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THE CAREER OF HEINRICH HIMMLER

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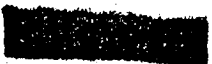
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THE CAREER OF
HEINRICH HIMMLER

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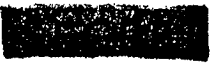
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THE CAREER OF HEINRICH HIMMLER

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I. EARLY CAREER, 1900-1929

A. STUDENT AND OFFICER-CADET


We know surprisingly little about Heinrich Himmler's early career. He has left no *Mein Kampf*, recounting family quarrels or youthful dreams and frustrations. Nor has he found a biographer. We must therefore rely for our knowledge of his childhood, adolescent, soldier and student years upon the dry, abbreviated records of biographical dictionaries, the imaginative glosses of journalists, and the recollections of a few who came into contact with the young Nazi in his days as a youthful National Socialist enthusiast and leader. At some points the accounts are obscure and contradictory; they are seldom intimate; there are only occasional hints of his character and mental processes. However, so far as can be made out from these sources, here are the essential facts of his early life, from birth on 7 October 1900¹ to his appointment as *Reichsführer* (National Leader) of the Party Schutzstaffel (SS-Protection Guard) in January 1929.

Himmler was born of a middle-class Catholic family living in Munich. His father, Gebhard Himmler, who was at the time 35 years of age, has been described as a Secondary School Director and a teacher. His mother, Anna Heyder Himmler, was 34. Apparently Heinrich had a brother, but of him, and of the other members of the family, no information has come to hand. There is a similar gap in our knowledge of his early family life; the assertion of a journalist that Heinrich grew up in "good, homely, steady surroundings" is not very illuminating, even if based upon knowledge of the facts. We do know, however, that Heinrich attended the *Volksschule* at Munich, and the High Schools (*Gymnasia*) of Munich and Ländshut, the latter a Bavarian town about forty miles northeast of Munich to which his family apparently moved during his high school years. His early academic career, like his later, seems to have been totally undistinguished, although he passed in turn the examinations required for entrance into the Technical Academy and the University at Munich.

At the age of seventeen Himmler took the opportunity open to all gymnasialists of that time to become an officer candidate, joining the Eleventh Bavarian Infantry Regiment. Although Baldur von Shirach, in his panegyric of Himmler, claims that he went into the field, and served as "an unknown front soldier," Himmler probably saw no battle service; and the Bavarian Revolution of 7 November 1918, quickly followed by the Armistice, found him demobilized after having attained the rank of *Fahnenjunker* (Officer-Cadet, or Ensign). Deprived, by revolution and defeat, of the fulfillment of his military ambitions, Himmler was never to abandon his frustrated hopes for military action and recognition; they were fulfilled twenty-six years later when, with the Reich again facing defeat, he became Commander of German Home Defense and directly commanded more than a million soldiers in his *Waffen SS*, (Armed SS).

Like tens of thousands of demobilized German officers, whose appetite for war was still strong, who refused to acknowledge defeat, and who found themselves thrust out of their protective uniforms into a turbulent and precarious civilian existence, Himmler

¹ Sometimes given as 7 November 1900.



found his outlet in the activities of the numerous "free corps" or "murder gangs" which flourished in post-Armistice Germany. To be sure, Himmler had another alternative: he could complete his studies, and in 1919 he enrolled for a three-year course in agriculture at the Munich Technical Academy, where he received the degree of *Diplom. Landwirt*. Concurrently with his studies, and perhaps for awhile thereafter (1922-23) he worked as an assistant or clerk at the Stickstoff-Land-Embs fertilizer factory located in the Munich suburb of Schleissheim. These studies, coupled with his experience at Schleissheim, apparently provided some basis for his later claims to be a farmer, and his experiments as a breeder of rabbits, preliminary to his ventures in breeding men; but they hardly appear to have made the major claim on his attention or enthusiasm. For parallel with his studies, and concurrently with his first job as a factory assistant, Himmler became a freebooter, a companion of ex-soldier murderers, and one of the zealous early members, later described as *alter kaempfer* (old fighters) of the young National Socialist German Workers' Party.

B. "OLD FIGHTER" OF THE NSDAP

For young Himmler had been demobilized from his regiment, his officer career cut short, his appetite for battle denied, to return to a Munich in social and revolutionary ferment. Revolution and counter-revolution, violence embracing murder, unemployment and unrest, the bitterness of a defeat regarded by the demobilized officers of the *Reichswehr* as a betrayal—these were the explosive ingredients of the Munich atmosphere. In the revolutionary struggle of the time, young Himmler threw in his lot with those super-nationalist bands, the "Free Corps," who were hostile to Republican, Socialist and Communist regimes alike; blamed Germany's defeat upon betrayal by radicals, free masons, democrats and Jews; preferred war to peace, and bread and pay in a restored *Reichswehr* to the civilian struggle for existence. These bands were led by officers of the *Reichswehr*, active and demobilized; they were supported and armed by the *Reichswehr* authorities, who saw in them a supplementary source of military strength beyond the limits permitted by the Treaty of Versailles; and those bands located in Southern Germany came under the special care of an officer of the Bavarian *Reichswehr* Headquarters, Captain Ernst Roehm, who in 1919 employed a fanatical demobilized corporal, Adolf Hitler, as a spy, political agent, and propagandist.

It was, then, in these circles, the world of the "uprooted and disinherited" and the "armed intellectuals," as Konrad Heiden describes them, that the young student and demobilized officer-cadet enthusiastically took his place. Through a chance meeting with his Landshut neighbor, the pharmacist Gregor Strasser, himself a demobilized officer and a National Socialist, Himmler came into contact with the small group of National Socialists (the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) and joined the Strasser "free corps" called the "Nationalist Soldiers Group." Off and on, Himmler was associated with other of these bands, who took their sport in beating up Jews and assassinating liberal and radical politicians. Among those with which Himmler is supposed to have been associated at one time or another were the "Oberland," the "Reichsflagge," and finally the "Reichskriegflagge," Roehm's own corps. Himmler, in fact, became "standardbearer" to Roehm, in the latter's capacity both as leader of the "Reichskriegflagge" and chief of the Nazi Party's armed formation, the *Sturm Abteilung*, which was formed on 3 August 1921. It was as standard-bearer to Roehm that Himmler took part in the seizure of the *Reichswehr* Headquarters in Munich on the night of the Nazi *putsch* that failed, 8-9 November 1923.

In the years 1919-1922 Himmler's acquaintance with Gregor Strasser grew into a closer relationship. Himmler, we are told, was for several years a guest at the Strasser

household; by 1923 he was serving as Strasser's assistant, or secretary, and accompanied him to Munich in the still-born *putsch* of 1 May 1923 and on the fateful 8 November. In 1925, when Strasser went North as Party organizer, Himmler stayed behind and took over Strasser's duties as provincial organizer. This association with Strasser must have been one of the decisive formative influences in Himmler's life. It is true that Strasser, something of an idealist and a *bon vivante*, had a kind of affectionate contempt for his "inseparable" protégé. Gregor's brother Otto, after an interval of many years and the commission of many crimes on Himmler's part, recalls that Gregor used to chide Himmler with such remarks as, "You'll remain infantile all your life" and, "You've got the soul and sensibilities of a butcher." "Gentle Heinrich" he used to call him ironically, this young secretary who seemed incapable of emotion or suffering.² However, despite these complaisant aspersions on his young assistant's character, Strasser accepted his services and, apparently, his devotion.

Himmler's association with Strasser enabled him to serve his political apprenticeship under the man generally regarded as the Party's most talented and successful organizer. Besides, in the company of Strasser, whether in the latter's home or in the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich, Himmler was enabled to meet the leaders of the Party, certainly Hitler, undoubtedly Alfred Rosenberg, and perhaps General Ludendorff, among many others. Here he made those connections through which he was to make his way in the Party; here he heard the Party gossip which later became his stock in trade as the systematic organizer of blackmail; and here, too, the young Himmler absorbed and formed those primitive racial and political convictions, especially the racial paganism of Rosenberg, Ludendorff, and Hitler, which he later used as the philosophical window-dressing for his system of terror. By 1925, when Himmler was given his first Party position, the mental and psychological basis of his later career was complete. Schooled for a year in the tradition of the German officer corps; apprenticed to Roehm, the freebooter, and Strasser, the meticulous organizer and left-wing thinker; devoted to Hitler, the spy and intriguer; disciple of Alfred Rosenberg and General Ludendorff, the "philosophers" of anti-Semitism and racial paganism, Himmler was to become the crucible in which the hatreds and frustrations, the methods and techniques of the "uprooted and disinherited" of post-war Bavaria were to be fused into an instrument of power.

C. THE PUTSCH OF NOVEMBER 1923

In the critical year 1923, however, Himmler was as yet only a minor and youthful figure among the group of ex-soldiers, fanatics, and intriguers who plotted to seize power not only in Bavaria, but in the entire Reich. He was young, still capable of excitement at the prospect of an armed clash, such as that prepared for May Day 1923, the day of the still-born *putsch*. On 30 April, orders came to Landshut from Munich for a "forcible reply" to "recent Communist risings"—which was to be a pretext, as Otto Strasser recalls the event, for the seizure of governmental power. Rapid and mysterious preparations were made in the little town of Landshut. Gregor Strasser's "patriotic" ex-soldiers, who for the past three years had been Nazi Storm Troops, joyfully equipped themselves for the conquest of a new Germany according to their tastes. They brought out their hidden arms, found lorries and, full of anticipation of the great events to come, made their way to Munich.

² Strasser, Otto, *Hitler and I*, 1940; Himmler's lack of "humanity" remained throughout his most noteworthy characteristic, observed even by his hardened close associates.

Otto Strasser recalls how Himmler thrilled to the news. Standing, breathless with excitement, he greeted Otto in Gregor's office with the great news: "Orders have come from Munich. It's for tonight." The next morning, at the Munich rendezvous, Himmler stood beside Gregor Strasser at the meeting of Hitler's leaders, among them Goering, Frick, Hess, and Streicher. One face, however, was missing; that of Roehm, who, with *Reichswehr* troops, surrounded the Nazi storm-troopers, and advised Hitler that the time was not yet ripe. Although Strasser favored a bold course, even to firing upon the *Reichswehr*, Hitler abandoned the fight. The May Day demonstration, which the Nazis had intended to combat, went forward as planned; and the comic opera scene, as Otto Strasser describes it, came to an end with the Nazis humiliated, but not beaten.

In the following months, against the background of the French occupation of the Ruhr and the hardships of inflation, preparations went forward for the next *coup*; and in September, when the hitherto indulgent attitude of the Bavarian Government towards the Nazis began to stiffen, the meetings of the Party leaders at the Bürgerbräukeller assumed the cloak of conspiracy. Although he was only a minor figure, Himmler was numbered among the plotters, the more important of whom were Hitler, Goering, Strasser, Hess, Streicher, and Frick. Himmler, who appears to have been otherwise unemployed at this time, appears to have spent most of his hours in the heated atmosphere of the Bürgerbräukeller or in Strasser's home in Landshut. He must have been with Strasser when the orders came through for the mobilization of storm troopers on 8 November, and he must have "marched" to Munich with the 350 men assembled under Strasser's leadership. We do know that he returned to Landshut with Strasser after the event, and was sitting at Strasser's dinner table when his host and mentor was arrested and taken to Landshut prison for complicity in the *putsch*.

Arrived in Munich, on 8 November, Himmler took up his post as standardbearer to Roehm. While the bulk of the three thousand storm troops surrounded the civic meeting in the Bürgerbräukeller, where Hitler intimidated the Bavarian Government leaders into momentary acquiescence in his revolutionary plans, Himmler went with Roehm's own corps, the "*Reichskriegsflagge*," to seize the Munich *Reichswehr* Headquarters beyond the Feldherrnhalle, the principal square of the town. Established in the *Reichswehr* building, Roehm and his followers prepared for battle, placing machine guns in the windows and surrounding their "fortress" with a protective fencing of barbed wire. Young Himmler, undoubtedly in his element, must have played a leading part in these preparations; just as he must have listened, later in the evening, as the Party leaders gathered in the building and heatedly discussed their plans for the following day. With their meetings alternating between the Bürgerbräukeller and the *Reichswehr* headquarters, the leaders spent the night, so Heiden tells us, in deliberation, fear, hope, and hesitation. Could the *coup* succeed without bloodshed? Would the Government leaders, including Von Lossow, the *Reichswehr* commander, live up to the agreement which had been extorted from them, quite literally, at the point of Hitler's pistol? Would the Reich Cabinet in Berlin order repressive action? These and other anxieties beset the anxious plotters, while Hess rounded up hostages throughout the city, and the decisive day was awaited.

The shape of coming events was clarified when morning came, as *Reichswehr* troops surrounded Roehm's band; between the "fortress" and the Bürgerbräukeller, where the bulk of the SA was concentrated, stood not only the *Reichswehr*, but also the green-uniformed police. At first under Goering, then under Hindenburg, the National Socialist column marched slowly from the Bürgerbräukeller towards the

Feldherrnhalle, presumably on their way to relieve Roehm's besieged headquarters. As the column approached the Feldherrnhalle, there occurred that brief exchange of fire between the SA and the police as a result of which fourteen of Hitler's followers were killed. Two hours later, Roehm and his corps, of whom two had fallen, capitulated behind their barbed wire.³ Himmler, it is said, stood by Roehm's side as his leader delivered the building to General Ritter von Epp. Then, unscathed, he returned to Landshut; he had shared in the great day of the Party, and from now on was to be counted among the members of the *Blutorden*, the "blood order" of Party heroes. Within a few years his own organization, the SS, was to be given custody of that sacred, blood-soaked flag, the *Blutfahne*, which had fallen at the Feldherrnhalle. After the revival of the Party in 1925 the Party myth and the Party rites were to revolve around the events of this day and this flag. Very few of the zealots who shared in this utterly unheroic and yet hallowed drama were to survive the years of intra-Party and national struggle that culminated in a far bloodier orgy, on 30 June 1934; of the plotters in the Bürgerbräukeller, two men who had the most to do with Himmler's start in the Party were to perish on that night, Roehm and Strasser, the first by the hand of Hitler, the second by the hand of Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's aide.

With the failure of the *putsch* and the imprisonment of most of the Party leaders in 1924, a period of disintegration, hastened by an improvement in economic and political conditions, set in for the discredited and banned Party. The Party leadership itself seemed quite effectively broken; Roehm, among others, parted company with Hitler, and the latter, writing his book under the eyes of benevolent guards at Landsberg fortress, felt so incapable of exercising leadership over the Party (now called the National Socialist Liberty Movement), that he resigned his Party chairmanship on 8 July 1924.⁴ After Hindenburg's brief and unsuccessful trial as leader, Hitler chose Gregor Strasser, then thirty-two years old and very ambitious, as his deputy in the movement. Strasser, too, had been imprisoned, but after only a few months he had been released from Landsberg to take the seat in the Bavarian Diet which he had won in the 1924 elections.⁵ An energetic and capable leader, who despised many of Hitler's associates, including Roehm and Goering, Strasser — still with Himmler at his side — undertook to construct an effective Party organization, with a greater national coverage than had hitherto existed.⁶ Even after Hitler, upon his release, resumed his Party leadership in February 1925, Strasser appeared to be the leading figure in the Party, with many of the newer Party districts, especially in the North, led by organizers loyal to himself. Asked by Hitler to take charge of the Party in Northern Germany, Strasser, with Goebbels as his assistant, built up an effective organization more truly socialist in outlook than Hitler's. A real cleavage developed, and persisted even after Hitler effectively asserted his supremacy in the Party in 1926, incidentally winning the loyalty of Goebbels and Himmler.

D. PARTY ORGANIZER

It is not clear why Himmler failed to accompany Strasser to Berlin in 1925. It is improbable that Himmler had at the time any regular employment, and although he had enrolled as a student of economics at the University of Munich in 1924, he

³ Heiden, Konrad, *Der Fuehrer*, 1944, pp. 185-199.

⁴ Dutch, *Hitler's Twelve Apostles*, p. 37.

⁵ Strasser, *Hitler and I*, p. 58.

⁶ Dutch, *Hitler's Twelve Apostles*, p. 39.

apparently had little interest in his studies and pursued them for only a brief period. Otto Strasser cryptically asserts that Gregor was unable to bring his "adjutant" Himmler to Berlin. Whatever the reasons, Himmler stayed behind, and in so doing got his first more or less regular Party job—he succeeded his chief, Strasser, as business manager of the Party district Lower Bavaria-Upper Palatinate, with headquarters in Landshut. Soon thereafter he became deputy Gauleiter (district leader) of that district, and later of Upper Bavaria-Swabia, with headquarters attached to that of the Party itself in Munich. Furthermore, Himmler in 1925 became one of the first members (he carried card #168) of the *Schutz Staffel*, the new Party guard formed by Hitler to guard his person and leadership against enemies within and without the Party. From this point on his rise in the Party formations was rapid; in 1926 he was elected a member of the *Reichsleitung* (national leadership) of the Party and was appointed Deputy Reichs Propaganda Leader, a post in which he served, nominally at least under Goebbels, until 1930. In 1927 he became Deputy Leader of the SS, becoming its *Reichsführer* (National Leader—RfSS) on 6 January 1929.

How much influence Gregor Strasser had in obtaining these various positions for Himmler is open to doubt; before 1928, Strasser's influence may have been helpful and even decisive; but in that year, according to Otto Strasser, Himmler, like Goebbels before him, was seduced by the prospect of national office under Hitler, in this case command of the SS, and deserted Strasser completely to give his complete loyalty to Hitler. In the Strasser-Hitler struggle, Himmler went over to Hitler, it appears, the day he was convinced that the future belonged to Hitler. In his struggle against Strasser, Hitler, who was drawing upon the support of conservative nationalists, now had at his disposal ready cash; he could thus provide paid offices for those who gave him their allegiance. These were, no doubt, important considerations to Himmler, as they were to Goebbels, whose example he followed. Yet there may have been deeper, and more intuitive reasons for this transfer of allegiance by two such opportunists. Did they find Hitler's combination of racial fanaticism and political opportunism more congenial to their own than that of their former chief? Did they sense that Hitler's will to power was more intense than Strasser's, and thus more likely to be rewarded? Did they feel that Strasser's obstinate emphasis on the socialist part of the program of the Party was too doctrinaire? Whether or not such considerations played a part, it was evident to the simplest mind that Hitler had won out in the Party struggle for leadership; it was even more than leadership that Hitler had asserted; for after his 1926 victory he transformed himself into the Party dictator. Now he styled himself "führer" and demanded unqualified obedience from the members of the Party, a very different position from that which he had enjoyed in the earlier days. Such a claim forced his subordinates to choose; since Strasser was unwilling to give that unqualified obedience, neither Himmler nor Goebbels could continue to serve both masters. They abandoned their friend and mentor, and chose the rising star.

If Himmler's abandonment of Strasser was dictated by his financial needs, he appears to have made a good investment; for by 1928 he had managed to get together enough capital, presumably from his Party activities, to buy or rent a poultry farm at the Munich suburb of Waldtrudering. Here, according to Heiden, he settled down, and his farm enterprise made him modestly independent. Although it is frequently asserted, to the contrary, that Himmler's farm was a failure and had to be abandoned, no one has produced any evidence to support the contention. In any event, Himmler's political fortunes continued to flourish; in 1930 he was elected to the Reichstag, entering that body with more than one hundred other National Socialists who had been elected in the first impressive show of National Socialist parliamentary strength.

E. A PORTRAIT OF HIMMLER IN THE NAZI MOVEMENT

What was Himmler like during this early period, before he began to wear impressive uniforms of black and silver? Hermann Rauschning,⁷ setting down his bitter second thoughts about the Nazi leaders, tells how he first encountered Himmler, "the very type of ordinariness and commonness," at a peasants meeting. As the meeting was on the point of adjournment, Himmler gained the platform, and delivered the usual tirade against the Weimar Republic, the Jews, and the jobbers, promising the peasants economic salvation through National Socialism. Himmler struck Rauschning as a disgruntled little fellow, nervous, intense, as seedy-looking and ill-proportioned as Hitler himself. He was a man of barely medium height, with a face that was no face, and eyes which, if they existed, could not look anyone in the face. He had a sleepy look; an ill-conditioned fellow, thought Rauschning, in sum, a dirty little bit of vermin.

