celebration of the summer solstice at the Bismarckwarte on the Müggelberg in the south-eastern suburbs of Berlin on 21-22 June 1930, on the occasion of the Nordic *Thing* (Assembly or Thing) there, in which 600-700 people took part. At a signal from an old Nordic luder horn the doors of the tower swung slowly open, we are told, and eight handsome Nordic maidens, led by Frau Konopath – i.e. the Princess – emerged, their blond tresses untied, carrying fiery torches. With measured steps, to the accompaniment of music, they descended the stairs and circled the high woodpile, before setting it alight. As the flames leaped high into the night sky, the peace of the *Thing* was proclaimed. Pathfinders lit their torches from the burning woodpile and placed themselves around the tower. After a brief blessing of the fire and another sounding of the horn, the principal speaker came out of the tower and delivered the poetic address in praise of Fire to great effect. The summer solstice song, “Rising Flame,” was then sung in unison. The “beautifully orchestrated” celebration ended, according to the article in *Die Sonne* with the intoning of the old-Nordic Brunnhilde ballad by a choir and soloist, by praise of fire and leaping over it, and by singing in which all present participated.

Like his friend R. Walther Darré, Konopath may have hesitated for a time to join the NSDAP, despite strong sympathy with much of its agenda, because of what he perceived as its predominantly urban focus and the mainly urban character of its support base. A conversation with Goebbels in April 1930 seems to have overcome whatever residual reservations he may have had, however, for by the end of that year he had been appointed to a leading position in the branch of the Party organization that was charged, under Constantin Hierl, with building up the cadres of the future state. (Another branch, under Gregor Strasser, was charged with the work of undermining the existing state). While Darré was chosen to head the
section on Agriculture and Hans Frank, the future Governor-General of Poland, the section on Legal Matters, Konopath was made head of a new section on Race and Culture – apparently on instructions from Hitler himself, who thereby passed over the more obvious candidacy of Alfred Rosenberg in favor of a relatively unknown newcomer.

In 1931 Konopath was listed as the Party’s Reichsleiter für Kulturfragen and in that capacity, along with Göring and Goebbels, preceded Hitler as a speaker at the NSDAP Gauparteitag in Chemnitz on June 7, 1931. In June 1932, once again along with Goebbels, he addressed a meeting of NSDAP Gauleiters in Munich, this time as head of the Party’s Abteilung Film und Rundfunk [Department of Film and Radio]. In the National Socialist Yearbook for 1932 he was still listed as “Chief of the Department of Race and Culture,” but in June of that year he was removed from his post “wegen einer Privatangelegenheit” [because of an affair in his personal life] – possibly a sexual indiscretion that may also have led to the Princess’s divorcing him in 1936. He was then appointed Director of the Reichslotterie, a position he still held in 1938.

Evidently, after joining the Party, Konopath fulfilled multiple functions in its operations, even if he never attained the notoriety of a Goebbels or a Rosenberg. As head of the Film and Radio Section, for instance, he was given responsibility for imposing the National Socialist Party agenda on a pressure-group, the Reichsverband deutscher Rundfunkteilnehmer, that had been set up in 1930 by the Stahlhelm veterans’ association and other right-wing conservatives for the purpose of influencing the character and selection of radio programs. Probably his most important Party assignment was to mediate, as head of the Department of Race and Culture, among a number of rival and quarrelsome Protestant Christian groups strongly sympathetic to National Socialism and bring them into a single umbrella organization, through which the NSDAP could better exploit their support, while at the same time maintaining its proclaimed “neutrality” in confessional matters and not becoming embroiled in the disputes (mostly revolving around degrees of racism and anti-Semitism) that divided them. Thus in 1931-32 he was instrumental in bringing into being the Glaubensbewegung deutscher Christen [German Christians Movement], the aim of which was to purge Christianity of its Judaic elements and the members of which were permitted by the Party to present themselves at the Prussian Church elections in 1932 as Evangelische Nationalsozialisten – i.e. as implicitly sanctioned by the Party notwithstanding the latter’s frequently announced policy of religious
Marie Adelheid Reuß, Prinzessin zur Lippe

neutrality. Though Konopath’s own sympathies lay with the neo-pagan movements grouped together in 1933 in Wilhelm Hauer’s non-Christian Arbeitsgemeinschaft der deutschen Glaubensbewegung [Working Community of the German Faith Movement], he served briefly, from February to May 1932, as President of the new Glaubensbewegung deutscher Christen.35

