

ROCKWELL'S NAZIS LOST WITHOUT HIM

Party Is Moribund 7 Months
After Leader's Murder

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WASHINGTON, April 7—The American Nazi party, seven months after the murder of George Lincoln Rockwell, has virtually ceased to function as a national organization.

The Nazi movement was shaped by its founder to appeal to a noisy fringe element that would attract but not compete for the publicity he craved. Now, without him, it is collapsing for lack of any coherent ideology or political base.

The storm troopers' "barracks" in Arlington, Va., has been boarded up. The stout brick gatepost emblazoned with a red swastika has been thrown on its side. And somebody has painted a Star of David on the driveway.

In place of the shabby three-story building on what was known in Rockwell's time as "Hatemonger Hill" a modern apartment building will rise.

The nine men who make up the remnants of Rockwell's national headquarters cadre are now crammed into a small rented house in an Arlington residential area.

Last Chapter in Dallas

Law enforcement sources say there is only one other functioning Nazi chapter left — in Dallas, Tex. The Nazis' only known remaining property, they say, is a printing shop in Spotsylvania, Va.

A handful of men scattered across the country still call themselves Nazis and subscribe to the party's occasional publications, but officials here feel they are isolated and inactive.

During Rockwell's lifetime the party also had an office and chapter in Los Angeles and local units in Chicago and San Francisco. These have ceased to exist now, the officials say.

The party membership was never large — Rockwell was said to have had only around 100 reliable followers — but Federal sources now say there are 75 members at most. A police official in Arlington who watches the group closely says: "They would have trouble getting 25 guys together now."

Nevertheless, many self-proclaimed Nazis are still capable of isolated acts of violence outside the party framework. Last month, for example, two members fought a gun battle on a lonely road in Maine.

Neither was hurt, but their party affiliation made the incident news.

In the crowded frame house in Arlington, Matthias Koehl (pronounced "Kale"), Rockwell's 33-year-old successor, holds forth as "commander" of the Nazi party.

Commander as Orator

Recently a polite, crew-cut young man wearing horn-rimmed glasses turned a reporter away with the explanation that the commander was too busy for an interview. His schedule, the young man explained, is booked up for the next two months with speaking engagements.

There was a certain irony in this because it is Koehl's speaking style that many observers blame for much of the party's financial trouble and dwindling membership. He does not measure up to Rockwell as a rabble-rouser, they say, and has not received the speaking invitations—and the occasional honorariums — that kept Rockwell going.

But police officials think a more fundamental reason for the organization's collapse after Rockwell's death is reflected in the motives for his murder, as they were revealed in the testimony at the subsequent trial.

A half-hour after Rockwell was gunned down in a shopping center across the highway from "Hatemonger Hill," the police arrested John Patler, a 29-year-old New Yorker, who had once been a captain in Rockwell's storm troopers.

At the trial late last year, it was shown that Rockwell had expelled Patler from the organization, partly as a result of a dispute over policy.

Support From Racism

In August, 1966, Patler had staged one of the rare Nazi operations that generated popular support when he led swastika-bedecked youths against Negro open housing demonstrators in white suburbs of Chicago.

Patler became convinced that the Nazi movement could flourish if it abandoned its "siege heil" greeting and other Hitlerite trappings and concentrated instead on his slogan, "White Power."

The organization did change its name from American Nazi party to National Socialist White Peoples party (the official name now) and named a publication White Power. It officially eliminated the phrase "heil Hitler" from all except formal occasions and changed the official greeting from "seig heil" to "white power."

But Rockwell delighted in striking fuhrer-like poses against a backdrop of uniformed storm troopers, and he refused to abandon the basic Hitlerite image of his movement.

Patler was found guilty of killing him and was sentenced to 20 years in prison. He is free on bail, pending his appeal.

Koehl always backed Rockwell in refusing to dilute the

German-Nazi image of the party, and he has continued this policy as Rockwell's heir.

The futility of attempting to engage in today's politics by invoking Hitler's ghost was apparent at one of Koehl's recent public appearances, a speech last month at a "controversial speakers" program at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill.

For an hour, Koehl droned through a rambling justifica-

tion of Nazi Germany's Third Reich (he said Soviet Russia had concentration camps, too) and complained that "all news media are infiltrated by Jews." He suggested that the Vietnam war should be handled as Nazi Germany dealt with its problems, "by exterminating the enemy."

Finally, he began to make slurring remarks about Negroes and about 100 students—mostly Negroes — stomped and

clapped their way past the podium and out the door, scuffling just enough with the campus police to prompt the dean to stop the speech.

Nobody in the student audience protested that Koehl should be permitted to continue, and the relaxed, joking mood of the departing students indicated not so much indignation at his message as boredom.