Hardly a complimentary portrait. Yet Rauschning continues to rub in his strictures. If Himmler was as seedy-looking as Hitler, he lacked what distinguished his leader, the hypnotist's power of suggestion — a point upon which all observers, who describe Himmler as a poor speaker, would agree. Neither did he have those virile qualities which distinguished the buccaneers like Goering or Roehm; nor did he possess the intellectual capacities of a Goebbels, or the passionate fanaticism of a Rosenberg or a Streicher.

Yet he made his way, this cold young man with what Heiden has described as a fish-like nature. Although he was not, in the years from 1925 to 1930, running against a very strong field, yet he must have had some qualities that would make him a useful member of the Party leadership. Certainly he possessed some ability to ingratiate himself with Hitler; he was noted, according to several writers, for his servile flattery of the Führer. He also appeared to possess, at least in Hitler's eyes, the capacity for trustworthy loyalty, undoubtedly a leading qualification for the post of *Reichsführer* of the SS. Furthermore, in a company of men few of whom were addicted to regular habits and systematic work, Himmler's diligence must have appeared valuable. We may be skeptical of some of the accounts that as early as 1924 he had begun to build up his card file of Party personalities, yet there is no doubt of his diligent application to his work, particularly in his organization of intrigue. By 1929 he must have convinced Hitler of his value as a master informer, a systematic practitioner of those arts of espionage and intrigue to which Hitler owed his first political successes, and upon which he continued to depend as his power grew. Whether or not it impressed Hitler, Himmler's capacity for intrigue was demonstrated by the extraordinary number of times during his career when, perhaps capitalizing upon his appearance of harmlessness, he was appointed to a deputy position, only to replace his chief within a relatively short period. Finally, Himmler by 1929 must have demonstrated to Hitler's satisfaction that he was something of a realist, a man who knew where his own interests lay, unlike stubborn and wilful men of principle like Otto Strasser, or men like Roehm who were simply stubborn and wilful. To Hitler, whose prejudices were firm as a rock, but whose principles were as reliable as the shifting sands, Himmler must have seemed a man of affinity. Such a man, he could hope, would remain loyal to *him*, to his leadership, would follow his star on its devious course. Unlike Strasser, or Roehm, or Goering, Himmler had no following of his own; he had never shown any capacity to enter the lists to strive for ultimate leadership. Like Hess and Goebbels, he would be Hitler's man, devoted to him, bound to him.

⁷ Rauschning, Hermann, *Makers of Destruction*, pp. 266-276.

Himmler, in fact, promised to be the living, actual proof of Hitler's thesis, "that the strength of a political party lies, not in having single adherents of outstanding intelligence, but in disciplined obedience."⁸ He was a mediocrity, but he had qualities, unusual in Hitler's entourage, of industry, precision and thoroughness. He had a "beaver-like capacity for quiet and effective work."⁹ His patient, systematic accumulation of his Party card files, his study of the techniques of revolution and suppression, were characteristic. Even Rauschning relents slightly, and admits that next to Goebbels he was the most intellectually active of the Nazi leaders; and while this may not be taken as proof of intense mental activity, Rauschning goes on to say that in talking with his colleagues Himmler used clear-cut phrases which revealed a keen intelligence and intensive study.¹⁰ If he was a poor speaker, if he presented an unimposing appearance — if, in short, he seemed to be a nonentity in the eyes of the extroverted members of the Party leadership, even this was turned to advantage by Himmler in his struggle for place, providing a deceptive cover under which he entered circles of authority which might have been denied a more primordial figure.

Whether entirely admirable or not, these qualities suited the requirements of preferment in the atmosphere of conspiracy and rivalry in which the Nazi leadership lived in the difficult years from 1925 to 1929. Within that leadership, Himmler's qualities of industry and loyalty were bound to impress Hitler. For when he sought to revive the Party in 1925, conditions were not such that men of real capacity would be attracted to his Party. The atmosphere of 1920-1923 in which the infant Party had thriven seemed to be gone forever. War, Ruhr occupation and defeat had receded into the background, and with it the revolutionary spirit of the post-war years had waned. The French had withdrawn from the Ruhr; the Dawes Plan had placed reparations upon a more bearable basis; and inflation had run its course and given way to a new, stable gold mark. The election of von Hindenburg to the Presidency symbolized, perhaps, the new period of political stability which resulted. On the lower level of human needs, there were for the first time since the war work and food for all, and even some luxuries. The Nazi Party, which could thrive only on social and spiritual tension, was bound to have a most difficult time in its campaign for public support, needed even more than in the earlier days because of Hitler's passion for "legality" in the climb to power. Yet even the inner nucleus of the Party had disintegrated; many of Hitler's supporters had deserted him, Roehm among them. In 1925, we learn from Heiden,¹¹ only "the strangest human scum rallied to his banners." A dozen or so more or less dubious characters were all that remained of his original group — Hess, Streicher, Esser, Rosenberg, Frick, Strasser — and most of these were "half childish, mentally deranged, weak natures." Strasser was by all odds the most endowed of them, but after the 1926 break he no longer played a central role in the Party, and even his position in the North was subordinated to that of Goebbels, whose new loyalty to Hitler was repaid with his appointment as *Gauleiter* of Berlin. In fact, as the breach between Hitler and Strasser widened, and as Hitler and his Bavarian faction asserted dictatorial control over the Party, it can be said that the Party came to consist more and more not only of failures, but of the most depraved elements of the old murderers' army, of whom the Roehm-Heines group of perverts was most conspicuous, Roehm himself having returned to the fold in 1927.

⁸ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, p. 306.

⁹ Roberts, Stephen, *The House That Hitler Built*, p. 89.

¹⁰ Rauschning, *Makers of Destruction*, p. 268.

¹¹ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 253-293.

It is not so surprising, then, that Himmler was able to make his way, in the face of such competition, and in the hierarchy of a Party which, far from reaching for power, seemed chiefly concerned with problems of dissention and survival.¹² For in these years Hitler's leadership, or rather his dictatorship, over the Party, had to be maintained and strengthened; conspirators and dissident elements had to be suppressed; the claims of old comrades and principles once declared unshakeable had to be overridden. No wonder, then, that Hitler should have founded a special guard, sworn to fealty not to Party, not to principle, but to himself. Hardly less wonder that, of the material available, he should have chosen as leader of this band his diligent, devoted, self-effacing, inhumane lieutenant, Heinrich Himmler.

¹² There is no intention to imply that the Party showed no growth in these years. According to the *Deutschvolkkunde-Geschichte der NSDAP*, a source which may be used with some reserve, membership rose from 27,000 in 1925 to 176,000 in 1929.

II. HIMMLER AND THE SS, 1925-1933

INTRODUCTION

An old Party member once gave Hermann Rauschning some useful advice, born of experience, on how to make his way. "In the Party," he was told, "there's only one way of maintaining your position. You must so build it up that, if you fall, a wall of the party edifice falls with you. . . . A man must be feared by his party friends, and then he can hold on."¹ Whether by choice or inability, Rauschning never profited from such counsel. Heinrich Himmler, one can be sure, had no need of it. When he became *Reichsführer* of the SS in January 1929 he secured control of a body which was destined to become the main "wall" of the Party edifice, and ultimately the governing force in Germany and a large part of Europe. Himmler had held other positions before, and he was to hold others as the years passed; but his position as the chief of the SS was to be his unique key to power, his instrument of domination over German life. It was by virtue of his position as head of the SS that Himmler had special responsibility for the protection of the life of the Führer, and played some part, as yet obscure, in Hitler's last days.² It was as head of the SS that Himmler was, in the days before Germany's collapse, in charge of the *Waffen SS*, the "one remaining integrated command organization" of the German armed forces.³

A. FORMATION OF THE SS

In later years, when the SS had grown to maturity, Himmler discovered grandiose racial, philosophical, and historical causes for its formation. The truth, however, was far less romantic. The story necessarily goes back to the early days of turbulence, the "combat era" of the Party, when the *Sturm Abteilung* (SA-Storm Troops-Brown Shirts) were formed as the strong-arm guards charged with the task of defending meetings of the Party, breaking up those of the opposition, and carrying on "outdoor propaganda." Originally led by Captain Ernst Röhm, the brown-shirted Storm Troopers to some extent incorporated and carried on the traditions of the free corps murder gangs; they not only waged their meeting-hall battles, but were also said to have fought against the French in the Ruhr and against the enemies of the Party elsewhere. After the failure of the *putsch* of November 1923 the SA was declared illegal, with the rest of the Party; and, as Röhm broke with Hitler, the SA disintegrated into various fragments, living a more or less independent existence. Since, in any case, the SA remained under an official ban when the Party was reconstituted, early in 1925, Hitler decided to form a new body of guards called the *Schutz Staffel* (SS-Protective Guard). Originally designed to take the place of the SA, the SS was retained even after the SA was again legalized, and in January 1926 the new formation, which had existed in its first year as a local unit in Munich, was organized on a nation-wide basis.⁴

¹ Rauschning, *Makers of Destruction*, pp. 260-261.

² See statement of SS Guard, *The Times*, 21 June 1945.

³ General Eisenhower, 18 June 1945, quoted in *The Times*, 19 June 1945.

⁴ Heiden, *History of National Socialism*, p. 125.

The central principle of the organization of the new body was radically different from that of the SA. Instead of a mass organization recruited indiscriminately from the Party membership, the SS was to be a small, carefully selected, trusted group, an inner guard for the defense of Hitler and the Party leaders. When the SA was established in 1921, the recruiting proclamation had run: "The Party expects that you will all join." Now it was emphasized, in the case of the SS, that "The Party is convinced that a small number of the best and most determined is more valuable than a vast crowd of supporters lacking the power of decision. In accordance with this belief the regulations for the recruitment of the SS have been laid down with great strictness and the strength of the SS will be restricted as far as possible."⁵

In addition to this limitation on its membership, the SS was to owe allegiance not to the Party, but to Hitler himself, thus emerging as an instrument of Hitler's Party dictatorship. In this sense at least the origin of the SS may be traced back to another small group, the *Stabswache* (Headquarters Guard), formed in March 1923 to serve as a protective guard for Hitler, and composed of selected men drawn from the SA. Found to be too small for its purposes, the *Stabswache* was absorbed a few months later (May 1923) into the *Stosstrupp Hitler* (Hitler Assault Troop), which had been organized by Hitler's old friend, Joseph Berchtold. To distinguish themselves from other SA formations, both of these guard bodies wore the *Totenkopf* (Death's Head) badge, which later became one of the distinguishing symbols of the SS.

The *Stosstrupp Hitler* took a prominent part in the Munich *putsch*, and suffered the common fate of the Party formations after its failure, being banned by law.⁶ The SS, which Hitler formed after the revival of his activities in 1925, was in some respects its successor; in fact, there was a continuity of leadership, for after a brief trial of his former chauffeur, Julius Schreck, as leader, the new SS group was entrusted in 1926 to Joseph Berchtold, the old chief of the *Stosstrupp Hitler*. In these first months of its existence, the SS performed some of the functions previously discharged by the SA, which still remained under an official ban. Organized in scattered units of ten men and their leader, known as *die Zehnerstaffeln*, it served as a protective guard for leaders and speakers at Party meetings. However, with the revival of the SA in 1926, under the leadership of Pfeffer von Salomon, an untrustworthy adventurer who was not even a National Socialist at heart, and was not amenable to Hitler's discipline, Hitler conceived the SS more narrowly as his own inner guard, the instrument of his own dictatorship over the Party, which was now threatened not only by the semi-independent course of the SA but also by the Strasser and other factions within the Party.⁷ Thus the SS, to enhance its prestige, was entrusted in 1926 with custody of the sacred *Blutfahne*, which all the banners of the Party had to "touch" in a ceremony of ordination. Also, the SS members were distinguished by the new black Fascist uniform, distinguishing them from the far larger membership of the brown-shirted SA. Berchtold, however, did not understand the spirit of his task; he lacked the heart to draw his troops out of the Party mass. For the notion of a chosen band insulted the broad section of members which was still permeated by the mood of the old founders, Berchtold himself among them. Besides, Berchtold was half-hearted in his leadership; he was not only SS leader, but also an editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Party newspaper, and let his editorial chief, Amann, bully him into instructing his SS men "to recruit readers and advertisers" for the newspaper. Finally, forced with the choice

⁵ As above; also Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 304-305.

⁶ *The Allgemeine SS*, EDS/G/8, p. 3.

⁷ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, p. 304.

of leading the black-uniformed élite or earning his modest living on the Party paper, he chose to earn a living. The SS was then led for a time, according to Konrad Heiden, by a certain Erhard Heiden, a stool-pigeon of the worst sort.⁸ It was this Heiden that Himmler replaced as Reichsführer of the SS in January 1929.

B. HIMMLER'S TASK

Himmler, we may now observe, had been one of the first to join the SS in 1925. In 1927, when the revived SA claimed a membership of 30,000, and the SS remained a small band of only a few hundred, Himmler was appointed its Deputy Leader. On 6 January 1929, when Himmler was elevated to Reich Leadership of the SS, its strength was only about 280; yet the appointment was a significant event in the history of the Party, for Hitler had at last found a leader whose character was suited to the task set before the SS, and who was in turn entrusted by Hitler with a commission to transform the SS into an élite, trusted body of troops, which would be "at all times at least 10 percent of the SA" in strength and could be relied upon in every circumstance.⁹ Himmler assumed his new task with the greatest seriousness, and at once began to organize what was to become the "Praetorian Guard" of the Nazi formations. Within a year his band included about 400 professional guardsmen, and between 800 and 1,500 part-time volunteers, who drilled on week-ends and during summer vacations. Working patiently and unobtrusively, Himmler set himself the task of creating an "aristocracy" within the Party, which he called the *Deutsche Männerorden* (German Order of Men), and to which he attributed the qualities of a "monastic community of clans." For the principle upon which he based his policy was that of racial and political selection, reinforced by Spartan discipline, and a Machiavellian lack of scruples in the service of the Führer. Whoever met these qualifications, whatever his class, education or mentality, could find a place in the SS—provided, that is, that he showed his readiness to sacrifice by putting up the 50 M. required for his black and silver uniform.¹⁰

In 1931 Himmler laid down the Spartan regulations which were designed to make the SS the aristocracy of the Party, and even to found a hereditary nobility. Members of the SS were to be the model members of the Party. The black uniform, marked by its Death's Head, had from the beginning included a belt inscribed: "My Loyalty is My Honor"; now, at every meeting of the SS, members were to sing its official song, "Though All Should Prove Unfaithful"—a song composed not by any radical National Socialist, but by the Conservative romantic Max von Schenkendorf.¹¹

Himmler understood with his heart when the Führer demanded that the Party must become the racial élite of Germany, the Party of the ruling minority. But by the Party now was meant Hitler's Party, which grew out of the unbridled National Socialist mass, and raised itself above the mass; Himmler saw the SS as the motive force of this special Party. "We are not more intelligent than two thousand years ago," he said to his men in 1931. "The military history of antiquity, the history of the Prussian Army two or three hundred years ago—again and again we see that wars are waged with men, but that every leader surrounds himself with an organization of men of special quality when things are at their worst and hardest; that is the guard. There has always been a guard; the Persians, the Greeks, Caesar, Old Fritz, Napoleon, all had a guard,

⁸ *Der Fuehrer*, p. 305.

⁹ EDS/G/8, pp. 3-5.

¹⁰ EDS/G/8, p. 3.

¹¹ Heiden, *History of National Socialism*, pp. 126-127.

and so on up to the World War; and the guard of the new Germany will be the SS. The guard is an élite of especially chosen men."¹²

The SS, writes Heiden, was stamped forever by the reason for its founding; Hitler's need to control an undisciplined Party by founding a new Party. The task of the SS man was to supervise and spy on the whole party for his Leader. The first service code of the SS listed among its tasks the protection of the Führer, the indoctrination within the ranks, and conduct of an information service. The last two terms meant, more plainly, espionage within and outside the Party.¹³

Some insight into Himmler's conception of his task at this time (1930) is provided by a story, frequently told, of a meeting at which Hitler surprised a circle of his friends by asking them what they thought of the recently published autobiography of Leon Trotzky, the Russian Revolutionary leader. As might have been expected, the answer was: "Yes . . . loathesome book . . . memories of Satan. . . ." To which Hitler is said to have replied: "Loathesome? Brilliant! I have learned a great deal from it, and so can you!" Himmler now spoke, remarking that he had not only read Trotzky, but studied all available literature about the political police in Russia, the Tsarist Ochrana, the Bolshevik Cheka and GPU; and he believed that if he should ever have to organize such an apparatus of terror, he could do better than the Russians.¹⁴

With this in mind he drilled his troop, imbued it with his Führer's arrogance and contempt of humanity, and thus armed his men with the moral, or immoral force, to massacre their own people as well as foreigners, and to regard this as absolutely necessary. At a time when the Party still meant nothing, Himmler's service regulations ordered that once a month at least the men must attend a confidential local Party meeting; at these meetings they must not smoke or leave the room like common mortals, and above all never take part in the discussion; for "the nobility keeps silence." The good material does not discuss, but only obeys and commands, "in responsibility upwards, in command downward," as Hitler put it. And of this obedient, silent troop there was expected not only ruthless struggle to the death, but, in case of grave failure, suicide.¹⁵

Above all, it must be emphasized, ran the overriding principle of obedience to the Führer. "Topical questions," Himmler told a Reichswehr audience in January 1935, "are of no interest to us. Any leader the Führer may put in over us is obeyed by us; any leader the Führer may remove from us is removed, if necessary, by force, for the only order which counts is that of the Führer."¹⁶ And in 1931, after Hitler had lost the Presidential election, Himmler described the SS as "Des Führers ureigenste, erlesene Garde" (The Leader's most personal, selected Guard).¹⁷

Blind obedience to Hitler's will was made all the more acceptable by the freedom from class bias in the selection of SS candidates. Unlike the SA, which was made up principally from the middle classes and was imbued with an anti-capitalist political philosophy, the SS was classless in origin and classless in aims, being drawn from all strata of society. Many of the men had been members of the *Freikorps* such as the *Brigade Erhardt*, the *Freikorps Reichsflagge* and the *Freikorps Baltikum*, and had

¹² Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 306-307.

¹³ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 307-308.

¹⁴ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, p. 308.

¹⁵ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 308-309; much of the few paragraphs above, even that part not in quotes, is taken almost verbatim from these pages of Heiden.

¹⁶ EDS/G/8, p. 5-6.

¹⁷ EDS/G/8, p. 3.

fought against Allied occupation troops after the World War. These men joined the SS with no other aim than the betterment of their own difficult existence. Unemployed laborers, disillusioned teachers, white collar employees and noncommissioned and commissioned officers of the defeated Imperial Armies—all these went into the *Stosstrupp* and its successor, the SS.¹⁸

C. SS IN THE PARTY STRUGGLE

The need for a personal, selected Guard, bound to blind obedience to Hitler, became abundantly clear in the three years, 1930-1932, which preceded the *Machtübernahme*, the seizure of power, on 30 January 1933. From 1929 to 1932 the rise of Hitler's Party to the position of the leading political force in the nation paralleled the fall in wages and employment which followed the temporary and artificial prosperity of the years from 1924-1929. The Party, which had elected only twelve members of the Reichstag in 1928, returned well over 100, Himmler among them, in the elections of 1930. Many of the towns of Germany had been "conquered," that is, terrified into submission, by the purposeful Storm Troopers; street and meeting-hall fights with "Marxists" and other enemies of the Nazis became the order of the day, and Nazi murderers like Horst Wessel became the heroes of the growing movement. These rumblings of the political underworld, however, and even the parliamentary gains of the Nazis, would have been of minor importance if the Republic itself, assailed by its friends of both extreme Right and the Left, and betrayed by the weakness of its friends in the Center had not gone politically bankrupt. These were the years in which Brüning invoked the emergency powers of the Constitution, in which the sinister and conspiratorial figures of Von Papen and Von Schleicher moved across the political stage, preparing the way, consciously or unconsciously, for the surrender of the State to Hitler. For the Nazi Party these were years of stirring triumph alternating with blank despair, when the chance of power was often held out tantalizingly, either to Hitler or to other leaders of the Party, on terms which held out great temptations. They were, then, years of test for the Party whose leader had long before abandoned program for opportunism, and was prepared to throw over old comrades, old principles, old methods, for the sake of the glittering prize of mastery over the Reich, which would at once satisfy his ambition and fill the pockets and stomachs of the mass of his hungry and impatient followers.