The inspirer of the Konopaths’ Nordischer Ring and the couple’s intellectual mentor was the specialist in race studies, Professor Hans F. K. Günther. Günther’s earliest major work, Ritter, Tod und Teufel: Der Heldische Gedanke [The Knight, Death, and the Devil: The Heroic Idea], published in Munich the year before the Princess’s 1921 poem, combined the völkisch tradition of nationalist neopaganism with biological racism in a mix that appears to have proved popular, for there were new editions of this work in 1924, 1928, 1935 and 1937. Günther’s masterwork, however, was his Rassenkunde des deutschen Volkes [Ethnogeny of the German People] which went through no fewer than sixteen editions between 1922 and the Nazi take-over in 1933 and of which 124,000 copies had been printed by 1943. (A shorter popular version, published in 1929, had been printed in 272,000 copies by 1943, bringing the total to 396,000.36) In this work, as in others, such as Rassenkunde Europas (1925; Engl. translation: The Racial Elements of European History, London, 1927), Adel und Rasse [Aristocracy and Race] (1926), Der nordische Gedanke unter den Deutschen [The Nordic Idea among the Germans] (1925), Führeradel durch Sippenpflege [An Aristocracy of Leaders through the Cultivation of Good Stock] (1936) Günther developed the idea that of the various European races he had identified – the “Nordic,” “Falic,” “Eastern,” “Western,” “Dinaric,” and “East Baltic,” each of which had its particular qualities and defects – the Nordic, still predominant only in the area of Lower Saxony (which surrounds the “free Hanseatic city of Bremen” and on the edge of which the Principality of Lippe is located), was the most dynamic, enterprising, and adventurous, “characterized by outstanding will-power, judgment, cool realism, truthfulness on a man-to-man basis, chivalry, and justice.”37 A race of conquerors, it had pushed South and West at the time of the great migrations, extending its influence over the whole of Germany, Austria, Northern Italy, and large parts of France and Spain. From it emerged the Aechean Greeks of the heroic age and the still surviving ruling castes of many European countries. Inevitably, however, it had been overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of the races it had conquered and with which it ultimately intermarried. Even in most regions of Germany it had become only part of the racial stock of the population;
people of pure Nordic race were a small minority. In the modern world it was under mortal threat from a series of new developments – urbanization and industrialization, the flight from the land, a burgeoning industrial proletariat made up of immigrants of other races whose fertility was favored by the social welfare policies of the modern state. And yet everyone agreed that even though the Nordic element had become a drastically reduced part of the German population, it was still the most “authentically German” [echt deutsch] part of it. Günther conceded that mixtures were not always to be avoided. The Nordic (predominantly North German) component, characterized by adventurousness and risk-taking, could usefully be balanced by the Falic (predominantly Rhenish) component, for instance, the chief characteristics of which were perseverance, defiant firmness, and reliability. He also noted that certain types of creativity might be fostered by the inner tension that arose when the admixture in a mostly Nordic individual of another racial element caused the (light) Nordic strain in that individual to struggle against the other (darker) strain.

Nevertheless, the greatest danger facing the German people, in Günther’s view (and in the view, as we saw, of many of his contemporaries), was still the diminution of the Nordic element in its racial composition: “Entnordung” [denordification]. To Günther this was synonymous with the adulteration and deterioration of the race as a whole. The goal of all concerned with the revival of Germany must therefore be Aufnordung [renordification] – preserving and reinvigorating the Nordic strain in the population. In the words of another writer, who claimed to have demonstrated “scientifically” that the Nordic strain had once been much stronger in South Germany than it was currently, “the greatest reserve capital of natural strength seems today to have been stored up in the Lower Saxon stock and so the last hopes of a regeneration of our people out of the true German spirit are firmly attached [...] to that stock.”

