

An Occurrence at the Gauforum Weimar Proscenium

Report by Kenneth Palmowski-Wolfe
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The crowd of 40,000 who greeted Nazi leaders at Platz Adolf Hitlers on May 1, 1937. *

In our Anthroposophical Studies class tour to Weimar in April, 2024, there was one unplanned event that turned out to be an excellent learning moment regarding the darker forces that overtook Germany during the Third Reich. It happened when Peter Selg took us to the outlook where Hitler and his cohorts stood, as they greeted a cheering and saluting crowd of 40,000. Before we ascended in the Weimar Atrium shopping mall, we stopped briefly at the Museum Zwangsarbeit. There we learned of the architectural plans for the Forum that were never completed, and saw a large photo-poster of that day in May, 1937, similar to the photo above.

As we stood outside on the proscenium, Peter Selg began to elaborate on the history of the Gauforum, and what had happened there. Then suddenly we were interrupted by a guard for the mall. He informed us that the outside area where we stood was off limits; no one was allowed to be there. Peter countered that we were there as an educational group, that there were no signs prohibiting us, and the doors were unlocked for us to easily access the area. The guard simply told us we would have to

go, and that he was “just following his boss’s orders.” I myself told the guard (auf Deutsch) that we must remember the mistakes of the past so we do not repeat them.

Nothing could have been a clearer picture of how Nazism took hold, and how its horrors succeeded. Nothing could have been a better parable of how easily people simply do what they are told, and refuse to take personal responsibility - the same argument used by the war criminals at the Nuremberg Trials to justify their horrific, murderous deeds. That guard at the Gauforum frustrated our class’s plans, but gave us an invaluable lesson in how the forces of darkness succeed if we do not act out of individual morality - a clear reminder of the essence of our second-trimester study of Philosophy of Freedom.

*Photo source: <https://www.gauforum.de/de/einfuehrung/>