In such circumstances, the blind obedience of the SS and its dissociation from the doctrinal differences within the Party were priceless qualities. When Otto Strasser and his socialistic faction, first within the Party and later outside it under the name of the "Black Front," had to be hounded out of the Party and the country, the SS, together with elements of the SA, was called in to do the job. On 2 July 1930 SS Guards did Goebbels' will in barring Otto Strasser from a conference of Berlin Party officials, after the final interview in which Strasser had broken with Hitler. SS and SA district leaders threatened any who dared to cling to Strasser with expulsion from the Party, and SA men took part in a physical attack on Strasser himself. The SS, together with the SA, fought Strasser's secessionist "Black Front" during the next few years, in bloody fights throughout the country. Finally, after the Reichstag fire, the SS set out deliberately to wipe out Strasser and his movement, and its agents hounded him out of Germany to Austria, and later Czechoslovakia, whence he escaped in turn to Switzerland, France, and finally to Canada.¹⁹

¹⁸ EDS/G/8, p. 4.

¹⁹ Strasser, *Hitler and I*, pp. 128-140.

When Otto Strasser broke with Hitler in the spring of 1930, he apparently carried with him one section of the SA, who took up an attitude of revolt against the Party leadership. The revolt in the course of which the SS attack was so threatening that Hitler himself was forced to come to Berlin, where by a combination of threats and cajolery he managed to keep the dissident elements in line. Furthermore, he took this occasion to get rid of Pfeffer von Salomon, who was retired, taking himself the title of Supreme SA Leader, thus becoming the *military* as well as the *civil* head of the Party. Roehm, who after his reconciliation with Hitler in 1927 had gone to serve with the Bolivian Army for personal reasons, was now (October, 1930) recalled by Hitler, and was made Chief of Staff of the SA and SS in January 1931.²⁰

This change, however, still left many elements of the SA of doubtful allegiance to Hitler's leadership, as was shown by the Stennes revolt, which quickly followed. Captain Walter Stennes, OSAF-OST, that is, commander of the SA in Eastern Germany, was as such the second most important commander of the SA, second only to Roehm. The Stennes "conspiracy" was intended, it seems, to drive Hitler back to the course of forcible revolution, which he had abandoned in favor of "legality"; it was also stimulated, according to Otto Strasser, by Black Front revelations of various Party intrigues. Whatever the precise motives, Hitler acted first, and deposed Stennes on 1 April 1931. A few weeks of action followed, in which Stennes captured the Berlin Party headquarters and press, issued an order deposing both Goebbels and Hitler, and led his followers in the accompanying battles with loyal elements, which were directed valiantly by Goebbels via telephone from Munich. While the facts at this point are obscure, it seems that Hitler did not even trust Roehm to put down the revolt, and placed a Lt. Schulz under Goering's supervision to restore order in the SA of Eastern Germany. Within a few weeks Schulz, noted for his ruthlessness, had quelled the revolt with the help of the SS and, strangely enough, the forces of law and order, the regular police.²¹

This lengthy excursion into the troubled history of the SA in 1930-1931 is intended to throw light on the role of the SS in that period. What emerges clearly is the unreliability of the SA, and Hitler's constant fear that it would try to destroy his leadership. This fear was not even dispelled by the reappearance of Roehm, who, as we have seen, was given the title not of Supreme SA Leader, but only Chief of Staff of SA and SS. And even this safeguard was to be supplemented by the presence, within the SA body, of Himmler, RfSS, and his organization, one of whose duties was to keep a constant watch on the dissident elements of the SA. This function was one of the principal tasks of the "Sicherheitsdienst," or security service, which by now had been established as one of the three main divisions of the SS, the others dealing with "race and settlement," that is, the promotion of Nazi racial ideas within and beyond the SS, and general administration.²²

At the same time, it should be remembered, SS men marched and fought beside those of the SA in the battles against the common political foes of the Party, and both organizations shared a similar fate when, on 14 April 1932, a few days after Hindenburg's electoral triumph over Hitler in the Presidential contest, they were suppressed as instruments of civil war by order of Groener, the Reichswehr Minister. The ban was, however, lifted a few months later when Hitler promised the President that he

²⁰ Heiden, *History of National Socialism*, p. 115; Heiden, *Hitler*, p. 350.

²¹ Heiden, *History of National Socialism*, pp. 127-128; Strasser, *Hitler and I*, pp. 137-138.

²² Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 349-351; Heiden, *History of National Socialism*, pp. 127-128; Strasser, *Hitler and I*, pp. 128-140.

would "tolerate," that is, not oppose, the new Reich government then in process of formation.²³

D. HIMMLER AND THE MACHTUBERNAHME

While the SS played, as has been seen, a critical role in the intra-Party struggle, and also joined with the SA in fighting the common enemies of the Party in 1931 and 1932, meantime fulfilling its established role as guard for the Führer and other Party Leaders, Himmler himself did not appear in the foreground of events. He had no independent game to play, unlike Roehm, who conspired separately with Von Schleicher to make the SA a State Army, with Von Schleicher at its head—a plan treasonable both to the State and Hitler. He had no independent political influence, and, unlike Gregor Strasser, received from Hindenburg no invitations to join the Cabinet. Unlike Goering, he appeared to have no independent channels of contact with upper circles in government, Army, or aristocracy. Unlike Frick, he held no independent provincial office. Nor did he have the influence of a Goebbels, whose voice and articles had become widely known, and whose sharp tongue lashed the enemies of the Party in the Reichstag. Himmler unquestionably lacked these qualities which gave the others influence, yet he was after all, only a young man, in his early thirties; not only that, he was patient; and while others strove for the symbols of power, for popular favor or Presidential blessing, he unobtrusively remained in the background, in the second row of Hitler's intimate circle of advisers, building up the SS. In the four years of his command, from January 1929 to January 1933, its membership rose from 280 to roughly 50,000 (some estimates are double or triple this figure); not as large as Roehm's SA, to be sure, but large enough, and far better disciplined, and far more strategically placed.

Only once did Himmler emerge from the wings to the stage on which the political drama was being played; but this, it must be realized was at the conference which was, perhaps, crucial in Hitler's devious intrigues for power—the notorious meeting of Hitler and Von Papen at the home of the Cologne financier, Baron Kurt von Schroeder, on 4 January 1933. The meeting came at a time when the Nazis appeared to be on an ebb tide. There had been a setback in the November 1932 elections, possibly reflecting a slight economic improvement. The Party was desperately short of funds, and members were dropping out. Hitler turned for support now to this group, now to that, uncertain whether he should reach for a share of power through Gregor Strasser, who would provide the entree to the Left, or Goering, who had his connections with the Right. The replacement of Von Papen by Von Schleicher as Premier finally decided the matter for Hitler, for Schleicher immediately began to lure Strasser from the Party with offers of a share of power. Goering meanwhile was putting out his own lines to Hindenburg; the mutual betrayal of the Nazi leaders, on the tantalizing threshold of power, was in process. Hitler struck out independently, and the meeting with Von Papen at Cologne was arranged. On such occasions as this, Hitler chose his entourage carefully, as if to say: these are the men with whom I shall rule when the time comes. This time he chose not Goering, who was at odds with Von Papen, not Goebbels, the mortal enemy of the barons, not Ribbentrop, who was not important enough to attend; none of the strong individualists of the Party were present. Instead, there was Hitler's conservative economic adviser, the manufacturer Wilhelm Keppler, and two silent men endowed with impressive self-control: Rudolf Hess and Heinrich Himmler.²⁴

²³ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 450-460.

²⁴ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 520-521.

What share Himmler had in this meeting is unrecorded. Yet it is worth emphasizing that at a critical point in his struggle for power, when Hitler wished to impress conservative and reactionary forces in Germany with his "soundness," Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, was one of his three principal show-pieces.

The Cologne conversation probably saved Hitler from bankruptcy, for it resulted in the formation of a consortium of heavy industrialists pledged to save the Party's finances. These funds made it possible to score a victory in the provincial Lippe election, thus restoring some of the Party's damaged prestige; and they tided the Party over until, on 30 January 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of the Reich. He had, no doubt, sacrificed many of his principles, and forgotten many of his bold claims for untrammelled power; but he was Chancellor. The consolidation of power, both in the country and the Party, would come later; and Heinrich Himmler would be one of his principal agents in the bloody process of "coordination" to be followed in the next eighteen months.

E. PLANS FOR THE PERIOD OF POWER

Meanwhile, Himmler and others in the Party had been making plans for the consolidation of power, once it should be achieved. During the summer of 1932, in a period of optimism about the prospects of the Party, Himmler was present at a meeting at Roehm's in Munich, where, with Col. Walther Nicolai (head of Reichswehr espionage in the World War), Goebbels, Roehm, and Hess (Chief of the Political Bureau of the Party, and no doubt present as Hitler's representative), he discussed plans for the organization of the secret police of the coming Nazi regime. Himmler, it is said, spoke far less than the others; but when he did, Nicolai was impressed with the range of his knowledge of secret police methods.²⁵ In the several days following, long planning conferences were also held in Himmler's offices on the third floor of the Deutsches Haus in Munich, directly above Hitler's own quarters. Goebbels, Hess, and Goering, among others, were present at these meetings; so was Reginald Garbutt, an Englishman who claims to have spent many years in the service of the Gestapo, and who relates that at these conferences the entire Gestapo domestic and foreign program was laid out. In the program for the complete Nazification of Germany, which was to involve the use of persuasion and force, Himmler foresaw the special province of the Gestapo to be the employment of cunning and intrigue, and similar weapons were to be used to advance Germany's aims abroad.²⁶

²⁵ Garbutt, Reginald, *Germany: The Truth*, London, 1940; Riess, Curt, *Total Espionage*. New York, 1941, pp. 9-13.

²⁶ Garbutt, *Germany: The Truth*, pp. 28-56.

III. CONSOLIDATION OF POWER, 30 JANUARY 1933-JULY 1934

INTRODUCTION

It was not very long before the plans for a Nazi regime of terror, so thoroughly canvassed in 1932, were to be put into effect. On 30 January 1933 Hitler became Chancellor. His power, to be sure, was formally limited; Von Papen was Vice-Chancellor, and the majority of the Cabinet represented parties other than the Nazis. Furthermore, the Nazi Minister of the Interior, Frick, promised on the first day of power that the SA (presumably including the SS) would not be incorporated in the armed forces of the State. The Conservatives could rest easy; the fanatics would be tamed by power, and would become in turn the prisoners of their more traditional supporters of the Right, the Nationalists. So they thought, at least, on 30 January 1933; their disillusionment was to be rapid; the lust for power which had driven forward the Nazi leaders and their followers could not be easily stifled. On the contrary, it was to lead, within a comparatively few months, to what was euphemistically called the "Gleichschaltung" (coordination) of the Reich. This is not the place to tell the story of the Nazi revolution, which transformed Germany from a country of many states to a unified Reich, from a country of many Parties to a one-Party dictatorship, from a state based upon law to a prison ruled where persuasion and policy failed, by deception and terror. Only so much of the story will be told as is required to make understandable the growing influence of Heinrich Himmler, who was to become the chief policeman of the regime, and his Schutz Staffel, the main instrument of his power.

Two things must be observed by way of introduction. In the first place, there was in the early years of the Nazi regime a dual struggle in Germany, for the supremacy of the Party over the entire State, and for leadership and domination within the Party itself. In the second place, while the Party won an almost complete victory over the State, the Party leadership never in fact merged with that of the State; what resulted, in fact, was a sort of condominium over Germany. Side by side with the Reich Government, much of which, it must be admitted, was in the hands of individual officials of the Party, there existed the Party government itself. This duality is illustrated at the top in the person of Hitler, who was simultaneously Chancellor of the Reich and Führer of the Party; it was reflected in Himmler's position as Chief of the German Police, while he retained his Party position as Reich Leader of the SS. The duality was by no means clear; members of the SS became important figures in the German police, as well as in other administrations, and as time went on purely Party formations were given State tasks by decree. It is, however, important to keep this duality in mind as we trace the career of Himmler, whose various State posts (in time he accumulated a good many) were in many ways coordinated and made more powerful through his overriding control of the SS.

A. POWER THROUGH TERROR

In the months of *Gleichschaltung*, one of the foremost tasks of the Party leaders was to secure control of the police in the various States (there was no national police under the Republic), consolidate them into an effective national force, and above all es-

establish an effective secret political police capable of eradicating all those who stood in the way of the regime. Seizure and "orientation" of the police forces of Prussia, which covered two-thirds of the Reich territory, was carried out under Goering; to him we also owe the birth of the *Geheime Staats Polizei* (Gestapo-Secret State Police), with its uncontrolled powers of repression. The "coordination" of the police forces of the rest of the country fell to Himmler, who by 20 April 1934 was also to obtain control of the Prussian Gestapo, and thereby possession of the entire secret political police of the Reich.

The events in Prussia during February 1933 must be noted even though Himmler's part in them was a subordinate one. As the month opened, the echelons of the SS and SA, despite Frick's promise, were waiting for the day when they would become the constituted police of the State. Goering, seemingly preparing for that day, brought SS Ogruf Kurt Daluege, one of Himmler's ruffians, into his Ministry. Then, using the Rhenish succession movement as a pretext (there were, by treaty, no *Reichswehr* forces in the Rhineland), Goering deposed the police presidents in the Rhineland and elsewhere, and replaced them by SA leaders or former officers who were his personal friends. Within a few days several hundred leading officials of the Prussian State changed their posts; and then the SA and SS began their march of terror throughout the land. Brawls and murders were the order of the day, in preparation for that election of 5 March 1933 for which the burning of the Reichstag, on 25 February, was also to prepare the way.

Not only was Goering content to give the SA its head; the regular police were ordered to protect the Storm Troopers in their brutal work. Even that was not enough, and on 22 February 1933, after conferring with Hitler and Von Blomberg, the new Reichswehr Minister sympathetic to the Nazis, Goering took the decisive revolutionary act of the National Socialists; he ordered the mobilization and arming of 50,000 auxiliary police, to be drawn from the SA (25,000), the SS (15,000) and the *Stahlhelm* (10,000). This was to be the army of the *coup d'état*; the Reichstag fire took place only a few days after its mobilization, and as its first task it thundered through the cities and towns of the country, committed numberless bestialities, rounded up and destroyed the Communist and Social Democratic leadership, and in other ways carried out Goering's threat to "destroy and exterminate" anyone who stood in the way of the new governors of Germany. And the new governors they were, despite the fact that in the election of 5 March, in the face of all that had gone before, Hitler mustered only a feeble majority, even with help of the votes of Hugenberg and Von Papen, leaders of the parties of the Right. To show their contempt for the processes of parliamentary decision, election day was followed by another orgy of the armed auxiliaries. Schutzhaft, or "protective custody," had already been given the sanction of decree on 28 February; now many potential opponents of the new regime were to find out what it was like to be "protected" in the new concentration camps constructed to accommodate the numerous victims of the regime.¹

B. HIMMLER—CHIEF OF POLITICAL POLICE

Meanwhile, the Nazi domination of the remaining States had to be carried out. Frick, the Reich Minister of the Interior, put SA leaders or Nazi gauleiters in charge of the police forces in Baden, Württemberg, and Saxony, where there was little active opposition; but in Bavaria, traditionally jealous of its autonomy, the Nazi leadership

¹ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 547-565; EDS/G/10, p. 1.

faced the resistance of an actively hostile government. Alarmed by the obvious nationalizing tendencies of the Nazi regime, the Bavarian Government even contemplated the establishment of a government under Prince Rupprecht, a move scheduled for 11 March 1933. The Nazis acted quickly; on 8 March they demanded the appointment of General Ritter von Epp, one of their supporters, as general state commissar of Bavaria. This the Bavarian government refused. The next day the Bavarian SA marched, seizing the government buildings in Munich and elsewhere. On the evening of 9 March General von Epp, with Roehm, Hermann Esser, Deputy Wagner of the State Diet, and Dr. Hans Frank, Hitler's attorney, began to rule. Active in the background was the new Police President of Munich, Heinrich Himmler; under his direction the SA and SS were let loose on the refractory State officials whose failure to acknowledge the new regime was to earn for some at least a sojourn in the concentration camp soon established at Dachau. Within a few months, in May 1933, Himmler had been appointed Chief, or Commissar, of the Political Police in Bavaria; his aide Reinhard Heydrich, head of the SD (Sicherheitsdienst) of the SS was chosen as his Chief of Political Police for Munich.²

By the end of 1933 Himmler had been appointed the chief of political police, and had organized secret police, in 13 states, that is, in all of Germany, except Prussia. He bore a new title which signified his responsibilities: Political Police Commander of the German States. During the first few months of power all the governments of these States, or Lander, were taken over by the Nazis, and with them all the executive positions controlling the Police, such as the Ministries of Interior. These newly appointed executives in turn immediately began a ruthless purge within their regions, to remove all the lesser members of the Police who had been in any way connected with a republican or democratic party, or whose loyalty towards the Nazi cause was open to question. Such men were mostly replaced by "Alter Kampfer" (Old fighters for Nazism), whose loyalty was beyond all shadow of a doubt. Thus the police forces, under the supervision of Himmler, were Nazified both from above and below; and frequently, too, large numbers of the SS and SA were temporarily employed as auxiliary police.³

For complete power over the instrumentalities of terror and power, however, Himmler required one remaining appointment, that as chief of the Prussian machine. From his headquarters in Munich he must have looked enviously at that concentration of power under Goering; his appointment to Goering's Prussian State Council, in July 1933, he must have taken at its face value, an empty office in a show-piece body which more than anything else pleased Goering's vanity. The reality of power was in the control of the Gestapo, and before very long, by 20 April 1934, it was to be his.

C. CONTROL OF THE GESTAPO

While personnel changes had quite effectively brought all of the German police under Nazi control in the first few months of power, the first structural change in the German police system was introduced in Prussia with the establishment on 26 April 1933 of the *Geheime Staats Polizei*, the secret state police, commonly known as the Gestapo. The establishment of the Gestapo had an obvious Party and State purpose; but it was evidently considered by Goering to be an instrument for the enhancement

² Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 566-567; many other sources for facts of Himmler's appointment.

³ EDS/G/10, p. 1.

of his own power within the Party circle. His appointment, as Deputy Chief of the Gestapo, of a non-Party man, Oberregierungsrat Diels, who had formerly been in charge of the anti-Communist section of the Reich Ministry of Interior, showed that Goering meant to keep this new instrument of power out of the hands of his Party rivals. Of these, two were most prominent: Roehm, who considered that as Chief of Staff of SA he should have control of such a function as secret police; and Himmler, who as head of the SS with its strongly developed SD, believed that he should control a state police service so obviously related to his own surveillance organization.⁴

Goering was to play no small part in destroying Roehm, one of his two chief rivals for captaincy of the Prussian secret police; but by the time that Roehm was utterly destroyed, in the "Night of the Long Knives," 30 June 1934, his other rival, Himmler, had won the prize, and was in effective control of the object of competition, the Gestapo. In the spring of 1934 Himmler brought several Prussian Gestapo officials under his sway, and "discovered" a plot against Goering, thus seemingly proving the inefficiency of the Prussian Gestapo. Acting very much in character, Himmler now forced Goering's hand, and the latter had to appoint him as Deputy Chief of the Prussian Gestapo in place of Diels, who was dismissed.⁵ There was, probably, more to it than that; Goering was getting too big, too powerful, too ambitious; and Himmler's appointment, which had the backing of Hitler, probably reflected Der Führer's determination to check any pretensions on the part of any member of his entourage, even of his second in command. There were even some who regarded Himmler's appointment as a victory of Roehm over Goering, in view of Himmler's position under Roehm; and, to illustrate how murky were the waters of Party intrigue, there should be mention of another group, who saw in the appointment a victory by Goering, who was thought to have "bought" Himmler!⁶ Whatever the motives of those concerned, and however divergent the interpretations, the one sure result of the appointment was that Himmler was the only person to derive any profit from it. Roehm was soon sent to the grave, largely through the efforts of Goering and Himmler; and if Goering thought he had "bought" Himmler he was due for a rude awakening. For with his command of all the secret political police of the Reich, as well as the SS and its SD, Himmler soon managed to become, as deputy chief of the Gestapo, far more important in police matters than his nominal superior.