Günther distinguished his goal of Aufnordung from the general goal of Aufartung embraced by one of the pioneers of race policies, Alfred Grotjahn (Soziale Pathologie, Berlin, 1912). Grotjahn, Günther recalled, had enjoined the supporters of the Nordic movement to give up their specifically Nordic project in favor of a broader movement to improve the general racial quality of the German population as a whole. In so doing, Günther objected, Grotjahn showed that, however much he may have been interested in promoting the racial health [Erbgesundheit] of the population, he had not given much thought to the spiritual and
psychological aspects of race [rassenseelische Richtung]. General racial health is a goal that any population may pursue, whatever its race. What distinguishes the Nordic movement, however, is that it is concerned precisely with the "rassenseelische Richtung des Deutschtums" [the spiritual and psychological aspects of racial development in the Germanic peoples and cultures], i.e. with preserving and reinforcing the specifically Nordic element – and its accompanying spiritual and psychological qualities – in the German people and its culture. This cannot be State policy, Günther conceded, since engaging in an effort to promote a particular race would violate the State’s necessary neutrality with respect to the races represented in the population. Consequently Aufnordung has to be a voluntary project, undertaken by the Nordic people themselves and by Germans convinced of the special qualities of the Nordic race. As a private initiative, the Nordischer Ring was thus fully justified by the acknowledged scholarly leader of the Nordic movement, along with the other activities, such as the Nordic Exchange, through which the Konopaths hoped to influence people and to reinvigorate the Nordic strain in the German population. Günther, moreover, traveled around the country giving talks in support of both the Nordischer Ring and the related Nordische Gesellschaft.

In the Germany of the 1920s and 1930s Günther was by no means the only champion of the Nordic idea with scholarly credentials. Others included, to mention only a few, Gustav Kossinna, an internationally admired professor of archaeology at Berlin University, as well as his students and followers – Otto Höfler, Gustav Neckel, Bernhard Kummer – all of whom occupied university chairs and sympathized with or were co-opted by the National Socialist movement; Rudolf John Gorsleben, translator of the Edda (1922), founder of the Edda Gesellschaft (1925), and editor-publisher of the periodical Deutsche Freiheit (subtitled Monatsschrift für arische Gottes- und Weltenkenntnis [Monthly Journal for Aryan Understanding of God and the World], later renamed Arische Freiheit [Aryan Freedom]); the Berlin University Professor Ludwig Ferdinand Clauß, already mentioned as a friend of the Princess’s brother; the political philosopher Carl Schmitt; and the Dutch-born scholar of ancient history, archaeology and linguistics, Herman Wirth – the friend, mentor, and protégé of both the Princess and her publisher Roselius – who had settled in Germany in 1924 and joined the NSDAP in 1925.

In 1921 the publisher Diederichs, another faithful patron of Wirth, launched a series of old "Nordic" texts, under the general title Thule:
Altnordische Dichtung und Prosa, that comprised 24 volumes by the time it was completed in 1938⁴⁴ (fig. 19). A number of women scholars also lent their support to the new ideas, writing – like the Princess herself – on themes such as the “Nordic woman,” “Nordic philosophy,” and “Nordic religion.”⁴⁵ In the Party leadership Heinrich Himmler and Alfred Rosenberg were especially haunted by the threat of “downfall and destruction” that, as the historian Joachim Fest put it, hung over “Germanness, the priceless sediment in the bowl of Nordic blood.”⁴⁶ The development of the powerful
anti-Christian, neo-pagan element in the Nordic movement, already perceptible in the Princess’s poem of 1921, owed much to the *Nordische Glaubensbewegung* [Nordic Faith Movement], established shortly after the *Ring*, in 1927, and subsequently absorbed, along with Ludwig Fahrenkrog’s *Germanische Glaubengemeinschaft* (founded 1913) into the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Glaubensbewegung* [Working Community of the German Faith Movement], an alliance of organizations with similar aims, led by the scholar of linguistics and former student of the celebrated Basler Mission, Jakob Wilhelm Hauer. The Princess’s brother, Friedrich Wilhelm, Prinz zur Lippe, was especially well known as a strong supporter of “Nordic” religion and an opponent of Christianity. At a July 1933 meeting of various völkisch religious organizations, convoked by Hauer in the hope of persuading them to agree on a common platform and join in a common organization, the Prince was identified as one of the “Nordics” – along with the artist Ludwig Fahrenkrog of the *Germanische Glaubengemeinschaft*, Wilhelm Kusserow of the *Nordisch-religiöse Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, Otto Sigfrid Reuter of the *Deutschgläubige Gemeinschaft*, and the Princess’s husband Konopath – who objected strongly to a proposal to divide the new organization into two branches, a Christian and a Germanic. There should be no place, according to Friedrich Wilhelm, in the new organization for Christianity in any form. “Wir wollen uns freimachen von der inneren “indung zur Kirhe.” No doubt the Prince subscribed to the views laid out in a 1933 position paper of the *Nordisch-religiöse Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, to wit:

Christianity in any form is a dangerous gate through which we are invaded by Asiatic influences, the Jews, and Marxism. National Socialism sows the seed of a healthy racial feeling in the hearts of the German people, but it does not engage in struggle against Asiatic, Judeo-Marxist Christianity. If we do not succeed in rooting out this poisonous weed, down to the last fiber, National Socialism itself will succumb to it. All struggle and sacrifice would be in vain, and perhaps the last chance of a breakthrough for the German people lost, unless our movement takes up and carries forward the struggle at the point where National Socialism these days abandons it.

The attempt to make a place for a völkisch form of Christianity in the organization did not succeed and the Prince later lectured on “Rasse und Glaube” [Race and Faith] at a 1934 meeting of Hauer’s *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung*, at which he shared the platform with Fahrenkrog. His talk was such a success that he gave it at other gatherings designed to drum up support for Hauer’s movement.
Among the promoters of the “Nordic idea,” the Princess appears to have been particularly close to R. Walther Darré (1895-1953), also a member of the Nordic Ring. A specialist in animal breeding by training and profession, the Argentinian-born Darré is now remembered chiefly as the leading exponent of the ideology of “Blood and Soil” in the NSDAP. Like his long-time friend Heinrich Himmler (until they quarreled over policy issues in the late 1930s), Darré had been a member, as a young man, of the Artamans, an anti-urban, anti-Slavic, and anti-Semitic youth group, founded in 1924. Influenced by standard Lebensreform ideas, such as physical culture, the cult of fellowship, the need for Bodenreform [land reform], and a return to nature, the Artamans had a two-pronged program: 1) to bring about a return to the land, the root and foundation of the German people, as the essential means of regenerating the nation and curing it of corrupt cosmopolitan capitalism and greedy, self-centered individualism, and 2) to bring about the triumph of the “Nordic instinct” in the relentless struggle – as they saw it – between “Nordisches Blut und unnordisches” [Nordic and un-Nordic blood]. (The group had a special section devoted to race studies and a program for promoting and encouraging marriages among the best representatives of the Nordic race). A small-circulation magazine put out by the movement for a few years conveyed these two related goals in its title: Blut und Boden: Monatsschrift für wurzelhaftes Bauerntum, für deutsche Wesensart und die nationale Freiheit [Blood and Soil: a Monthly Magazine for the Promotion of a Peasantry rooted in its own Land, of native German-ness, and of National Freedom]. Most of the Artamans, including Darré and Himmler in their early years, offered their services as workers on the land, especially in Eastern Germany, where they aimed to protect German soil and German stock from foreign, in particular Slavic encroachments in the form of Polish summer workers hired by the landowners of Silesia and Mecklenburg. (The movement is evoked admiringly, as will be seen shortly, in the Princess’s 1942 novel, in the shape of two young male characters who come unexpectedly to the aid of the heroine after she has recovered her dead husband’s family farm in Lower Saxony and who become role models for her twin sons). Darré did not join the NSDAP until 1930, his hesitation being probably due to what he may have perceived as a misfit between the Party’s heavily urban base and his own radically anti-urban ideology. But in March of that year he succeeded in having his agrarian program – aimed at promoting a return to the land and preserving traditional family holdings – adopted by the Party leadership. He then conducted a vigorous political
campaign in rural areas and won the support of the German farmers for the NSDAP. For this he was rewarded in 1933 with the post of Reichsminister for Food and Agriculture, a post he held until 1942, when he was forced to step down, his inflexible commitment to restoring individual peasants’ or small farmers’ holdings in the German lands having been found not only to have failed to produce the desired results but to be incompatible, grounded as it was in the idea of the peasant’s rootedness in his native soil, with the “Drang nach Osten” and the plans of his sometime friend Himmler to repopulate the conquered territories in the East with sturdy German farmer-warriors.35