At first, however, Himmler maintained an attitude of respectful deference towards his new chief. As he took over his new duties as Deputy Chief of the Prussian Gestapo he addressed to Goering a public announcement:

"There are still thousands and tens of thousands who remain enemies, even though they raise their arms and are *gleichgeschaltet*. . . . Our task is heavy, but in confidence of our victory we shall proceed with our work in faith and comradeship. Be assured, Herr Ministerpräsident, that we shall do our duty to the end."⁷

Following this conception of his duties, Himmler's first care was to purge his secret police of all officials suspected of a lukewarm attitude towards the regime, and then rapidly replace the dismissed officials with members of the SS, thus beginning that amalgamation of the SS and the Police which was to find its full expression some

⁴ EDS/G/10, p. 1.

⁵ EDS/G/10, p. 2.

⁶ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 743-744.

⁷ Quoted by Schumann, *Hitler and the Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 300, from the *Völkischer Beobachter*, 21 April 1934.

years later.⁸ The legislative decree of 30 January 1934, which had meanwhile been passed, had transferred the sovereign rights of the States to the Reich, and thus enabled Himmler to coordinate the activities of his secret police forces throughout the country.⁹ While the Gestapo itself remained, for some time, purely a Prussian institution from a strictly legal viewpoint, it became in effect, under Himmler's direction, the secret police of the entire nation.¹⁰

As national chief of the Gestapo, Himmler brought to his State tasks the experience and personnel of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) of the SS. "The importance and influence of the SD in the early history of the formation of the Gestapo cannot be overestimated." This scientifically organized Party intelligence service was at hand to form the basis of a similar intelligence apparatus run on government lines. The SD was to continue as a separate entity for many years, but it became indissolubly allied with the Gestapo. In fact, almost all of the personnel of the latter were drawn from the SS, including Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the SD, who became the actual executive head of the Gestapo under Himmler.¹¹

D. THE SS, 1933-1934

Meanwhile, what of the SS itself, in these first few years of State power? We have seen how the SS played its part in the revolutionary phase, helping to fill the ranks of the auxiliary police, and sharing in the terrorization of potential enemies of the regime. We have seen how the SD of the SS came to fit into the organization of the Gestapo. What of the SS as a whole, the organization which was to prove, throughout, the basis of Himmler's State power?

These were crucial years for the SS, a test of its ability to remain what it had set out to be in 1929, the inner guard of the Führer, eschewing immediate political ambitions, knowing only one loyalty, the organization "that might be relied upon in every circumstance — an élite organization of the Party." How Himmler met this test, he recounted himself to a group of senior officers of the *Reichswehr* whom Blomberg had invited to a "beer evening" in January 1945 for a reassuring talk about the SS, which had shown such a disquieting display of strength in the 1934 "blood purge." The year 1933 Himmler called "the time of the great influx and flood tide of those wishing to join the Party and its various formations." This was the critical point at which the greatest restraint would be needed to keep the inner SS core, built up according to Himmler's standards of selection and sacrifice, from being diluted. This restraint, according to Himmler's account, was not wanting; a rigorous policy of selection was accompanied by a "purge" which resulted in the expulsion between 1933 and 1935 of 60,000 SS men who failed to satisfy the leaders as to their reliability. The result was that, although the SS at the latter date numbered only 210,000 men, these men did actually constitute the élite that Himmler required. In his judgment, the "best boys" of the country were in his organization; and the training to which they were subjected gave a clear enough indication of their functions; sport, marching, street fighting, street control, Nazi ideology and, above all, the inculcation of blind obedience to the Führer.¹²

⁸ EDS/G/10, p. 2.

⁹ EDS/G/10, p. 2.

¹⁰ A complete survey of the steps taken to coordinate and develop the Gestapo's activities will be found in *The German Police*, EDS/G/10.

¹¹ EDS/G/10, p. 1.

¹² EDS/G/8, p. 5.

Although the course of the SS cannot be traced here in any detail, a few other developments of these years should be mentioned. The first is the organization, soon after the *Machtübernahme*, of the first full-time SS formation. Soon after he came to power, Hitler saw the need for a full-time SS formation, composed of specially selected and utterly devoted followers. The first unit to be organized was the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (The Adolf Hitler SS Bodyguard), which was set up in 1933 with barracks at Berlin-Lichterfelde, under the command of "Sepp" Dietrich. Other such units were created later, predecessors of that Waffen (armed) SS which was in the end to fight alongside the *Reichswehr*. There followed the organization of SS units in foreign countries, set up by Nazi Party branches in Austria, Danzig, the Sudetenland, Memel, Schleswig, and Alsace-Lorraine. Of these the Austrian SS emerged from its underground existence into the open in 1934, when Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered by the notorious SS-Standard 89.¹³ A third major development was the beginning of SS infiltration into every aspect of German political, industrial and social life through the means of *Fordernde Mitglieder* (Honorary Patron Members), and the appointment of select members of the government or important public figures to high rank in the SS. The direct promotion of SS members to high positions in the State (the SS "fifth column") was still another method of infiltration, and thus another source of power for Himmler's growing organization.¹⁴

E. HIMMLER'S PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION

Himmler by 1934 was in control of two organizations which, together, were destined to become the most powerful forces in the Reich, the SS and the State Secret Police. Fortunately there are at hand a few indications of the spirit with which he intended to animate these powerful forces, the purposes they were to serve, and the methods they were to follow. The most succinct statement is found in his order-of-the-day to the SS on 1 January 1934. The purpose of the SS, he then said, was

"to find out, to fight and to destroy all open and secret enemies of the Führer, the National Socialist movement, and our racial resurrection. In performing this work we are prepared to spare neither our own nor foreign blood if the Fatherland calls for it."¹⁵

More revealing insights into the mind of Himmler at this time are provided by the accounts of his conversations with Hermann Rauschning and Hansjürgen Koehler, the latter of whom claims to have served for many years in the Gestapo as the first assistant to Reinhard Heydrich. Rauschning reports some of Himmler's views as expressed at a private conference in Danzig in the late autumn of 1933. Himmler, he reports, spoke of the dangers facing the regime from external forces and Party enemies at home, and of the internal schisms and weaknesses of the Party, of which he was fully aware. What was needed to keep the situation under control, in his judgment, was an impressive terroristic act, which would create an atmosphere of terror among all groups and classes. Even the SS, he held, would have to submit to a sharp pruning of the "old guard," the critics, the unreliable, to insure blind obedience.

What were the methods to be used? All classes, Himmler believed, had to be made leaderless. Of the alternative methods of treatment, that is conversion, applying pressure, or naked destruction, Himmler favored the first. And the means of conversion was to be corruption, through the exploitation of weakness and blackmail. This,

¹³ Vagts, *Hitler's Second Army*, p. 43.

¹⁴ EDS/G/8, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵ Vagts, *Hitler's Second Army*, p. 43.

Himmler was careful to say, would have to be done efficiently, by the systematic use of index cards, dossiers, and registers. He warned against the bear-like crushing of dissidents: the proper method was to keep records, keep silence, and then, at the proper time to force acquiescence through fear. "Everybody has his hidden record," Himmler stated; he intended to exploit it. Corruption, not blood-letting, was his preference for revolutionary method, for his "noiseless revolution." He was contemptuous of Roehm's play-acting for the control of the mass; he placed his confidence, rather, in control of the leaders by the adroit use of their weaknesses.

The true purpose of the SS, as Himmler envisaged it, was to serve as the nucleus organization of the permanent *coup d'état*, the permanent revolution. It was, however, to be more; Himmler was a biological revolutionary, who actually believed in breeding a new race of leaders. To this end the marriage regulations, and the entire paraphernalia of SS breeding and educational establishments, were to be devoted.¹⁶

Koehler's report of a conversation with Himmler, immediately after the failure of the Austrian *putsch* of 1934, provides an equally revealing insight into the mind of Himmler the systematic terrorist, the "technician of terror." The setback in Austria had not caused the patient Himmler to lose confidence in ultimate success. "This time," he reflected, "the Italians saved Austria. Next time we shall manage differently—there won't be any marching of troops over the Brenner Pass." Then he continued:

"If even one percent of the population is with us we can get the Austrians whenever we like. The other ninety-nine percent will outbid each other in yelling 'Hell!' Why? Because every one of them already has a very good idea of what is going to happen to him if he does anything else. It is perfectly safe to be a Nazi in a democratic state, but it is mortally dangerous not to have been a Nazi when a State suddenly becomes National Socialist. So everybody suspects everyone else of being a Nazi in secret. And this not only in Austria. I would undertake to create a Nazi movement that would be feared in any country if you give me ten men to do it with."

Himmler meant to be taken seriously. He placed unreserved confidence in the efficacy of fear, the exploitation of suspicion. He had an unlimited contempt for the individual. Speaking of a campaign of press intimidation in Scandinavia, which had been a great success although based upon an altogether empty threat to withdraw all newspaper advertising by German firms, Himmler philosophized, in high good humor:

"It is grotesque to see what we succeed in doing unmolested, and it is only because people are afraid of us and believe in our power. What could we have done if the Press had answered our threat by boycotting all German advertising? They would have found it easier to maintain their boycott than we ours. It is really remarkable. We levy blackmail and borrow our pistol for the purpose from the victim himself. We give bribes, borrowing the money to bribe him from our *protégé* to be. Naturally we never return either the pistol or the money. The whole world protests its indignation against Nazidom. But we see plainly enough that they are all trying to curry favour with us."

And another time, Himmler summed up his cynical approach to human conduct, which he intended to exploit for his own purposes:

"When a man's burning to death, he'll jump into any water, even though it's boiling."

¹⁶ Rauschning, *Makers of Destruction*, pp. 269-276.

Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's saturnine and brutal assistant, once in a jocular mood asked Koehler what he would suggest as the inscription to be engraved over the entrance to the Gestapo headquarters on Prince Albrecht Strasse, Berlin. Koehler, rising to the spirit of the moment, suggested, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." Heydrich demurred, and ventured a motto which would more appropriately reflect the essence of the establishment: "Knowledge is power." A diabolical bit of humor, thought Koehler; but it was far worse, a malevolent distortion of the truth, just close enough to enable Himmler to attain for a time almost untrammelled power over the population of Germany and many other lands as well.¹⁷

These, then, were some reflections of the mind of Himmler, head of the SS, chief of the German Secret Police, technician of terror, in the year 1934. How some of his theories actually worked out in practice was to be seen in that "impressive terroristic act," the slaughter of 30 June 1934, which shocked the world, but cowed the German opposition and elevated Himmler to a position of greater power in the Nazi hierarchy of German rulers.

F. THE "BLOOD PURGE"—30 JUNE 1934

This is not the place to tell the full story, or even that part of it which is known, of the events leading up to the mass slaughter of 30 June 1934, which has come to be known as the "Blood Purge" or the "Night of the Long Knives." It is necessary, however, to tell as much of the story as is necessary to explain Himmler's role in those events. For the essential facts, so far as they are known, we must rely chiefly upon the published works of Heiden.¹⁸

To be understood, the purge must be seen against the background of the intra-Party crisis precipitated by the conquest of State power. Hitler, it should be recalled, had managed to acquire the mantle of State leadership by virtue of his supreme opportunism and egotism. It may be said that on the day he took power he was committed to virtually no political program except the extension of his power. True, he had prejudices and convictions, but they were, in many cases, beyond the arena of controversial politics; they were either generally agreed upon, like his foreign program, or they were millennial, like his devotion to the idea of breeding a master ruling class. Much of Himmler's rise under the shadow of Hitler must be attributed to this similarity of outlook, for Himmler too was preoccupied chiefly with power and race, not with those "topical" questions which make the stuff of political controversy.

Hitler's political genius lay in his willingness to make alliances with any persons, any groups, any class, who would support him. Others in his immediate circle were not so adept; their power was limited, their ideas less flexible, their alliances more rigid. They were all preoccupied with power, to be sure, but had different conceptions of how to attain it. The purge was to be the culmination of eighteen months of struggle for power among Hitler's lieutenants; it was his way of subduing those who thought of imposing upon him their own ideas, their own programs, their own limited and exclusive conceptions of power.

There was constant struggle, in those months, among Hitler's lieutenants, and between Hitler and some of his aides. Feeling the weight of power, Hitler desired a double compromise, embracing a balance among his followers, and an equilibrium between their claims and those of the more traditional forces of the State, such as

¹⁷ Quotations from Koehler, Hansjürgen, *Inside Information*, pp. 204-216.

¹⁸ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, pp. 720-771.

the industrialists and the Reichswehr. The dominating conflict between his followers was that between Goering, the "beast of prey," taking his pleasures in the public eye, aligned with the elements of Conservatism; and Roehm, head of the SA, who stood for the claims of the "old fighters" of the Party for a place at the head of the Reichswehr, who demanded a "second revolution" to fulfill the traditional "left" aims of the Party and, more to the point, provide his devoted masses of followers with the uniforms and pay of regular soldiers, or at the very least regular policemen.

The first struggle came over the police. It will be remembered that Goering and Frick had, in February 1933, ordered the arming of thousands of SA and SS troopers as auxiliary policemen; but in May 1933 Goering forbade his police officials to belong to the SA or SS; and at the beginning of August he disbanded the whole of the SA and SS auxiliary police. This, raged Roehm, was the treatment accorded to the "old fighters!" The SA, he insisted, was necessary to suppress the defeated enemy, even, if need be, to exterminate him.

Among other things, this was a conflict between the State and the Party over the right to practice terrorism. The SA considered terrorism as its monopoly; but when Goering created the Gestapo, he chose as his deputy leader not a National Socialist, but Councillor Werner Diels, a Prussian police official. Thus Goering tended to dissociate himself from the SA, from the "old fighters" whose depravity had been revealed by the atrocities committed in the concentration camps and elsewhere. The more cool-headed Nazi leaders were given food for thought by the widening gulf between the SA and the people, and their thought was made plain enough to Roehm, who bitterly repudiated these misgivings of the "bourgeois reactionaries." He rejected their contention that the SA had lost its reason for being; the National Socialist revolution, in his view, was by no means completed!

So a struggle raged within the Party over the prerogatives of the SA, over its control of the police and, more important, its control of the Reichswehr, which involved at its most sensitive point the Party State equilibrium. In December 1933 Roehm seemed to be winning out; he was at last made a member of the Cabinet with the rank of Minister, a belated honor. But the reason for his appointment was that Hitler had decided that the SA might be needed again. A monarchist movement had been taking shape, and the mass army of the SA might be an invaluable ally, especially if the *Reichswehr* should oppose the regime. During February 1934, in a further gesture, the SA members were given the same pension privileges as soldiers of the *Reichswehr*. With Hitler's approval, too, a more radical line of talk was fostered, directed against "reactionary machinations." By the middle of June 1934 there was a perceptible stiffening of attitude, in which the SA played a part, towards critics of the regime.

However, it was still felt that the final form of the revolution had not been determined. These half-measures failed to satisfy the ambitions of the revolutionary wing of the Party, the men who were the leaders of the original bands of the Uprooted and the Disinherited. Roehm stood at the top of this group; Goebbels was one of its adherents, taking up the grievances of the SA so long as he believed that in the end Hitler would do what they wanted; and Himmler, Roehm's old comrade, and even now technically subordinate to Roehm, also appeared among the discontented. When the fighters grumbled and threatened publicly, Heiden tells us, Himmler was among the loudest of them all. Yet it must be assumed that he, too, like Goebbels, would only support his old comrades so long as he thought that he was supporting the policy really reflecting Hitler's mind.

The allegiance of Himmler, at this time, might be crucial. For Himmler formed one of the small group, the so-called "black cabinets," which controlled all of the armed forces of the various Nazi leaders. Himmler, with the other two leading personalities in this group, Rudolf Hess and Major Walter Buch, chairman of the Party's "Control Committee," was to supervise the uses to which the special "body-guards" of the various Nazi leaders, forces capable of seizing key points in a crisis, might be put. Himmler had a voice in their ultimate control or supervision; Roehm did not.

Himmler's loyalty, in the developing struggle, was also important since he and his SS represented a wedge which Hitler had driven into the SA. Outwardly, the SS was still subordinated to the SA; and, as we have said, when SA leaders grumbled for the "second revolution," Himmler was to be found among them. So apparent was his attachment that when he replaced Diels, Goering's own man, as deputy chief of the Gestapo in April 1934, the move was widely regarded as an SA triumph, a triumph for Roehm over his rival Goering; and Roehm himself may have believed that the elevation of Himmler, once his protegé, now his subordinate, would mean an increase in his own power.

If Roehm had any such illusions, they were soon dispelled. In May 1934 the imminent death of President von Hindenburg confronted the Nazis with a succession crisis, which Hitler decided to solve, if need be, by using force to make himself Head of State. But which force? The SA, the SS, Goering's growing private army known euphemistically as "police groups"? Hitler decided that the real force lay in the hands of the *Reichswehr*; yet it was just at this moment that Roehm inconsiderately resumed his old dispute with the generals! He demanded, as a member of the Reich Cabinet, that the SA be made part of the regular army. It was this aggressive move that caused Roehm's undoing. It gave his old enemies, who included Walter Buch and Martin Bormann, head of the SA "Relief ("bribe") Fund," their chance to denounce and deride what almost everyone knew about the SA, eagerly attacking Roehm's new Berlin Headquarters as the scene of extravagant and obscene orgies.

What was worse: Roehm wouldn't abandon his position, even in the face of Hitler's explicit demand. This recalcitrance sealed the fate of the SA. Roehm was suddenly isolated; his entourage of followers, advocates, and companions quickly disintegrated; those two dependable comrades, Himmler and Goebbels, who so recently had echoed Roehm's demands for a second revolution, or at least a continuation of the first, grew silent. On 7 June 1934 the decisive step was taken; the SA was ordered, by Roehm acting under orders from Hitler, to take a four weeks' furlough beginning 1 July; Roehm himself began his "sick-leave" on 7 June. In a message to his followers, he bluntly restated his conviction: "The SA is and remains Germany's destiny."¹⁹

What actually happened between 7 June and 30 June is hard to say. It is clear that there ensued hectic weeks of plans, conspiracies, and armed preparations for the expected demise of the old man of Neudeck, the dying President. There was, it is clear, a sharpening of cleavage between the SA forces and those elements in the Party who were prepared to submit to such criticisms of the excesses of their regime as that made by Von Papen in his famous speech of 17 June. So the Party groups, even fragments within the SA, prepared to fight. This meant more than a sharpening of knives; it meant bringing out the lists, for each group had its own lists of those slated for liquidation in case of a show-down—a mass of stored-up murder, bound to lead to confusion and excess when the knives were drawn. The SA leadership, the SS

¹⁹ Heiden, *Der Fuehrer*, p. 747.

under Himmler and Heydrich, Hess' so-called "liaison staff," and Goering all had quite different lists of their own. The whole idea of a Strasser-Schleicher-Roehm conspiracy, which after the event became the official explanation for the widespread series of murders of 30 June, was little more in Heiden's judgment than an invention to help rationalize the blood-letting, which even extended to totally "innocent" victims of mistaken identity, and others who had been pledged the Führer's protection.

Of the sequence of events in which Himmler was concerned, the following are known. On 25 June, after the SA members had received orders for their furlough, to begin on 1 July, Himmler put his SS troops in a "little" state of alarm, paralleled by a similar degree of mobilization of the Reichswehr under Blomberg. On 26 June, Hitler offered to forgive Roehm, through Hess, while Roehm invited Hitler to a meeting of his leaders to be held at his sanatorium at Wiessee on 30 June. On 28 June, however, Hitler notified Goering that he was "striking out"; Goering (Chief of the Prussian Gestapo, it may be remembered) and Himmler (Chief of SS and nation-wide secret political police, only recently appointed deputy chief of the Prussian Gestapo) made preparations as for a civil war, ordering their police commandos and the SS special troops to be held in readiness. The next day, 29 June, Karl Ernst, the SA group leader in Berlin, got wind of the Goering-Himmler preparations, jumped to the conclusion that the reactionaries were planning a coup, and proclaimed a state of alarm for the Berlin SA. This news was brought by Goebbels to Godesberg, where Hitler, in consultation with Lutze, Goebbels, and Otto Dietrich, decided to act. By this decision Hitler not only decided that in the conflict between the Reichswehr and Hess he would choose the former; he also ended the weakness in himself, the indecision that had tormented him for weeks. By one means or another the signal for action went out. Hitler appeared personally in Munich, where the round-ups began; then he proceeded to Wiessee, still with the same party as at Godesberg, but now augmented by Buch, Christian Weber (in SS uniform), and Emil Maurice. They arrived at Wiessee early the next morning, and found Roehm in his bed. . . .