As could be expected, Darré was a strong advocate of strict racial policies. Along with Himmler, he was one of the editors of the magazine Volk und Rasse. The return of the people to the land was inseparable, for him, from the preservation of the Nordic race. Das Bauerntum als Lebensquelle der Nordischen Rasse [The Peasantry as the Life Source of the Nordic Race] was the title he gave to one of his earliest books (1929).56 “The community of our people [Volksgemeinschaft] is a community of blood,” he declared in a later work; “the institutions of our national life are nothing; the blood of our people is everything.” Race and blood are the basis of community. Humanitarian ideas only estrange people from “Life”: “Against the ideas of 1789, the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, […] and the life-destroying deification of Reason, […] we set the Law of our Blood. We envisage the future of our people as built on the foundation of the blood inherited from our forefathers.”57 This did not entail support of the old nobility. Darré advocated using the breeding techniques he had learned as a student of agriculture to build a new German aristocracy from native peasant stock, since the existing aristocracy, tainted by elements of alien blood, lacked real legitimacy, in his view, and had demonstrated its moral bankruptcy in 1918.58 The race question was also relevant, he claimed, to the resettling of the population on the land. Thus he did not advocate indiscriminate resettling to resolve the problem of “an uprooted, urban German population” [eines ent wurzelten, städtischen Deutschtums]. That, he warned, would result in a disastrous “total denordification of the German people” [eine totale Entordnung des deutschen Volkes].59 Consistently with his membership in the Nordic Ring and his earlier association with the Artamanen, he took the title of the monthly journal he launched in 1932 – Odal: Monatsschrift für Blut und Boden [Odal: Monthly Magazine for Blood and Soil] – from the Odal rune, the sign of an old Norse and Northern German legal bond between
family or tribe and land. The Princess – his “little sister,” as he called her – was Darré’s chief editorial assistant in running this journal. She also contributed articles to it in which she expressed no less vehemently than he her contempt for the “hoffnungslose Allerwelts-Gleichmacherei” [hopeless making everybody everywhere equal] that had “resulted from a centuries-old false doctrine” and her conviction that “blood, not books,” determines character and level of culture. “We are what we are,” she proclaimed, “thanks to our fathers and mothers.”

Holding the position of “Arbeitsleiterin für Frauenkultur” [Director of Women’s Education and Culture] under Darré as “Reichsbauernführer” [Leader of the Reich Farmers], the Princess was one of the Blut und Boden theorist’s earliest and most loyal devotees. Rebellious and independent-minded as she was, she could not but respond favorably both to his high regard for the Nordic woman, whom he represented, following Günther, as an equal partner of her husband, in contrast to the subordinate role allegedly assigned to women by “Oriental” or Semitic peoples, and to his idea of a “new nobility.” In fact, her association with Darré may well have encouraged the Princess to complete the revolt against her caste that she had begun a decade earlier – for Darré’s plan for a new peasant or farmers’ aristocracy to replace a nobility he considered corrupt and besmirched by alien blood, was understandably not well received in most noble families, including those that had rallied to National Socialism. In general, Darré’s influence may well have played an important role in turning the vague longings and aspirations, still couched in Gott in mir in mystical and religious terms, into adherence to a particular political program. Both the Princess and her husband Konopath joined the NSDAP in the late Spring of 1930, around the time that Darré joined. Thereafter the Princess appears to have chosen to define herself as a loyal Party member. At some point this must have entailed some downplaying of her earlier association with the völkisch religious movements and sects that had in all likelihood inspired Gott in mir. For once the National Socialists had attained power, these quarrelsome and competing movements, which had helped in some measure to prepare the way for the Party’s success, quickly came to be viewed as eccentric, divisive, disorderly, and inconvenient, equally incompatible with the image of a dynamic, forward-looking, united nation that the Nazis were trying to promote and with the hegemonic ambitions of the National Socialist Party and its ideology. In contrast, establishing solid relations with the long-standing national Churches – which were
understandably extremely hostile to the sects, in particular to the openly anti-Christian ones – was seen as tactically indispensable to promoting the ends of the regime. The sects were therefore deliberately marginalized or in some cases banned altogether as the Party sought to rid itself of its more unruly elements and get itself seen as a Party of order, national tradition, and national unity. After the collapse of the Nazi regime in 1945, however, the Princess reverted to her early enthusiasm for völkisch politics and religion.