Meanwhile, in Berlin, the morning of the same 30 June, Goering and Himmler struck. Within the walls of Lichterfelde Prison (Berlin), as at Stadelheim (Munich), and to a lesser extent elsewhere, there began what Heiden describes as the most hideous incident (until then) in modern German history, surpassing in horror even the Munich executions of May 1919 which Hitler had helped to organize. Just as Walter Buch directed the executions in Munich, so Himmler is said to have directed the SS riflemen who executed 150 top leaders of the SA at Lichterfelde.

There is no need to go into the extent of the executions, to attempt to list fully those names which included Streicher, Von Kahr, Father Stempfle, and hundreds of others who could have had no possible connection with any conspiracy, but who were murdered to settle old scores, or put out of the way, because they might conceivably be troublesome some day. Two of the murders, however, were of rather intimate concern to Heinrich Himmler: that of Roehm, the reasons for which have already been to some extent explained; and that of Gregor Strasser, who was by this time out of politics, murdered by the hand of Reinhard Heydrich to satisfy Goering's animosity and also, it seems to pay off a Heydrich grudge, perhaps with the acquiescence if not at the direction of Himmler himself.²⁰ Thus the two men to whom Himmler was chiefly indebted for his introduction to and rise in the Nationalist Socialist movement were murdered in the blood bath in the preparation and direction of which Himmler

²⁰ Dehillotte, Pierre, *Gestapo*, Paris, 1940. p. 19.

played such an important part. There is a striking parallel in the manner in which both Roehm and Gregor Strasser met their deaths: both were shot in their prison cells, the former in the presence of Hitler, the latter in the presence of Heydrich, who personally led the Strasser murder party. Himmler stepped over the corpses of his mentors to a position of commanding importance in the Nazi hierarchy. In July 1934, with Roehm out of the way, Himmler became the sole commander of the SS, with responsibility only to Hitler; the political power of the SA was broken, and Himmler and the SS were established as the ruling caste within the Party.²¹ Soon even Goering, who had shared with him the work of slaughter, would be forced to relinquish his remaining powers over the Prussian police to Himmler.

²¹ EDS/G/8, p. 4.

IV. PREPARATION FOR WAR: JULY 1934-SEPTEMBER 1939

INTRODUCTION

The effect of the purge of June 30 had been to terrorize Germany into submission, and to end for once and all any threat of revolution within the Party. Hitler's leadership, which encompassed a compromise with the Army and other powerful forces of the Reich, was from now on perforce unquestioned among the masses of the Party. The SA was reduced to an innocuous role, under its new Chief of Staff, Victor Lutze; the *Stahlhelm* ("National Socialist Front Fighters") was dissolved by decree of 7 November 1935; and other Party leaders who might before have thought in terms of revolt were now of necessity prepared to become the obedient instruments of Hitler's will.¹ With this inner conflict settled, and the nature of the State leadership apparently determined, the Party and nation turned more and more to its conquests in the foreign field; these were the years of rearmament, of autarchy, of remilitarization of the Rhineland, of the reincorporation of the Saar, of the seizure of Austria and Czechoslovakia, in all of which Himmler, using both his strong arms, the Gestapo and SS, played an insidious part.

If, however, the State leadership was for the time being fairly well established by the purge, there was no cessation in the continual and inevitable competition for the prizes of office among the National Socialist leaders. In that competition, Heinrich Himmler appears to have had two ultimate goals, the Ministries of War and the Interior; but first there was an intermediate stage to be reached, control of the entire police system of Germany. In July 1934 Himmler was in effective control of the entire German secret political police; after two years in which both the Gestapo and SS grew in strength and influence, Himmler finally achieved this intermediate stage of power in June 1936, with his appointment to a new position created for him by Hitler, *Chef der Deutschen Polizei*, or Chief of the German Police.

A. GROWTH OF THE GESTAPO

First came the consolidation and extension of the power of the Gestapo. The Gestapo functioned for nearly three years before its position was defined by law. Its early "extra-legal" powers, revolving around the practice of "protective custody," had been laid down in decrees of 28 February 1933 and 8 March 1934; but the complete freedom of the Gestapo from judicial restraints was formulated in a ruling of the Prussian Court on 2 May 1935, later sanctioned in the basic Gestapo law of 10 February 1936, the "Law Concerning the Secret State Police."² This law, consisting of ten brief clauses, was so framed as to allow the very widest scope of action to the Secret Police, and was, in effect, nothing more than legal camouflage for unbridled police despotism of the most ruthless and sweeping nature.

¹ Schumann, *Hitler and the Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 478.

² EDS/G/10, p. 4; NID *Geographical Handbooks*, BR 529A, Vol. II, p. 345.

The essence of this decree is found in its seventh clause, according to which decisions in affairs conducted by the Gestapo could not be re-examined by the Judiciary. This meant in effect that persons might be arrested and imprisoned without warrant or just cause, and persons tried and found "not guilty" in court might be re-arrested by the Gestapo, the most famous example of this kind being the case of Pastor Niemöller. In another important clause, the Gestapo was empowered to invoke the cooperation of all types and branches of the local Police, whose personnel would then enjoy the same legal immunity as the members of the Gestapo themselves.

Instructions for the application of this decree, issued on the same date, 10 February 1936, laid down in greater detail the functions and attributes of Himmler's Gestapo. Some of these were as follows:

- (a) Measures instituted by the Gestapo were to be equally effective in all parts of the Reich.
- (b) The Gestapo was to be the controlling authority for Political Police information.
- (c) The Gestapo was to control and supervise all State Concentration Camps.³

Furthermore, all local, provincial, and State authorities were required to keep local Gestapo offices informed of all important political moves and speeches. Further decrees, of March 1937, June 1937, and November 1938 finally incorporated all police officials into the Reich service, even including those of the communes, and gave Himmler power to issue police regulations for the whole of the Reich or for any part of it, thus reducing almost to extinction the independent police powers of the states and other local authorities.⁴

B. CHIEF OF GERMAN POLICE

It is of academic interest to note that according to this decree-law of 10 February 1936, the Chief of the Gestapo was the Prime Minister of Prussia, i.e., Goering. Technically, therefore, Himmler was not then and was never to become chief of the Gestapo; but the technicality was to become of even less importance when, in the space of three or four months, Himmler was to become the all-powerful, all-embracing chief of the German police, political and otherwise. For, whatever the nature of the Himmler-Goering rivalry since the 1934 purge, Himmler clearly emerged the victor when he was appointed on 17 June 1936 to the newly-created position of Chief of the German Police in the Reich Ministry of Interior. Under the decree which made his appointment effective, Himmler was made directly responsible to the Ministry of the Interior. He was, therefore, in the exercise of his Police office, the representative of both the Reich Minister of the Interior, Frick, and the Prime Minister of Prussia, Goering. However, as Commander in Chief of the SS, Himmler was directly responsible to Hitler alone, and he was therefore in a position to circumvent the authority of Frick. Whatever anomalies there might have been in this situation were to some extent cleared up in a decree issued by the Reich and Prussian Minister of the Interior on 15 May 1937, which made it plain that any ruling, whether it bore Himmler's signature or that of the Minister of the Interior, would be regarded as a Ministerial decision.⁵ Meanwhile, Himmler had already been accorded the ministerial privilege of participation in Cabinet meetings when questions within his sphere were being discussed.

³ Administration, however, was in the hands of the SS. See EDS/G/6, pp. 4-5.

⁴ NID *Geographical Handbooks*, BR 529A, Vol. II, p. 345-346.

⁵ EDS/G/10, p. 3-4.

Himmler lost no time in employing his new powers. He first undertook rationalization of the immense police system which had now come under his jurisdiction, and which included the multifarious local, State and national forces which had been coordinated in the years since 1933. His basic decision, incorporated in a decree of 26 June 1936, was to divide the German police into two principal branches, whose duties were listed in detail:

- (a) The *Orpo*, or *Regular Police* (Ordnungspolizei), to include all the existing branches of the Uniformed Police such as the Protection Police, the Rural Police, and the Administrative Police, under SS Ober-Gruppenführer and Generaloberst der Polizei Kurt Dalwege.
- (b) The *Sipo* or *Security Police* (Sicherheitspolizei), to include the Kripo (Reich Criminal Police) and the Gestapo, under SS Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, head of the SD of the SS.

Further measures of integration undertaken by Himmler were the creation of the post of General Inspectors for the Orpo, charged with the effective development of their respective branches of the service, and the requirement that the entire police force should from 25 June 1936 wear the same uniform and adopt standard rank titles and badges. These reforms were accompanied by important steps designed to make the provincial organization of police far more efficient. By 20 September 1936 Himmler had set up in each *Wehrkreise* (Military District) of Germany Inspectors of the Orpo and Sipo, charged with coordinating police matters with authorities of the *Wehrmacht*, Party, and civil officials in their districts. Later, as Himmler became more conscious of the rapidly expanding power of the Army, he created an even more exalted type of police official, who came to be known popularly as the "little Himmlers." These were the *Hohere SS and Polizeiführer* (HSSPf—Superior SS and Police Commanders), who served as Himmler's personal representatives in the *Wehrkreise* of Germany and the occupied territories, carrying on liaison relations with the military commanders and other higher regional authorities as well as the functions of police administration.⁶

Parallel with these measures, Himmler also took steps to unify and strengthen the new Security Police, or Sipo, the more powerful of the two main branches established on 26 June 1936. First, by a decree of 10 July 1936, he authorized the officers of the Gestapo and the Kripo (Criminal Police), which together constituted the Sipo, to conduct their activities in any part of the Reich independently of the areas covered by their bureaus. Next, on 20 September 1936, a new decree made the Gestapo Office in Prussia responsible for the duties of the Political Police Commanders in all the German States; and on 1 October 1936, a further decree closed the still remaining gap between the state political police and the Gestapo by requiring that all the Political Police forces were to be called Secret State Police. Next, there followed as a matter of course the creation of a network of Gestapo head offices and subsidiary offices, Regional Headquarters and Sub-regional Headquarters, throughout the entire Reich. A similar unification of the Kripo was also carried through, thus completing the national Sipo structure.⁷

One of the most important changes in the history of Himmler's police organization was the linking up of the Sipo with the Security Service (SD, or Sicherheitsdienst) of the Reichsführer SS, the SS intelligence and counter-intelligence unit under Reinhard Heydrich. The key decision to make this merger was incorporated in a decree of 11 No-

⁶ EDS/G/10, p. 3.

⁷ EDS/G/10, p. 4.

vember 1938, which made the SD officially responsible for the control of all persons, activities and events that might interfere with the dominance of the National Socialist idea. It stated:

"The Sicherheitsdienst of the RFSS, as the Party and Reich Government organization, has to carry out important tasks; in particular, it must assist the Security Police (i.e., the Gestapo and the Kripo). The SD is consequently active on behalf of the Reich and this demands close and intelligent cooperation between the SD and the officials of the general and Interior Administration."

The two branches of the Sipo, therefore, emerged from the 1936 reorganization of the Police as new instruments of power, and were now joined, that is, ultimately dominated and controlled, by the SD. The consolidation of that control, finally placing the Gestapo and Kripo completely in the hands of the SD, was achieved by a decree of 23 June 1938, ordering the enrollment of all Sipo personnel in the ranks of the SS, if they were not already members.

The combined Gestapo, Kripo and SD came to be known as the "Staatsschutzkorps"—an unofficial Nazi term signifying the combination of forces for the "protection of the State." In terms of organization the process was expressed in 1939, on the eve of war, by combination of the Hauptamt Sicherheitspolizei in the Reich Ministry of the Interior with the SS-Sicherheitshauptamt, both now emerging in the new organization, the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA-National Department of Security), embracing the Gestapoamt and the Reichskriminalpolizeiamt.⁸

To summarize, it may be said that before war broke out in 1939, Himmler had gained control of the internal armed force of the Reich in all its branches. In the Gestapo he had an agency of permanent terror against all opponents, with eighteen concentration camps in Germany and two in Austria. In addition, he had not only the specially armed and trained security police but also the armed formations of the barracked protection police and the motorized units of the Gendarmerie. Throughout Germany, then, a highly organized and disciplined "army" for internal use had been concentrated under the control of Himmler and his leading subordinates, Daluge and Heydrich. These men were also the leaders of the Nazi SS, the carefully chosen and toughened inner circle of *Hitlertreue* ("loyal to Hitler") young men, the "pretorian guard" of the regime.⁹ In fact, Gunter d'Alquen, in an officially approved booklet *Die SS*, could say in 1939 that "by slow and selective evolution the police has, through National-Socialist recruitment and National-Socialist leadership by the SS, itself become a part of the proud formations of the movement."¹⁰

C. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SS, 1934-1939

The preceding pages have shown how Himmler, in the years before the War, merged his SS and Police organizations to construct an integrated and all-powerful system of intelligence, control, and terror. We have also summarized (above) some of the sources of the growing power of the SS in these years, including the infiltration of SS personnel into broad phases of German life, and the establishment of full-time SS units. These full-time units, which began with the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (The Adolf

⁸ EDS/G/10, p. 4-5.

⁹ BR 529A, p. 346.

¹⁰ BR 529A, p. 347.

Hitler SS Bodyguard), came to include a variety of barrack regiments, including the *SS Standarte 1 Deutschland* (HQ, Munich), the *SS Standarte 2 Germania* (HQ, Hamburg, Arolsen and Radolfzell), and the *SS Standarte 3 Der Führer* (HQ, Vienna, Graz and Klagenfurt), the last-named formed after the annexation of Austria in March 1938. Two special duty battalions, for Engineers and Signals, were also formed.

In addition to the barrack regiments, full-time units to act as Concentration Camp Guards were formed from selected SS volunteers. Four units, known together as the *Totenkopf Verbände* (TV.—Death's-Head Formations), were established, being named after the areas in which they served. These TV's, together with the three original regiments, came to be known collectively as the *SS Verfügungstruppen* (VT.—General Service Troops). To them were added SS officer training schools, under their Inspector, SS Ogruf. Paul Hausser, a former Lt. General of the *Reichswehr*.

By 1939, the ordinary SS (distinguished by the title of the *Allgemeine SS*, or General SS), numbered about 250,000 men, while the *SS Verfügungstruppen* provided another 40,000. The *Verfügungstruppen*, it should be noted, were led by many former Army officers, who had joined the young but expanding SS Army because the opportunities for advancement were far more favorable than in the regular forces. Led by these experienced officers, the SS troops were trained and equipped as motorized infantry regiments and were designed to function as a mobile and politically reliable military force, completely at the disposal of the government, for purposes of internal repression.¹¹ The influence of the SS upon the continuing struggle between the army and the Party is, indeed, reflected in a conversation between the journalist Karl von Wiegand, and General von Reichenau, held in Munich in July 1937 and reported soon afterward to the American Ambassador, William E. Dodd. Von Reichenau was reported to have said that the army in general was by no means in sympathy with the Hitler system, but that Hitler had greatly increased the SS forces, taken the best young officers from the army and built up the SS for personal purposes. Five thousand SS troops, the General stated, were kept in Munich at all times, with other units scattered throughout the country. The idea, he believed, seemed to be to guard against any internal or army revolt; a contingency also to be forestalled by the excellent training being given the police, who were also taken from the SS.¹²

Apart from the growth of these SS armed forces and the fusion of the SS and Police, the years from 1934 to 1939 saw a steady increase in the activities and influence of the *Allgemeine SS*. During these years, in fact, the SS was well on its way to becoming "a state within the State, a racially conscious clique of men (and women) governed by a rigid set of rules, the chief of which was unswerving loyalty to one's immediate chief and unquestioning obedience to orders."¹³ One of the chief means to this end was a program of infiltration into every branch of official and unofficial life. Membership in the SS was attractive. It offered, if one obeyed the rules, a steady lucrative job in or through the agency of the most powerful body in Germany, with the chance of a quick lift on the road to economic, political, or even artistic success. The SS thus became much more than merely a collection of well-drilled fighting men, or concentration camp thugs, or Adolf Hitler guardsmen; its membership represented, in fact, a very carefully organized racial élite composed of intellectuals no less than shopkeepers or peasant youths. It is a striking fact, and a confirmation of the influence of this SS "fifth column" in

¹¹ EDS/G/8, pp. 6-7.

¹² Dodd, William E., *Ambassador Dodd's Diary*, London, 1941, p. 428.

¹³ EDS/G/8, p. F1.

German life, that of the twelve hundred leading figures in Germany in 1944, as listed in "Who's Who in Nazi Germany," one fourth were entered as members of the SS. By that year SS officers ("political members") were spread throughout every branch of public, industrial, cultural, and educational life in Germany. It could in fact be said by 1944, and the same might perhaps have been said in 1939:

"Even in the most innocuous activity there is always the ulterior motive and the political control. There is nothing in Germany which is not political, and nothing political in which the SS is not concerned."¹⁴

The position and character of the SS; and the nature of some of its activities, has been effectively summarized as follows:

"The ultimate significance of the SS organization is that it comprises the inner order of Nazi fanatics schooled to dedicate their whole lives to the Führer's purposes. It has its own press, and its weekly journal *Das Schwarze Korps* (The Black Corps) with a circulation of over 500,000 in 1939, exerts great influence on general policy. But, as one writer has said, 'the SS touches all phases of its members' lives. Before the SS child is born his father and mother have complied with SS racial and eugenic standards. He is born in an SS mothers' house. He is delivered by an SS physician. His parents give him a pure Germanic name. (His) home is often a new SS apartment house in a suburban SS settlement! He will have a better chance than others of being admitted to a *Napola* (SS boarding schools for training the political élite). He will do his military service with an SS unit. He may receive higher training at an SS Junker school or, if he goes to the university, he will find an SS house. If disabled or killed in the war, his pension, or those of his dependents, will be administered by a separate SS organization.

"This SS political 'Order' has its own property and an elaborate organization at headquarters covering every branch of its activities, including its own courts for dealing with any breaches of discipline committed by its members. It is throughout filled with the military-racial ideas of Hitler himself and its members have been the most active and merciless agents of persecution in the concentration camps, in the expulsion and murder of Jews, in the 'mercy-killings' of the insane and the incurables.

"Finally, the influence of the SS has become increasingly important in the Nazi regime as a whole. In foreign policy both Ribbentrop and Bohle, head of the foreign organization of the party, hold SS rank. Sauckel, Commissioner-General for Labour; Darré, the Minister for Agriculture, and Backe, his present substitute; Bormann, head of the party chancery, successor to Hess as Hitler's deputy; Buch, the head of the supreme party court; Dietrich, the Reich press chief, and Amann, who holds a similar post in the party; Alfred Rosenberg, director of Nazi ideology, and many other prominent Nazi officials and Gauleiters are members. But the SS influence has also spread to industry and banking, and it is said that some of the younger members of the old aristocratic families have themselves become members and that inter-marriage between the historic and the newly-risen élites is becoming common. Some of these new 'recruits' (e.g., the Cologne banker, Schroder, who brought Hitler and Papen together) may merely have received honorary titles which they dared not refuse. It is, however, probable that they felt little reluctance in accepting them so long as things went well. . . ."¹⁵

¹⁴ EDS/G/8, p. F6.

¹⁵ BR 529A, pp. 348-349.