In the 1930s and early 1940s, the Princess did her utmost to propagate Darré’s views about the fundamental role of blood and soil. The key to the Nordic idea, she wrote in the foreword to a volume of Darré’s essays and articles that she collected and edited in 1940 – most of them taken from the extreme right-wing journals *Deutschlands Erneuerung* and *Die Sonne*, the organ of the Artaman movement – lies in recognizing “the issue of race and breeding, on the one hand, and the significance of the peasantry, on the other, as the dual basis of everything that happens in the areas of politics, economics, and culture.” Above all, as we shall see, her novel *Die Overbroocks* was a grand celebration of Darré’s ideas.

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After joining the Party in May 1930, the Princess and her husband appear to have been quickly caught up in the social activities of the Nazi leadership. They continued to frequent the salon of Viktoria von Dirksen, one of a number of wealthy women who had become infatuated with Hitler in the 1920s and had supported him financially. The stepmother of Herbert von Dirksen – who later served as Ambassador to Tokyo, Moscow, and London – Dirksen was known to have contributed handsomely to the NSDAP, and to have served, as one source put it, “as an intermediary between the National Socialists and the old courtiers,” thereby earning for herself the sobriquet “Mother of the Movement.” According to the same source, “Hitler, Goebbels, Helldorff, and the other accomplices held their weekly meetings at her home,” while her brother, the science-fiction writer Karl August von Laffert, attended her receptions “in the full splendor of his SS uniform.” Even after President von Hindenburg banned the SA, the men “used to arrive [at Frau von Dirksen’s] in full uniform under long capes.” It seems that both she and her youngest daughter wore a large diamond swastika “pinned conspicuously on their bosoms.” It may even have
been at the Baroness’s that the Princess first met Konopath, just as in 1930 it was through the Baroness and her royal guest, Prince Auwi, that Magda Quandt, the recently divorced wife of one of the richest men in Germany, is said to have met her future second husband Goebbels.\textsuperscript{70} At all events, “the two Konopaths” were named among the guests at a late evening reception (“from 11 until 2 in the morning”) at Freifrau von Dirksen’s in November 1930, at which the other guests were Göring and a couple of his relatives, Goebbels, Baroness Marie von Tiele-Winckler, Prince Auwi and his son Prince Alexander, the banker von der Heyd, the head of the Mannesmann steel tubing works Erich Niemann with his wife, and Admiral Magnus von Levetzov, later appointed chief of police in Berlin after the Nazis came to power.\textsuperscript{71}

Goebbels for his part tells in his diaries of a dinner party at the Görings’ a few months earlier (June 1930), at which the guests included, besides himself, “Frau Schultze, Frick, the Konopaths, Epp, and a director of the UFA [the powerful German film company \textit{Universum Film AG}].”\textsuperscript{72} In Nazi terms, this was top rank company indeed. Wilhelm Frick had just been named Education Minister in the coalition government, which included National Socialists, of the state of Thuringia, and had immediately appointed Hans F. K. Günther to a professorship at Jena (over the objections of the faculty), issued an “Ordinance against Negro Culture” (1 April 1930) which purported to rid Thuringia of all “immoral and foreign racial elements in the arts,” dissolved the state school of architecture in Weimar, headed at the time by the moderate Otto Bartning – the Bauhaus having already been forced by pressure from petty-bourgeois artisans to relocate in Dessau – and appointed the architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg, a close friend of R. Wilhelm Darré, whose \textit{Blood and Soil} ideology he shared, to head a new “united school” combining painting and architecture with the applied arts. Frick went on, after 1933, to become Hitler’s Minister of the Interior, one of the drafters of the Nuremberg Laws, and the controller of concentration camps. He was sentenced to death at the Nuremberg trials and hanged two weeks later.