D: THE SS AND FOREIGN CONQUESTS

It was a far cry, indeed, from the small band of some 280 men, which Himmler had taken over in 1929, to this pervasive force of almost 300,000, just ten years later. But the influence and achievements of the SS were hardly limited to the German domestic scene, where its most striking act of terror, perhaps, was the systematic attack on the Jews, notably the brutal assault of 1938. The years from 1934 to 1939 were the years of preparation for war and of "bloodless" conquests. The hand of Himmler's SS could be seen in the terror that preceded the reincorporation of the Saar Territory (1935), in the Nazification of Danzig, in the conquests by terror and sudden "diplomacy" of Austria, the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, and Memel, and in the preparation of the attack upon Poland. We have already seen something (p. 25) of the role of the SS in the first Nazi attempt to seize Austria in 1934, and of Himmler's plans to prepare the ground, by a campaign of fear, for a second attack. When on 14 March 1938, after a series of "negotiations" in which Himmler played a part, Hitler triumphantly entered Vienna, the city had already been "cleaned up" by his secret police and SS, to make the Führer's route of march safe for him; and these forces, cooperating with the Austrian Nazis, saw to it in the days following that Austrian anti-Nazis suffered for their patriotism and political convictions, and that Austrian Jews were subjected to innumerable humiliations and sufferings.¹⁸

We also know something of Himmler's role in the events leading to the Munich crisis of September, 1938. Himmler and Ribbentrop, according to Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador in Berlin, were the two chief lieutenants of the war party of that period, of which Hitler himself was the chief. His share in the Munich crisis was not, however, limited to counsel; his agents had long been at work in Czechoslovakia, and on the eve of the crisis he and Goebbels worked out that technique of Nazi diplomacy which included an anti-Czech campaign in the German press, controlled by Goebbels, and the fabrication of incidents, persecutions, and even mass migrations, which were the work of Himmler's agents. This combination, which was to be seen at work later against Poland, helped to inflame Hitler, and to enable him, by that curious capacity for self-delusion which he exploited to the full, to make the most extreme demands of the Czechs.

If, however, we are to accept Sir Neville Henderson's interpretation of events, the effect of Munich was to strengthen Hitler's will to war, and thus to enhance in his favor those like Ribbentrop and Himmler who had urged a "solution" of the Sudeten problem by war rather than negotiation. Hitler came to reflect, uneasily, that he had been wrong to come to any agreement at Munich, and thus to abandon his project for a "local war," as he was convinced it would be, against the Czechs. The result of this feeling was not only a rise in the influence of the extremists who had favored the naked use of force, but a corresponding fall from grace of all those he regarded as the faint-hearts, among whom Henderson numbered Goering, as well as others scattered throughout many strata of the Party and Reich Government.^{18a}

These post-Munich reflections on the part of Hitler, coupled with his bitterness against Benes and the Czechs and other factors that need not be mentioned here, precipitated the total conquest of Czechoslovakia the following March. The Vienna scene was repeated, as, in the brief period between the arrivals of Himmler and Hitler,

¹⁸ Henderson, Neville, *Failure of a Mission*, pp. 125-126; Koehler, *Inside Information*, p. 203.

^{18a} Henderson, Neville, *Failure of a Mission*, pp. 196-198.

the SS raged with terrible thoroughness through Prague, Himmler afterwards standing coolly by Hitler's side as the Nazi forces passed in review.¹⁷

In the events preceding the attack on Poland and the precipitation of world war, the malign influence of Himmler, Ribbentrop, and Goebbels, again according to Henderson, cannot be exaggerated. It was consistently sinister, not so much because of its suggestiveness, since Hitler alone decided policy; but because, if Hitler appeared to hesitate, these extremists at once proceeded to fabricate situations calculated to drive him into courses which even he at times seems to have shrunk from risking.¹⁸

Himmler's organizations, however, had an even wider mission in the all-embracing scheme of the German strategy of conquest. The Gestapo and SD, under the immediate direction of Reinhard Heydrich, commanded an army of agents and informers throughout the world, with generous attention being given to the Western Hemisphere. Working hand in hand with Bohle, the head of the Party's Foreign Organization, and with the *Reichswehr* intelligence apparatus, in which Colonel Nicolai was said to play a leading role, and cooperating with the program of foreign economic penetration and domination under the Reich economic authorities, Himmler played his part in that immense effort to neutralize and paralyze the potential enemies of Germany, to conquer them, as Himmler had once prophesied, by intrigue and intimidation.¹⁹ Not the least part of Himmler's role was the preparation, by his assistants, of those alternative plans which, Henderson tells us, were ready at Hitler's hands to be used as opportunity dictated.

Not all of Himmler's activities in the foreign field were covert. For example, he played a small part in the rapprochement of Hitler and Mussolini; on 19 October 1936, accompanied by his two chief aides, Daluge and Heydrich, he visited Mussolini in Rome.²⁰ And it has even been said that his membership in the Oxford Group persuaded a number of Englishmen, in the critical months of 1939, that the Nazi regime had pacific intentions!²¹ Overshadowing these events in its consequences for German foreign policy, however, was Himmler's calculated attack upon the Jews, ordered on 12 November 1938. In this attack, ordered in revenge for the murder by a young unbalanced Polish Jew of a German diplomat in Paris, Himmler's secret police and formations of extreme Nazis actually connived and participated in an orgy of violent ill-treatment of the Jews such as even the Middle Ages could scarcely equal.²² The motives for this disgusting exhibition, according to Henderson, were two-fold; one was utterly ignoble and revolting, the opportunity which the murder afforded to plunder the Jews and force their expulsion from Germany. The second was within the spirit of Himmler's terroristic outlook, another "impressive terroristic act" which would insure the safety of the regime. As Henderson describes this motive: "The German authorities were undoubtedly seriously alarmed lest another Jew, emboldened by the success of Grynszpan, should follow his example and murder either Hitler or one of themselves."²³

¹⁷ See Royal Institute of International Affairs, annual *Surveys of International Affairs*, for these events; also Koehler, *Inside Information*, p. 203.

¹⁸ Henderson, Neville, *Failure of a Mission*, p. 251.

¹⁹ Kaltenbrunner, head of the important Amt VI (SD) of the RSHA from 1942 on, claims that the Gestapo played no role in the Western Hemisphere, which was entrusted, he says, to Bohle's *Ausland Organization*. (Draft report: Kaltenbrunner Interrogation, 1945).

²⁰ *Survey of International Affairs*, 1936, p. 580.

²¹ Thyssen, *I Paid Hitler*, pp. 189-190.

²² Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, p. 172.

²³ Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, p. 172.

Whatever the motives of this "exaggerated and inhuman revenge," it was, in its consequences for Germany abroad, an act of incredible stupidity comparable in its effects to the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the shooting of Nurse Cavell in the first World War, for it led to a great revulsion of feeling against Nazi Germany in the outside world, particularly in the United States, but also in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. It led to the withdrawal of the American Ambassador in Berlin, though not to the termination of diplomatic relations; and, in encouraging those elements in Czechoslovakia who were opposed to the Munich partition, it hastened the pace of Hitler's conquests, and let him to swallow the remainder of Czechoslovakia a few months later.²⁴

Another of Himmler's interventions—although here the facts are less certain—was calculated to have serious effects upon foreign policy. As suggested above, one consequence of the purge of 30 June 1934 was to establish an equilibrium between the forces represented in the Party and the *Reichswehr*. This equilibrium, however, was unsteady throughout the years that followed, and, indeed, until the very end of the Nazi regime. Such a direct challenge as that represented by Roehm did not again appear; but the more extreme Party elements persisted in their attempts to gain the upper hand over the Army. Himmler was one of the leaders in this constant movement; in his case personal ambition, the desire to become Minister of War, reinforced his Party outlook; and for the blustering methods of Roehm he substituted the rather more effective techniques of intrigue. This, it appears, was the nature of his intervention in the Blomberg affair of February 1938. General Blomberg, Hitler's Minister of War, had been the target of attacks both from the Army Chiefs, who regarded him as a "political General," too subservient to Hitler, and from the Party extremists, who saw in him an obstacle to their ambitions. These forces converged upon him to cause his downfall in February 1938, and one competent observer, the British Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, regards Himmler as probably the leading spirit in a plot to discredit the General.²⁵ Himmler's intervention came about in the following manner: General Blomberg married Fräulein Eva Gruhn, in a private ceremony attended by Hitler and Goering. The news was received with amazement in Berlin, since no one had ever heard of the girl. However, it gradually became public property that she was inscribed on Himmler's police records as a lady who was attractive, but of the lighter virtues. This disclosure of the girl's past, which Henderson believes *may* have been a calculated plot on Himmler's part, shocked Hitler, who demanded an annulment. This Blomberg refused—the second shock to Hitler, who expected obedience from his subordinates, and especially from those who, like Blomberg, he regarded as trustworthy. While he was debating his course, the Army decided to intervene, their spokesman, General von Fritsch, not only insisting on the resignation of Blomberg in the interest of honor and military discipline, but also taking the occasion to criticize Hitler's foreign policy, then tending towards the annexation of Austria. The intervention by Von Fritsch magnified the Blomberg incident into a first-rate crisis, requiring the dismissal of both Generals. The removals were effected under a vast camouflage of other changes, calculated with a view to turning the setback into profit. Hitler personally took charge of the Army, and in the Foreign Office Von Neurath was replaced by Ribbentrop. Thus it can be seen that Himmler's intervention, if we accept Henderson's suspicions about it, helped to remove two moderates, Blomberg and Von Neurath, from Hitler's councils, and to tilt the Party-Army balance a little further towards the Party. There were other effects, too, which may be mentioned in passing: the Blomberg incident so upset Hitler that it gave him

²⁴ Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, p. 172.

²⁵ Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, p. 107.

his first brainstorm of the year, and radically altered his outlook. It made him less human; his faith in the fidelity of his followers was shaken; and, probably to overcome in his own and the public's mind the memory of the painful episode and the crisis it precipitated, it may have hastened his attack, already contemplated, upon Austria.

It is evident, then, that while Himmler had no official place in the formulation of German foreign policy in these years, his interventions in that field, and the consequences of his domestic policy of terror, gave him a high place in that "war Party" which most closely reflected the wishes of Hitler, and which led Germany down the road of conquest. When it is also observed that the Gestapo had by 1939 come to exercise a certain degree of influence over the conduct of German diplomats abroad, it will be seen how important a place Himmler had come to occupy in the formation of Germany's war policy even before the coming of the world war linked more intimately than ever before the methods of intrigue and terror with those of diplomacy.

E. ON THE EVE OF WAR

The foregoing survey has shown how the development of Himmler's two main organizations, the Gestapo and SS, together with his control over the entire German Police, had placed in his hands by the autumn of 1939 a well-organized instrument of repression. The single-minded systematic growth of his organizations was reflected in Himmler's position in the Nazi hierarchy. To be sure, after his appointment as Chief of the German Police in April 1936, Himmler received for three years no further recognition of high office. When, in February 1938, the government crisis precipitated by the planned seizure of Austria led to a reorganization, Himmler received no place on the Privy Council established by Hitler. Yet by 1939 most observers agreed that Himmler was a far more powerful figure than most of those who sat on this Council, which included Neurath, Ribbentrop, Admiral Raeder, General Keitel, and Dr. Lammers (head of the Reich Chancellery), as well as Goering, Goebbels, and Hess.²⁶ The Privy Council, in fact, turned out to be an advisory body that seldom met; and membership on it, as can be seen from its members' names, could hardly be regarded as a measure of stature. Most observers seem to agree that in the years 1938-1939, Himmler was regarded as among the first three or four men in the regime. Some, like the Australian writer Roberts, saw in Himmler the future ruler of Germany, or the leader second only to Hitler himself;²⁷ but most at least agreed that next to Hitler and Goering, Himmler was the dominating figure in German life.²⁸ One observer, writing of this period, places Himmler among the three leaders who could exercise discretionary power, the others being Goering, Hitler's chief executive and presumptive successor, and Wilhelm Frick, (who was to be succeeded by Himmler during the war), who combined the fanatic zeal of the National Socialist "old fighter" with the methodical training of the German public official, and was in charge of the conversion of Germany into a unitary state.²⁹ Another journalist who places Himmler third in the Nazi hierarchy, next only to Hitler and Goering, includes him among the "big five" who were called in by Hitler for consultation.³⁰

²⁶ Tolischus, Otto D., *They Wanted War*, 1940, pp. 136-138.

²⁷ Roberts, *The House that Hitler Built*, pp. 89-90.

²⁸ Bayles, *Caesars in Goose Step*, p. 124.

²⁹ Tolischus, Otto D., *They Wanted War*, 1940, p. 138.

³⁰ Shirer, William L., *Berlin Diary*, New York, 1941, pp. 589-590; other members of the "big five" were listed as Goering, Hess, Ribbentrop and Ley.

Whatever the precise measure of his influence, it is obvious that the war found Himmler in sole control of the machinery of domestic, not to speak of foreign repression. When, at the outbreak of the conflict, Himmler issued the grim warning: "Carping and criticism are permitted only to those who are not afraid of the concentration camp," there must have been few in Germany who would have failed to take him seriously.³¹ And the people of Germany and the occupied countries would soon come to grasp the meaning of another of his famous injunctions:

"We must be cruel," he once declared, "even at the risk of seriously injuring an occasional opponent and of being branded uncontrolled brutes by many persons. Should we fail to fulfill our National Socialist mission because we were too objective and humane, history would not give us credit for kindness of heart."³²

Himmler had, as early as 1937, foreseen clearly the crucial role that his police forces would be called upon to play in the coming war:

"In the coming war we shall fight not only on land, on sea, and in the air. There will be a fourth theater of operations—the Inner Front. That front will decide on the continued existence or the irrevocable death of the German Nation."³³

³¹ Bayles, William D., *Postmarked Berlin*, p. 101.

³² Bayles, *Caesars in Goose Step*, p. 109.

³³ EDS/G/10, p. i.

V. THE WAR YEARS, 1939-1945

INTRODUCTION

Himmler reached the apogee of his power during the years of war, 1939-1945. It is not surprising that the war gave Himmler, more than any other Nazi leader, the opportunity to satisfy his unrelenting ambition. His career in the years before the war had been a reflection of the inner nature of the regime, which came to base its power increasingly on terror and corruption. The energies of the people were absorbed by, and their attention fixed upon, those preparations both at home and abroad for the total war to come. When the war finally did come, the instruments of repression which had first been cast for Germany and given their initial foreign trials in Austria and Czechoslovakia were put to use in all of conquered Europe, where Himmler's SS and Police came to be the executors of the Nazi conceptions of order and racial domination. With Europe and its races at the mercy of Germany, the racial extremists in the Nazi Party, of whom Himmler was a prominent member, saw their opportunity to reorder the racial pattern of much of Europe. The metamorphosis of Nazi racial theories from Party dogma to State practice was symbolized by Himmler's appointment in October 1939, with the conquest of Poland and the German-Russian Pact, as Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of Germanism, an office which grew out of the SS Department of "Race and Settlement."

The war, too, was bound to change the character of the SS, and not altogether to the derogation of Himmler's power. The power of the *Allgemeine SS*, to be sure, was largely dissipated by the call of military and other duties upon the services of its members; on the other hand, however, the nucleus of armed SS detachments which existed in 1939 was expanded during the war years into an effective, self-supporting military force, fighting the enemies of the Reich by the side of the traditional fighting force, the *Reichswehr*. The SS, in addition to its regular military assignments, served as special "shock troops," undertook the hazards of guerilla warfare, and provided the echelons needed for the blacker military arts of sabotage and terrorism. It provided, in addition, the channel through which the German racial "élite" of the conquered lands, and their ideological associates, could join the German armed forces.

Himmler's new power over racial policy and his command of the growing *Waffen SS* came during the period of German victory, which extended until the débâcle at Stalingrad and the Anglo-American landings in North Africa towards the end of 1942. From that point onwards German power was in decline. The Italian ally fell before the Allied attack and Mussolini was overthrown; the Russians steadily pressed westwards; the growth of Allied unity was reflected by successful inter-Allied conferences, and finally, after the successful breach of the Atlantic "Wall" and the liberation of France, Germany herself was faced with invasion and destruction, which the years of Allied air attack had helped to make possible. There is no attempt to list here the important steps on the road to German defeat, but the above have been suggested because as the power of Germany declined the power of Heinrich Himmler rose, and the connection between the inverse lines on the graph is causal. By 1 September 1939 Himmler had in his hands all of the armed forces of Germany designed for internal purposes of repression. By the end of the war he had under his charge as Chief of Home Defense all of the armed forces of the Reich devoted to defense of the homeland against the enemy. On the way to that final power he had in turn become the head of Germany's air raid protection organization, Minister of the Interior and Reich Plenipotentiary for Interior Administration.

As the war inevitably enhanced the importance of secret intelligence, intrigue, and violence in foreign policy, Himmler's power in that field also increased, notably in the sequel to the fall of Mussolini. The effect of military setbacks on the *Abwehr*, the intelligence department of the OKW (German High Command), was also so demoralizing that, even before the unsuccessful *attentat* and *putsch* of 20 July 1944, in which some of its members were implicated, Himmler had managed to win his long-sought victory over the *Abwehr*, which was incorporated into his intelligence and terror organization, the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA).

It is conceivable that in the last years of the war others had more intimate influence upon Hitler than did Himmler. It is indisputable, however, that in the years 1943-1945 Himmler had in his hands, placed there by the Führer, the complete power of command over the internal administration of the Reich, and over the organization of German home defense. As Hitler came to devote almost all of his attention to that military strategy of which he regarded himself the master, this meant in effect that Himmler, in addition to his posts as head of the SS and the Police, with their foreign and domestic espionage systems became in title at least the Supreme Administrator of the disintegrating German State.

Himmler was something more, until almost the very end. He was the guardian of Hitler's life; his SS, and the entire apparatus of power built upon it, reverted in a very real sense to its original purpose, that of the inner guard of the Leader, that inner guard which, Himmler believed, accounted for all historical greatness and achievement. The German armed forces kept fighting during the last year of the war partly because the German officer, with his rigid if unimaginative code of honor, considered himself bound by his oath of loyalty to Hitler. The plot that culminated in the attempted assassination of 20 July 1944 was in a sense simply an attempt to remove the object of that loyalty; it was Himmler's responsibility not only to keep that object alive and protected, but to see to it that the code of honor of the German officer was reinforced, if necessary, by the threat of death. This was Himmler's greatest power: that he could have removed, at any time during the war, that leader who was the cause of many months of senseless resistance and destruction; yet if he had done so, Himmler would have removed at the same stroke the source of his titles, his wealth, and his power.

A. THE ALLGEMEINE AND WAFFEN SS

The SS remained, until the end, the chief instrument of Himmler's power; but its nature was radically altered during the war years. To be sure, some of the tendencies already in existence before 1 September 1939 persisted. Thus, the fusion between the police and the SS became virtually complete; certain branches of the police were by 1944 recruited exclusively from the SS; in all branches, the officers came to hold a dual rank, first as members of the SS, secondly as policemen. By a similar process the SD was completely absorbed into the security and intelligence machinery of the State, and came to be supported by State rather than Party funds. The process of infiltration into the entire fabric of German life, described above as the SS "fifth column," was continued and accelerated; and it may be said, in general, that the grip of the SS upon the German people as a whole steadily tightened.¹ Complete control over the transportation and communications was effected in 1942 by the transfer of the Postal and Railway Guards to the SS, and the organization by the SS of the Radio Police for the con-

¹ EDS/G/8, p. 8; *Manual on the German Secret Services*, p. 23.

trol of transmission and reception of radio messages.² Still another accretion of SS influence was implied in the Himmler-Ley agreement of April 1942 for the joint education of the Labor Front and the SS, which brought the SS and Gestapo into every workers' lecture hall.³

At the same time, as the character of the membership of the SS changed under war pressures, the disciplinary regime over SS members themselves became more strict and complete, the new SS penal code of 1942 bringing all members of the SS without exception under the strict discipline and stringent penalties (including hanging, shooting, and decapitation) of SS law.⁴ The same penal code was to apply to the new women's corps of the SS, the *SS Helferinnen* (Female Signal Auxiliaries), who were recruited beginning in 1942 to relieve SS men more urgently needed on the fighting fronts.⁵ An attempt was also made, as the Germans anticipated an Allied invasion in mid-1944, to use the SS as a means of policing the large number of potentially dangerous foreigners in the Reich. For this purpose a new type of SS formation came into being, composed of battalions of mixed nationality, the first of which, composed of 320 Dutchmen and Flemings, took the oath in May 1944 after eighteen months of propaganda and recruiting. Their tasks were defined, according to an article in the *National Zeitung* on 1 June 1944, as the supervision of foreign labor and the carrying out of propaganda and police work in Germany.⁶

Despite these evidences of growing influence, however, the most notable development of the war years was the decline in membership of the *Allgemeine SS*, and the corresponding expansion of the *Waffen SS*. Members of the former, whose military activities were normally confined to evening or week-end parades and meetings,⁷ were not exempt from military service; and the SS leaders were therefore confronted with the alternative of allowing the best of their men to become merged with the general mass of the *Wehrmacht* or of providing a special branch of the armed forces where SS men could retain their identity and strengthen their tradition. Some way also had to be found to give the *Verfügungstruppen* the battle-front experience and honors that such "political soldiers" would be expected to share in a nation at war. Himmler's creation of the *Waffen SS*, an independent branch of the armed forces of the State, was the answer to both problems. From its nucleus, made up of the four regiments of the *Verfügungstruppen*, the *Waffen SS* grew until it comprised, early in 1945 over one million men who had seen service on every major military front except Norway and Africa.

Although its history goes back to 1939, the *Waffen SS* appeared for the first time as a completely independent branch of the armed forces on 15 March 1942.⁸ Existing virtually as a fourth arm of the service, the *Waffen SS* was directed not from the German High Command (OKW), but from Himmler's HQ, which shifted with the exigencies of war. Under its commanders, notably Sepp Dietrich, the SS had the reputation of showing exceptional initiative, bravery, and tenacity in battle. The SS men regarded themselves as political soldiers, and did not conceal their feeling of superiority to the *Wehrmacht*, an attitude which was quite naturally bitterly resented by many

² EDS/G/8, p. 24.

³ Schütz, W. W., *German Home Front*, p. 80.

⁴ EDS/G/8, p. 30.

⁵ EDS Report No. 21, bound with EDS/G/8, p. 1.

⁶ Graves, Phillip, *The Nineteenth Quarter*, p. 215.

⁷ EDS/G/8, p. 29.

⁸ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 17 March 1942, quoted by Schütz, *German Home Front*, London, 1943, p. 80.

elements of the traditional fighting force.⁹ At the upper level, indeed, there must have been something far more intense than resentment, particularly when officers of the SS undertook to enforce upon *Reichswehr* commanders the senseless orders that came from the Führer's HQ in the last year of the war. It is not too much to say that even apart from this police function within the declining *Wehrmacht*, the *Waffen SS* became in the last years of the war the chief mainstay of the German defense, claiming an enrollment in May 1945 of 1,200,000 men.^{9a}

It must, however, be surmised that the crisis faced in the last few years of the war, which was accompanied by almost indiscriminate recruiting for the *Waffen SS*, had to some extent diluted the single-minded loyalty and fervor of the SS contingents, and produced different shades of opinion and policy. Furthermore, as Himmler's power grew, he became more indifferent to his chief associates, many of whom broke with him, or were broken by him, including his old associate in the SS, the chief of his personal staff until 1943, SS Ogruf. and General der Waffen SS Karl Wolff, Military Plenipotentiary in Italy, who was chiefly instrumental in organizing the negotiations for the capitulation of German and Italian "Republican" forces in Italy and Western Austria.¹⁰ Nevertheless, it can still be said that the SS, whose training and indoctrination remained focussed upon its oath of unqualified obedience to the Führer, remained until the end the hard core of the Nazi Party; and, as General Eisenhower has testified, the *Waffen SS* stood at the end as the only integrated command organization of the German armed forces.¹¹

B. HIMMLER'S GROWING MILITARY POWER

The growth of Himmler's power at the expense of the OKW was not, however, limited by any means to the development of the *Waffen SS*. In 1942 most of the functions as well as the units of the *Geheime Feldpolizei* (GFP—Secret Field Police), the executive agent of the Security Department (*Abwehr*, or Section Ic) of the *Wehrmacht*, were officially taken over by the Sipo and SD. This was not simply another accretion of power for Himmler's police services; it provided, in addition, a means by which Himmler was able to keep a close watch over the activities of Army personnel.¹² Furthermore, by 1944 the German armed forces had become completely dependent upon the Sipo and SD for their intelligence information, as the *Abwehr* itself, the military intelligence system of the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW—the German High Command), was incorporated in Himmler's RSHA under the title of *Militärisches Amt*. This change, which came about on 1 June 1944, gave Himmler complete control of the entire German Intelligence Service, within and beyond Germany, military and civilian, including intelligence, sabotage and security. While it would seem that there was before 1944 room for the existence of the two systems, the *Abwehr* and the RSHA, as the military situation began to deteriorate friction arose between them and gradually their formerly peaceful co-existence was replaced by competition and rivalry. The reason for this development may be found partly in the difference between the personnel of the two agencies: the SD, which supervised the intelligence activities of the RSHA, was staffed by the most fanatical followers of the Nazi Party, its full time personnel being derived exclusively

⁹ Fredborg, Arvid, *Behind the Steel Wall*, p. 235.

^{9a} SRGG 1260. (C).

¹⁰ CSDIC/CMF/X 166.

¹¹ EDS/G/8, p. 8.

¹² EDS/G/10, p. 64.

from the ranks of the SS; the *Abwehr*, on the other hand, was led by German Staff Officers, many of whom had never favored National Socialism except for opportunistic reasons. In addition, the latter's knowledge of military affairs and their access to inside information on the darker facts of the strategic position of Germany led many of them to take a more realistic, i.e., defeatist, outlook towards Germany's future. The orthodox Nazi, in contrast, still believed in Germany's invincibility.

To this basic difference in outlook between the *Abwehr* and the SD there must be added certain practical and operational factors. The working machinery of the *Abwehr* had never reached a very high degree of efficiency and was perhaps encumbered by too much bureaucratic procedure. On the other hand the SD, newly risen to power, carried out its own aims and those of the SS with scientific ruthlessness and efficiency. As military conquests added foreign territories to the Reich the SD expanded in proportion and (through its Amt VI) took over many functions of espionage and sabotage which ordinarily might have been considered the responsibility of military intelligence and counter-intelligence. It is not surprising, therefore, that rivalry between the *Abwehr* and SD, i.e., between the OKW and the Nazi Party's instrument, the SS, led to strife, and finally to the *Abwehr's* absorption into the RSHA.¹³

The degree of consternation caused by the shift in *Abwehr* circles is reflected in the fact that Himmler himself had to address a conference of *Abwehr* officials (called Mil. Amt. officials in the report) at Salzburg in mid-May 1944, in an attempt to make them feel that in coming under the wing of the RSHA they would be joining a good organization.¹⁴

Expressed in terms of personalities rather than organizations, this change constituted a victory for Himmler over the German general staff, and in particular over Admiral Canaris, the head of the *Abwehr*, who was dismissed in the course of the struggle. The defeat of the *Abwehr*, it may be added, was complete even before the conspiracy of 20 July 1944; but the participation of some of its surviving directors in that conspiracy enabled Himmler to prove that his defeated rivals had been not only inefficient but also disloyal. Directors of the old *Abwehr*, like Canaris, were dismissed, while others, like Hansen and Freytag von Loringhoven, were ruined in the plot's sequel.¹⁵

Himmler's success in taking over the intelligence apparatus of the OKW, coupled with his control over the *Waffen SS* and his pre-existing intelligence services, gave him by the end of the war an immense influence in military affairs. This was particularly evident with respect to Goering's Air Force. Himmler had, as early as 1942, won a jurisdictional quarrel with Goering, when he took control of the entire ARP system—a victory which had been preceded, the year before, by the formation of the first SS emergency companies (SS Alarmsturme) for use during air attacks.¹⁶ By the end of the war, however, Himmler's control over the air force went far beyond this modest victory. During 1944 the SD made an intensive report, for Hitler's benefit, on the conduct of the *Luftwaffe*; the SD examined the *Luftwaffe* with a critical eye, pointing out many phases of organization and planning which were faulty. This examination of the *Luftwaffe's* weaknesses then went far beyond the mere cataloguing of faults; it included recommendations, among which were the appointment of SS "commissars" who would

¹³ EDS/G/10, pp. 88-89.

¹⁴ Draft Report, *Kaltenbrunner Interrogation*, May 1945.

¹⁵ SHAEF, *The German Intelligence Service*, April 1945, p. 3; Canaris, it is reported, was also arrested for complicity, see draft report of *Kaltenbrunner Interrogation*, May 1945.

¹⁶ EDS/G/8, p. 29.

rectify the mistakes. Typical of this method of SS aggrandizement was the appointment of General der Waffen SS Kammler as commissar-general for jet-propelled aircraft, one of the fields in which the SS had been particularly critical of the *Luftwaffe's* methods and results.¹⁷ It even appears that towards the end of the war an SD official was appointed to supervise every important GAF staff officer.¹⁸

The penetration of the GAF by the SS led, as may be imagined, to numerous intrigues. Certain officers of the GAF were accused by their colleagues of betraying their own service to the SS; some, indeed, invoked the favor of Himmler to get what they wanted from Goering, who was said to yield whenever the influence of the SS was manifest; in one case it appears rather clearly that Himmler influenced Hitler to recommend a change in one of the highest positions of the Air Force.¹⁹

Rather more striking evidence of the influence of the SS over Goering is provided by the fact that in the last days of the war, when Hitler ordered Goering's arrest, he was placed in the custody of SS guards. A persistent story of these last days indicates that Goering thought he might make some profit out of his "protection" by these SS guards; he entertained the hope, it is said, that when the Allies captured him he would claim that the presence of these guards proved that he was acting under restraint, and was forced to follow anti-Allied policies against his own judgment!²⁰

One other point is worth mentioning in connection with SS control over the *Luftwaffe*, since it throws some light on Himmler's ambitions and character. It is said that Himmler tried to organize an air force of his own during the war, probably some time before 1944, but that the *Luftwaffe* had at the time been able to protect itself against such a frontal attack. From that point on Himmler concentrated on the more indirect attack of dominating the *Luftwaffe*, which has already been described. Himmler, however, is said to have taken to wearing the pilots' diamond badge after his attempt to establish an independent air force failed.²¹

Finally, in this assessment of Himmler's growing power in the military field, there should be included the allegation that the SD Liaison Officer at Hitler's HQ, Herr Rattenhuber, and his two associates formed der Führer's "most intimate circle." These gentlemen, it has been said, were responsible for the self-deluding slogans, such as the one about 3000 jet-propelled aircraft, and in fact not only the "dirty work," but the "whole conduct of . . . operations" were reported as being in their hands, presumably during the last six or eight months of the war.²²

Apart from these reports, which are subject to confirmation, Himmler's greatest power over the German military machine was to come after the attempt on Hitler's life on 20 July 1944, when he was appointed Chief of Home Defense. Before describing the circumstances of that appointment, however, it is necessary to trace the development of Himmler's power as administrator of the German home front.

C. MINISTER OF INTERIOR, 1943

The need for repression on the home front had enhanced Himmler's power and activities long before his appointment as Minister of the Interior in August 1943. Just

¹⁷ SRGG 1227 (C).

¹⁸ SRGG 1242.

¹⁹ For details of these cases see SRGG 1226 (C), SRGG 1243 (C), and SRGG 1242.

²⁰ SRGG 1210 (C).

²¹ SRGG 1227 (C).

²² SRGG 301.

a few days after the outbreak of the war, on 7 September 1939, his powers were extended in a sweeping decree which prescribed the death penalty for anyone "endangering the defensive power of the German people." The first execution under the decree was announced the next day: one Johann Heinen of Dessau had been shot "for refusing to take part in defensive work." This was only the first of many such executions, many of which were decreed by the secret "People's Court"; on the two days 20-21 December 1939, for instance, the authorities admitted eleven such executions, about half for espionage, the rest for "damaging the interests of the people in war-time." To illustrate another side of Himmler's powers, we may also cite the execution, announced on 28 July 1940, of a Polish farm laborer, accused of committing with a German woman the crime of "race pollution." And still another side to Himmler's activity was revealed by the report, heard by an American journalist in Berlin, that the Gestapo was putting to death the mentally deficient population of the Reich.²³ His advancement of the racial and population theories of the Nazi extremists was also evident during this period; on 27 February 1940 it was decreed to be the duty of German girls to become the mothers of children of soldiers going off to the front, either in or out of wedlock; the SS, it was promised, would become guardian to the children of all those who should fall at the front.²⁴

Himmler also remained, of course, the protector of the Führer's life as well as the executor of his wishes. Thus when Hitler appeared at Danzig, on 19 September 1939, Himmler was in his entourage, performing himself some of the guard tasks, pushing back the people in the aisle down which Hitler walked, and muttering at them—one sign of the extreme weariness and irritation of Hitler's group on this occasion.²⁵ When the death of General von Fritsch was announced, later in the same month, the very strange circumstances under which he had met death at the front line suggested the possibility that he might have been murdered at Himmler's order, though that fact was by no means established; the absence of Hitler, Himmler and the other leaders from his funeral, however, certainly suggested that his death had not been unwelcome to them.²⁶ When a bomb attempt to assassinate Hitler took place in Munich in November 1939, Himmler instituted a widespread hunt for the perpetrators, which resulted in the arrest of one Georg Elser, behind whom, Himmler alleged, stood the British Intelligence Service and Otto Strasser.²⁷

These events, all of which took place during the first year of the war, tend to illustrate some of the tendencies within the Reich even in those victorious months and years when the Nazi war machine seemed invincible. The employment of terror on the home front, however, was to become much more necessary after the tide of war had turned towards the end of 1942. And the enthronement of Himmler in the seat of complete administrative power in Germany was to follow that event in August 1943 which was to represent an immense challenge to the prestige of Germany and to the Führer principle which ruled it—the overthrow of Mussolini. Coming just a few days after a Hitler-Mussolini meeting, the fall of Il Duce threatened at once the foundations of Germany's power in Europe and Hitler's power in Germany. It was in particular bound to be a decidedly bad example to dissident elements in Germany, who would

²³ Shirer, William L., *Berlin Diary*, New York, 1941, pp.205, 206, 262, 461, 569.

²⁴ Shirer, *Berlin Diary*, p. 291.

²⁵ Shirer, *Berlin Diary*, p. 217.

²⁶ Shirer, *Berlin Diary*, p. 222.

²⁷ Shirer, *Berlin Diary*, pp. 251-252; Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Chronology of International Events*.

think in terms of a "palace revolution" on the Rome model as a means of getting rid of the Führer. The grave crisis which ensued was solved, so it was thought, by the rescue of Mussolini from his captors, thus restoring the Führer principle to some dignity, and by the elevation of Himmler to a position that might be called that of internal dictator of Germany. Himmler now supplanted the milder Frick as Minister of the Interior for the Reich and Prussia. With this position came membership on the small Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Realm, Germany's "War Cabinet" established in 1939 whose members had power to issue decrees having the force of law. He was also appointed, as Frick's successor, to exercise the great administrative powers embraced in the title of General-Plenipotentiary for Administration (sometimes described as Commissioner-General or Delegate-General for Administration)—a position in which Himmler, as Frick's Deputy, had already had some experience, and which gave him supervision not only of the Ministry of the Interior, but also the Ministries of Education, Church Affairs, Space and Planning, and (for a time) Justice. Thus Himmler gained control of a large share of the bureaucratic machine of the Reich and its subordinate regional administrations; although it should be noted that other important areas of government, such as that over war industry, were outside his jurisdiction, and that his power may have been limited somewhat by that of Bormann, who had in 1941 been appointed Hitler's Deputy for home affairs, succeeding Hess.²⁸

An official interpretation of the effect of Himmler's appointment was suggested in a broadcast over the foreign service of the German radio:

"With his collaborators," suggested the broadcaster, "Himmler is known for treating everybody from the humblest man to the highest official with human sympathy and consideration. . . . His personality embodies all the factors for a further concentration of forces and a stronger cohesion of the home front."²⁹

A rather more candid comment, from the official *Völkischer Beobachter*, may be more illuminating. The appointment, it held, meant "a clear front against every coward, every weakling, against dirt and half-measures, against every obstacle, big or small, on Germany's way of destiny." While Hitler's comment, in his belated speech of 10 September, was perhaps the most revealing of all. The measures taken since Mussolini's overthrow, he stated, would insure that there would never be a July 25th (the date of Il Duce's overthrow) in Germany.³⁰

To appreciate the importance of Himmler's appointment to the Ministry of Interior—a change described by one source as the most important in the Nazi regime since the Roehm purge of 1934—it is necessary to glance for a moment at the extensive powers of his new position. The Ministry had functions in the realm of legislation as well as administration, with respect not only to the constitutional structure of the Reich itself, but also that of the incorporated territories or assimilated regions, such as the General Government in Poland and the "Protectorate" of Bohemia-Moravia, although there existed an independent ministry for the occupied Russian territories. Furthermore, the Minister's executive powers included the appointment, promotion, and dismissal of many officials and functionaries, while in other cases he had the power of recommendation to the Führer. For example, the Minister practically appointed the mayors and other leading officials of the larger cities. These powers of appointment

²⁸ RA-1130; BR 529A, p. 483; EDS/G/10, p. 6; *European Political Report*, Vol. II, No. 23, 8 June 1945, p. 3.

²⁹ Graves, Phillip, *A Record of the War: The Sixteenth Quarter*, pp. 203-204.

³⁰ Graves, *A Record of the War: The Sixteenth Quarter*, pp. 203-204.

made it possible for Himmler, if he chose, to cleanse the civil service of those remaining conservative elements whose devotion to Nazism was questionable—a purge probably foreshadowed by Hitler's dismissal, at the time of Himmler's appointment, of Hans Pfundter, principal Under Secretary of State in the Ministry and a civil servant of the traditional type. There was, as a result, the possibility of a more complete coordination than had previously existed between the Gestapo and the entire State administration, thus bringing the terror machinery of the regime much closer to the population, in its "day to day" contacts with government.³¹

D. CHIEF OF HOME DEFENSE, 1944

That the elevation of Himmler to his vastly enlarged authority was not altogether to the liking of the Army is suggested by the removal of the Reich Labor Service, an auxiliary of the armed forces, from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior simultaneously with his appointment.³² If, however, the Army wished a tighter control of the home front, they should have been grateful to Himmler, for he employed his new powers, as the *Völkischer Beobachter* had prophesied, to tighten still further his repressive hold on the German masses. The "People's Courts," it was reported, responded to his stimulus with a display of bloodthirsty activity, including a noticeable increase in beheadings, notably in Austria. Yet all of this display of an incorrigible intention to bend Germany to Hitler's will was not enough to discourage the group of plotters, military and civilian, who had decided that the future of Germany required the elimination of Hitler. They proceeded, during the months following Himmler's appointment, with those plans which finally matured in the incredibly unsuccessful attempt on Hitler's life on 20 July 1944. Just as the overthrow of Mussolini had led to Himmler's appointment as Minister of the Interior, so now, with the failure of the assassination plot, which had embraced plans for a *coup d'état*, Himmler was to be appointed to succeed Generaloberst Fromm as Chief of the Replacement Army and Commander of Home Defense. The highest circles of the Army had been involved in the plot; Generaloberst Fromm himself was the superior officer of Oberst von Stauffenberg, the assassin; thus was Himmler appointed, when it must have appeared to Hitler that all had failed him, to those positions of military command to which he had aspired for so many years.³³

Himmler was now in control of all disciplined formations, civil, paramilitary, and military, within the frontiers of the Reich. He used his new authority to order longer and more intensive hours of training, and inaugurated plans for the day when Germany itself would be invaded, including the formation of the *Volkssturm*, of which he became the head, and the conduct of guerilla warfare against the invader. As the war approached Germany his military functions became of increased importance—he was reported to be on the Moselle front in September 1944—and he had a corresponding increase in stature as a ceremonial figure. He read the broadcast proclamation of the Führer on the anniversary of the Munich *putsch* in November, deputized for Hitler at an investiture, and for the first time made radio speeches calling upon the population for determined resistance.³⁴

³¹ RA-1130

³² RA-1130.

³³ EDS/G/10, p. 6; SRGG 1219 (C).

³⁴ EDS Report No. 19; Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Chronology of International Events*.