Frick’s protégé, Schultze-Naumburg, whose wife was at the dinner (subsequently she separated from her husband and married Frick), had long been an advocate of a return both to the land and to a traditional building style appropriate to the German countryside, and had become a vehement critic of the “rootless,” “urban,” international style in modern architecture. He was the author of a book entitled \textit{Kunst und Rasse} [Art
and Race] (Munich 1928) and of numerous articles asserting the racial basis of art, including a pamphlet entitled Kunst aus Blut und Boden (1934), in which he maintained that Blood and Soil are the two sources from which the creative powers of man emerge. While the blood of the German people is a mixture of “nordisch, “dinarisch, “ostisch,” and “westisch,” he declared, referring to the races identified by his friend Günther, the most precious of these is the Nordic strain, to which, according to Schultze-Naumburg (once again following Günther), the art of Greek antiquity also owes its strength and purity. The first act of the new head of Frick’s Vereinigte Weimarer Kunstlehranstalten was to fire 29 teachers from the schools, mostly because they were associated with Bauhaus style. He then proceeded to have 70 works of art, including paintings by Dix, Feininger, Kandinsky, Klee, Kokoschka, Franz Marc, and Nolde removed from the Weimar Schlossmuseum as representative of “eastern or otherwise racially inferior subhumanity” and to have Oskar Schlemmer’s murals in the old Van de Velde building that had housed Gropius’s school painted over. Goebbels had already glowingly recounted a visit in June 1930 to Schultze-Naumburg’s famous country estate at Saaleck, where he met Hans Günther, “der Rassenforscher,” and was “shown around the entire house by Frau Konopath.” Darré and Günther were regular members of Schultze-Naumburg’s Saaleck-Kreis and her role as cicerone makes it seem likely that the Princess was also. Only a month before the visit described by Goebbels, Hitler himself, accompanied by Rudolf Heß, had met at Burg Saaleck with the Princess’s mentor, Darré, no doubt to discuss the latter’s agrarian program for the Party.

The Epp at the Göring’s dinner party was Franz Xaver, Ritter von Epp, a veteran of the genocidal war against the Herero people in South-West Africa in 1904-1906, as well as of the First World War, and the founder of the Freikorps-Epp in 1919, which the Majority Socialist government of Ebert used to put down the Bavarian Workers’ Councils Republic or Räterepublik in Munich in 1919 and to eradicate Left-Wing Socialist and Communist resistance in the Ruhr in 1920. Both operations were carried out with unparalleled ferocity. In Munich, it has been said, “a ‘white terror’ ensued such as no German city, not even Berlin, had yet experienced. For a whole week the conquerors were at liberty to shoot at will, and everyone ‘suspected of Spartacism’ [i.e. left socialism, anarchism, or communism] – in effect Munich’s entire working-class population – was outlawed.” One conservative eye-witness described how “‘Spartacists’ were dragged out
of wine-bars or railway trains and shot on the spot.” Gustav Landauer, the well-known anarchist intellectual, friend of the Hart brothers, and translator of the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart, who had been appointed Minister of Education in the first Bavarian Workers’ Councils government, was brutally murdered. During the suppression of the Communists in the Ruhr the following year, one member of the Freikorps-Epp wrote in a letter: “If I were to write you everything, you would say these are lies. No mercy is shown. We shoot even the wounded. The enthusiasm is marvelous. […] Anyone who falls into our hands gets first the gun butt and then the bullet…We also shot dead instantly ten Red Cross nurses each of whom was carrying a pistol. We shot at these abominations with joy. […] We were much more humane toward the French on the battlefield.”75 Epp joined the NSDAP in 1928, raised enough money, with the help of Röhm, to turn the Völkischer Beobachter into a National Socialist newspaper, was soon elected as a National Socialist member of the Reichstag, and after the National Socialists took power was appointed Governor (Reichskommissar) of Bavaria by Frick.

This, then, was the distinguished company the Princess kept during the 1930s.76 Goebbels himself seems to have been on easy terms with the Konopaths. In one diary entry he tells of “going to the Konopaths for coffee” and from there, with the Görings and Dirksens to see “The Merry Widow.”77

Everything did not go smoothly, of course. Besides the usual rivalries among the leading members of the Party – Goebbels confides to his diary at one point that Konopath is trying to wrest control of film propaganda from him – there was a more significant disagreement over what Goebbels who, as Propaganda Minister, had to be concerned about ideological inflexibility and potential divisiveness, termed Konopath’s “Rassenmaterialismus” [racial materialism]. From the beginning, Goebbels had judged Konopath “intellektuell zu sehr vorbelastet” [intellectually too full of preconceived ideas], that is, not sufficiently attuned to tactics.78 By the end of 1930, the two had had a heated discussion about the racial issue, at which, according to Goebbels, Konopath “had to give in.” “We can’t allow him too much room for his obsession with race,” Goebbels noted in his diary.79 But the disagreement clearly persisted, reflecting a divergence of views on the subject of race, within the Party, between tacticians like Goebbels and strict ideologues, and among Nazi sympathizers between those, such as the psychologist Carl Jung, for whom National Socialism was above all an awakening of the German nation, and those for whom it was above
all a matter of physically eliminating foreign (i.e. Jewish, Slavic and other “inferior”) elements and creating a physically perfect Nordic type. In his insistence on biology and animal-like breeding, Konopath probably had the support of a faction that included his wife, the Princess, along with her brother Friedrich Wilhelm Prinz zur Lippe-Biesterfeld, his own friend Darré, and Himmler, who had been a student of animal breeding like Darré. A full year later Goebbels describes a scene at which he “polemierte heftig gegen diesen Rassenmaterialismus” [argued heatedly against this racial materialism], and hints that Konopath’s Nordischer Ring might have to be disbanded. Barely a month afterwards a meeting took place in Goebbels’ office at which, Konopath having again defended his “blond race materialism, […] we flew at each other.” The matter will have to be pursued further, Goebbels notes in his diary: “Konopath’s arrogance has to be broken. He needs to rethink things. But I doubt that he is capable of that.”

This disagreement between Goebbels and Konopath about the way to conduct “race propaganda,” as Goebbels called it, probably reflects unease in Nazi leadership circles about the program of Aufnordung, which was resented by Germans, especially those from the southern areas of the country – to say nothing of the Propaganda Minister himself – whose physical appearance did not match the blond ideal.

It may also be connected with Goebbels’s effort, which often enough led to conflict with other high Party officials, notably Rosenberg and his Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur, to present an image of National Socialist culture that was modern, dynamic, turned toward the future, rather than nostalgic for a lost past. Hence his attacks on what he termed “National Kitsch,” his efforts to preserve a place for twentieth-century German artists in the Nazi Pantheon, and his opposition to doctrines that might provoke division or challenge the ideological hegemony of the Party. Thus Schultze-Naumburg ultimately fell out of favor, along with other völkisch ideologues and religious leaders whose views and organizations came to be considered not only damaging to national unity and the authority of the Party (which was more effectively upheld by good relations with the established Churches), but backward-looking and out of tune with the “new” Germany of autobahns, airships, and the “People’s Car.”

Throughout the thirties and during the War years the Princess served the National Socialist regime and the National Socialist ideology in every way she could – as a minor player in the National Socialist administration and above all as a writer, through her advice books for young “Nordic”
women, her editions of the essays and aphorisms of her friend and mentor Darré, and not least her fictional writing, which was clearly intended to educate her readers and inspire them to serve the regime as devotedly as she.

The 1934 tract, *Nordische Frau und Nordischer Glaube* (new editions in 1935 and 1938), and the novel, *Die Overbroocks*, published in Berlin in 1942, offer an epitome of the Princess’s mature thought along with a remarkable insight into the mentality and values of a dedicated National Socialist, who also appears to have been an unusually independent-minded woman – into the “Nazi Conscience,” to borrow the title of Claudia Koonz’s recent book.\(^{85}\)

For that reason they will receive special consideration here. Whereas in 1921, the Princess’s ideas and feelings could be presented only in the abstract, philosophico-religious terms of the poem *Gott in mir*, by 1935 they could be articulated in more developed and practical political terms, thanks to her association with ideologists like Darré, Günther, and her husband Konopath and to her own involvement with the NSDAP. By 1942, after two decades of political action and nine momentous years of National Socialist government, it had become possible for her to represent these same ideas through the characters, actions, and concrete historical conditions required by the literary genre of the realist novel. The fundamental themes of *Gott in mir*, *Nordische Frau und Nordischer Glaube*, and *Die Overbroocks* remain, however, recognizably the same, as the following summary accounts of the tract and the novel should demonstrate.