E. HIMMLER AND THE CONQUERED TERRITORIES

No more can be attempted here than a brief summary of the role that Himmler and his police and SS organizations played in the administration of occupied territories and foreign policy during the war years. The police and SS were, it can be said, the chief instrumentalities of German occupation policy; which has been described, in the most thorough published study of German occupation ordinances and activities, as a gigantic scheme to change for many years to come the balance of biological forces between Germany and the captive nations. The Police and SS were, in the view of the author of the study, interwoven with the administration of the conquered lands, and therefore had the opportunity to perpetrate the greater part of the war crimes that occurred during the war. An analysis of the specific functions of the Gestapo and the SS, and of their program and world outlook, leads, in his judgment, to the conclusion that in the light of their close connection and combined activities they constituted an association for the commission of crimes *in genere*—crimes against the municipal law of the occupied countries, international law, and the laws of humanity. Their program and activities, in fact, amounted to a conspiracy, the members of which should be punished in virtue of their membership in these organizations.⁸⁵

One fragmentary insight into the responsibilities of the SS and Gestapo, with graphic descriptions of the methods used, is provided by the official records of the war crime trials in Kharkov and Krasnodar Territory, held after those Soviet regions were liberated by Soviet forces. The "wholesale murder" of Soviet citizens in the Krasnodar Territory, it was decided, was under the "immediate supervision and execution" of the Krasnodar Gestapo, the punitive section of which was described as Sonderkommando SS-10-a; while among those indicted and convicted at the Kharkov trial were SS and SD officers, under whom an SS Division and an SD Sonderkommando carried out mass executions.⁸⁶

There is no need to burden these pages with similar examples of the work of the Gestapo and SS abroad. It is, however, important to stress the degree to which these acts were part of a calculated policy on Himmler's part, and his degree of responsibility. In October 1939, with the conquest of Poland and the division of spheres implied in the Soviet-German Pact of August 1939, the Nazi regime had its first opportunity to carry out systematically its racial ideas. It was Himmler, whose racial fanaticism was hardly second to that of any other member of the regime, who was entrusted with the execution of policy, with his appointment, in October 1939, as *Reichskommissar für die Festigung des Deutschen Volkstums* (Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germanism). As such he was responsible for the resettlement of *Volksdeutsche* ("racial" Germans)—from the Volga, the Black Sea, Transylvania, Wallachia, etc.—in newly acquired territory, such as the *Reichsgaue* Wartheland and Danzig-Westpreussen, which had been taken from Poland, and were, prior to 1939, comparatively thinly populated by Germans. This task was performed through the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle*, an office closely associated with the SS High Command and largely staffed by SS personnel, no doubt drawn from the pre-existing SS Race and Settlement Department, one of the three oldest departments of the SS.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Lemkin, Raphael, *Axix Rule in Occupied Europe*, Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944, pp. xi, 22-23.

⁸⁶ (Kharkov trial), *The People's Verdict: Full Report of the Proceedings at the Krasnodar and Kharkov German Atrocity Trials*, London, Hutchinson, 1944, pp. 7-13, 45-48.

⁸⁷ EDS/G/10, p. 6; EDS/G/8, p. 13.

Himmler's appointment as Minister of Interior with power over questions of citizenship, nationality, and the maintenance of "Germandom" in the frontier areas, consolidated his influence over Eastern policy, already great. In his combined capacities, he was the exponent of an intransigent policy for the racial conquest of the Eastern provinces. Differing from Rosenberg, head of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, who apparently favored a certain degree of autonomy for the Eastern peoples, Himmler favored the most rigid control and insisted upon extermination of the intellectuals and other leadership elements among the conquered. He favored concentration of all governmental authority in the hands of the Reich Germans and the transfer to them of land and property—in short, the complete and permanent exploitation of the Eastern territories and their peoples by Germans for Germany. To Himmler the future of Germany was bound up with German domination over the Eastern territories and here his racial policy was most thoroughly tested and carried out—though fortunately, the Soviet Army saw to it that the process was of short duration.³⁸

For an understanding of Himmler's Eastern racial policy one must remember that with his education in animal husbandry, his impressionable years as a disciple of Rosenberg, Ludendorff, and Hitler, and his passion for breeding rabbits, Himmler seriously thought of himself as a breeder of men and nations. His projects within the SS are sufficient evidence of this distorted conviction; and the opposite side of his delusion that he could breed a German racial "élite" was his conviction that he could destroy the vital force of other nationalities. His approach to this problem is illustrated by a memorandum of 21 July 1944, addressed to Kaltenbrunner, head of the RSHA, and circulated only in the highest Nazi circles, in which Himmler outlines a fantastic project to establish a new zone of German settlement in the Russian territories. Within this zone, the native elements were to be forced into a "peaceful and disarmed frame of mind," which required the imposition of a religion, unlike Orthodox or Catholic Christianity, which would induce a submissive spirit. Towards this end Himmler proposed using as missionaries the pacifistic *Bibelforscher* (Bible Students), who had in his eyes "really ideal qualities," among them opposition to the Jews, the Catholic Church, and the Pope, while for the Turcoman tribes he suggested the introduction of Buddhism. As a first step towards this scheme he proposed more lenient treatment of the *Bibelforscher* then imprisoned in concentration camps, thus permitting their use for "confidential work" within the camps as a preparation for this later missionary work in conquered Russia!³⁹

Such a plan, even if seriously held, might be dismissed as incredibly fantastic. But the Nazi policy towards the conquered peoples, especially the Slavonic peoples of the East and the Jews, cannot be dismissed except with a shudder. With regard to the Slavonic peoples, there was indeed some deviation from the creed of pure "Aryanism" induced mainly by the German manpower shortage, which led Himmler to think in terms of gradations of racial classes rather than total extinction.⁴⁰ No such considerations, however, were allowed to modify the blind fanaticism and complete inhumanity of the Nazi policy towards the Jews, until the very last days of acknowledged defeat. When Ley declared, on 4 December 1942, that it was the Nazi intention to "go on waging this war until the Jews had been wiped off the face of the earth," there is

³⁸ RA-1130.

³⁹ HQ, 3rd U.S. Army, *Detailed IPW Report No. 20*, 17 May 1945, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰ BR 529A, p. 491.

no doubt that he meant what he said, and that he represented faithfully the intentions of Hitler and Himmler, in whose hands lay the decision as to policy and its method of execution. As one official survey summarizes this phase of Nazi behavior, "The responsibility of the Nazi leaders, as well as of their specially trained agents, for the callous slaughter of defenceless Jewish citizens both of Germany and of many other lands is direct and undeniable."⁴¹ Among these Nazi leaders, Himmler may be said to have been, next only to Hitler, the chief protagonist and executioner of the scheme for the total liquidation of the Jews, whom he linked with Bolsheviks and democrats ("Freemasons") among the eternal enemies of the long-suffering German race.⁴²

The conquest of Eastern Europe did more than provide a laboratory for testing Nazi racial theories; it also offered a larger economic and geographical base for German penetration of the outside world. That this new strategic factor was recognized is shown by a report of a plan formulated in 1941 with Himmler's approval, to use Germany's dominant position in the beet-sugar industry to set up a world-wide espionage organization.

The plan called for the establishment as camouflage of a beet-sugar producer-cooperative with branches all over Europe and observation points in the most important non-European sugar-producing areas, such as Cuba and Java. Many steps were taken towards the implementation of this plan during the war years, among them the seizure by Himmler in his capacity as Commissioner for the Preservation of German Nationality, of sugar-beet factories in Western Poland, which had already come under the administration of Goering as Chief Trustee for the Eastern Territories. The cooperative having been established, the RSHA was reported to have obtained, by 1943, its first fruits, intelligence concerning Swiss installations received via Hungary.⁴³

The "Protectorate" of Bohemia-Moravia

While Himmler's SS and Police were sufficiently important in all occupied territories, they seem to have had an especially elevated place in the regime governing the "Protectorate" of Bohemia-Moravia, established on 16 March 1939 upon Hitler's destruction of the Czechoslovakian State. At first, it may be recalled, the "Protectorate" enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy under Reich Protector von Neurath, whose power did not include control over the Army and Police forces, which were under the German High Command and Himmler respectively, the latter delegating his authority to the Sudeten leader, Karl H. Frank. However, with the appointment of Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's SS Deputy and head of the RSHA, to take the place of Von Neurath, who went on indefinite leave in September 1941, the German grip of the "Protectorate" was tightened. Frank, who remained as Heydrich's deputy, now controlled not only the whole of the German Police and SS in the "Protectorate," but also the Czech police, which had to obey instructions issued to it even by the local German police.⁴⁴

The character of Heydrich's rule in Czechoslovakia had already been foreshadowed in a candid article, no doubt designed to instill fear in the population, which that notorious aide of Himmler had published in the Prague Journal, *Bohemia and Moravia*,

⁴¹ BR 529A, p. 491.

⁴² See Himmler, *Die Schutzstaffel als antibolschewistische Kampforganisation*, 3rd edition, Munich, 1937, pp. 3-8 and *passim*; see also Glueck, Sheldon, *War Criminals, Their Prosecution and Punishment*, New York, 1944.

⁴³ CG, Third U.S. Army, 20 May 1943.

⁴⁴ Duff, S.S., *A German Protectorate*, p. 78.

in June 1941. In this article Heydrich boasted of the methods of the Gestapo and SS which he admitted to be the instruments used by the Party to destroy its "political enemies, particularly the Republican Parties, Jewry, Communism, the political Churches, the Freemasons." His article, after describing in detail the functions of the SS and Gestapo, among which were the combatting of "sabotage, espionage, and terrorism," went on to warn his Czech readers with a description of their role in fighting the non-German enemies of Nazism, including the Czechs and Poles.⁴⁵

Animated by the spirit which had earned him the flattering sobriquets of "Butcher" and "Hangman," Heydrich enjoyed a comparatively brief, if notorious rule, which was ended quite appropriately by assassination in May 1942. His place was, however, taken by Himmler's second aide, Kurt Daluege, Chief of the Orpo, who may be remembered as one of the first Gestapo officials under Goering. Resistance by the Czechs continued to defy the Nazi authorities; and when, in August 1943, a place had to be found for Frick, whose place as Minister of the Interior was being taken by Himmler, Daluege was removed, the official resignation of Von Neurath was accepted, and Frick was made Protector, with the Sudeten German Frank remaining in the administration as Minister of State for Bohemia-Moravia with the rank of Reich Minister.⁴⁶ Thus the only experiment in direct and complete SS rule of a conquered area came to an end, in circumstances that suggest something far less than complete success. Furthermore, the Czechs appear to have "broken" Himmler's two chief aides; Heydrich was assassinated and Daluege was soon "retired" on a pension, suffering, so it was said, from "mental trouble."⁴⁷

F. HIMMLER AND FOREIGN POLICY

Himmler's growing power over the internal administration of Germany, the regimes of the occupied countries, and finally the military defense of Germany, was accompanied by an increasing influence over foreign policy. His chief instrument in this field was that most secret of his police agencies, the SD, which, as already described, was linked with the *Sicherheitspolizei* on 27 September 1939, becoming the key agency of the RSHA, Himmler's over-all police executive. The function of the SD was clearly and briefly expressed, the year after this elevation of the SD, by Dr. Werner Best, who was once described as the brains of Himmler's police organization: "The SD . . . must investigate and explore thoroughly the background and activities of the great ideological arch-enemies of National-Socialism and of the German People, in order to make possible a determined and effective effort for the annihilation of those enemies."⁴⁸ This function was to be discharged both within Germany and the occupied territories, where the SD was empowered in 1942 to serve as the principal espionage body, and outside of Germany, where it was responsible for espionage, sabotage and subversion. After 1942, this foreign organization of the SD expanded rapidly and aggressively under its chief, SS Brigadeführer Schellenberg, competing with and finally coming to dominate the military intelligence service of the OKW, the *Abwehr*.⁴⁹ In the field of diplomacy itself, in neutral countries for instance, cases were not unknown of the SD attempting to supplant the influence of the German Ambassador and his staff.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Schütz, W. W., *German Home Front*, London, 1943, pp. 78-80.

⁴⁶ BR 529A, p. 477.

⁴⁷ Draft report, *Kaltenbrunner Interrogation*.

⁴⁸ EDS/G/10, p. 78.

⁴⁹ EDS/G/10, pp. 88-89.

⁵⁰ *Manual on the German Secret Services*, p. 31.

Nor did the SD hesitate to penetrate the Foreign Office itself; as early as 1939 the SD followed, from the inside, the course of a desperate struggle for power between the Foreign Office on the one hand and the Reich Ministry of Propaganda and the OKW on the other, utilizing the information gained to strengthen its own position by playing off the two contestants against one another.⁵¹ By 1943, indeed, the position of the SD was regularized within the Foreign Office as Domestic Division II, under the direction of the allegedly corrupt SS Standartenführer Wagner. The function of this Division was to maintain liaison between the Foreign Office and the Reich SS leaders, whose preponderance in many foreign political questions had increased considerably, notably in the negotiations concerning the establishment of the Fascist Republican regime in northern Italy. It is in fact alleged by a well-placed official of the Foreign Office that the Division increasingly became, as time went on, a control agency of the SS in the Foreign Office. This power was vastly enlarged after the 20 July 1944 *attentat*, in which a number of Foreign Office personnel were involved. In fact, the SS now turned against Ribbentrop, who had earlier been the instrument of Party influence in the Foreign Office, and a whispering campaign was begun designed to effect his removal. This campaign became so strong that Ribbentrop had to counter with a defense of his record as Foreign Minister and the dismissal of a number of officials who had been put on a purge list, among them the envoys to Madrid and Lisbon. The surveillance of the remaining officials was sharpened, and many were arrested for defeatist remarks during the closing phase of the war.⁵²

Himmler also played a direct role in the making of foreign policy decisions by the Führer. According to one report, the four leading "advisors" of the Führer on foreign matters were Goebbels, his "most fertile" collaborator, Himmler, Bormann, and Ribbentrop. Ribbentrop, it is reported, was in constant conflict with the older Nazi leaders, including Goebbels, Goering, and Bormann. But the strongest attack of all upon him, again in the closing phase of the war, was said to have come from Himmler, who felt that Ribbentrop's diplomatic methods had largely contributed to the catastrophic isolation of the Reich.⁵³ Such was the position in the last eight months of the war that Ribbentrop even had to complain that Kaltenbrunner, the head of the RSHA and a subordinate of Himmler, was reporting directly to Hitler on foreign policy questions, thus by-passing Ribbentrop. The SD did, however, also make regular reports available to the Foreign Office, and Kaltenbrunner frequently discussed policy and information with Ribbentrop.⁵⁴

Undoubtedly the most notable of Himmler's foreign enterprises was that which resulted in the "liberation" of Mussolini and the establishment of the Fascist Republican Government of Northern Italy in the late summer of 1943. As indicated above, the overthrow of Mussolini was regarded not only as a challenge to the Führer principle which was bound to have serious repercussions for Hitler's position, but the defection of Italy as an ally was also bound to reflect with damaging consequences upon the prestige and position of the Reich. Whatever the role played by the orthodox methods of diplomacy in the events that followed, it is clear that it was overshadowed by Himmler's foreign espionage organization, personally directed by Himmler. For it was under Himmler's authority and direction that the "liberation" of Mussolini from his captors was carried out, under the immediate leadership of General Student and the SS terrorist, Otto Skor-

⁵¹ EDS/G/10, p. 80.

⁵² F-2023, 26 May 1945.

⁵³ F-1023.

⁵⁴ *Kaltenbrunner Interrogation*, draft report, May 1945.

zeny; and in addition, the negotiations with Badoglio which followed his assumption of power, and the preparations for the setting up of a revived Fascist regime under Il Duce, were in the hands of Himmler's agents working under his direction. Thus, in what was undoubtedly one of the most important crises in foreign relations with which Germany was faced during the war years, we find that it was Himmler rather than Ribbentrop and the German Foreign Office who played the more critical part.⁵⁵

G. THE END

So it was, too, at the end, when Hitler spent his last days in the Berlin Chancellery while the Reich he ruled disintegrated into bewildered fragments. With its territories being rapidly overrun, its armies destroyed, its cities shattered, its State administration broken, the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler was in total dissolution. Soon its leader (if we assume the death of Hitler, which seems most logical to the writer) was dead or dying; at least the decision that he would die, in which Himmler may have had some part, was already made. At this point, holding the fragments of his once great power in his hands, Himmler emerged suddenly into the public view with an offer of surrender to the West, representing himself as the sole authority capable of surrendering Germany and also presenting himself to Count Bernadotte, it was reported, as the "one sane man" left in a Germany gone mad.⁵⁶

Himmler's offer of surrender, as reported in the press, was limited to the Western Powers; whether he himself had any part in the approaches to Russia, which were also carried on from March-May 1945 and earlier, is unknown to the writer. What is known is that Himmler and his subordinates discussed a forthcoming meeting with Count Bernadotte as early as March 1945; and that Himmler also prepared soon after for the dissolution of Germany by giving Kaltenbrunner and Berger complete powers for the government of Austria and Bavaria respectively.⁵⁷

The background of Himmler's emergence as peace-maker is necessarily still obscure, though much light may be shed on it by the publication of Count Folke Bernadotte's book, *Slutet* (The End), and by interrogation of Schellenberg, head of the SD and Himmler's political adviser. According to Kaltenbrunner, the head of RSHA, peace "feelers" had been made in the direction of the Russians in 1944, through agents of Ribbentrop; during 1945 both the Russians and the Western Powers were being approached by many agents.⁵⁸ Some of these agents were probably representing Ribbentrop, others, Himmler. But Himmler and Ribbentrop were by no means the only candidates for the task of negotiating Germany's surrender—an office which might or might not imply succession to the position of Führer. There was Goering, who on 22 April 1945 sent the Führer a telegram requesting, in view of Hitler's inability to act freely in Berlin, that he, Goering, should be appointed Führer in accordance with the succession plan of 1939, with a free hand at home and abroad. This suggestion was curtly rejected by Hitler, who curtly repudiated the idea that he was no longer a free agent, and implied that until he actually chose a successor, a matter in which he reserved his own discretion, he would remain in command himself. Goering's dismissal and an order for his execution were reported to have followed a few days later.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ CSDIC/CMF/X166 and other sources.

⁵⁶ *The Observer*, 29 April 1945.

⁵⁷ Draft report, *Kaltenbrunner Interrogation*, May 1945; the regional powers were given on 18 April 1945.

⁵⁸ Draft report, *Kaltenbrunner Interrogation*, May 1945.

⁵⁹ CSDIC (UK), SRGG 1249 (C).

Another candidate for leadership, it seems, was Walter Funk, President of the Reichsbank and Reich Minister of Economics, who was reported to have made an abortive attempt to form a government on 24 April, a few days after Goering's initiative.⁶⁰ Not many days later, it also was rumored, an offer of unconditional surrender was made by the German High Command. In fact, as an official statement from 10 Downing Street on 28 April 1945 stated, "all kinds of reports of proposals for German surrender from various parts of the German Reich are rife, as these are in harmony with the enemy's desperate situation."⁶¹

Unlike Goering or Doenitz, who claimed title to the position of Führer, Himmler apparently did not represent himself as the chosen political leader of Germany, but instead asserted equivocally that he was in a position to guarantee unconditional surrender to Great Britain and the United States, with a further assurance that Hitler, who was "not very well," presumably suffering from cerebral hemorrhage, would not survive Himmler's announcement of unconditional surrender by forty-eight (or twenty-four) hours.⁶² This offer, which was made orally to Count Bernadotte, Deputy Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, at Luebeck on 19 and 21 April, was countered by London and Washington with the demand that an acceptable surrender could only be made to all three of the major Allies, including Russia. This Allied demand was presumably transmitted by Bernadotte to Schellenberg, Himmler's aide, with whom he renewed contact in Stockholm on 30 April.⁶³ It was, however, reported that on his second visit to Northern Germany Bernadotte did not again see Himmler, but instead saw Field Marshal Busch and Admiral Doenitz. Immediately thereafter, on 1 May 1945, the German radio announced the death of Hitler, which was followed by the announcement of Admiral Doenitz's assumption of the title and powers of the Führer.⁶⁴ Count Bernadotte, back in Stockholm, announced that he had no new message from Himmler or any other authoritative spokesman for Germany. On 3 May 1945, Berlin's garrison capitulated, and at the same time all of the German armies in Northern Italy and Western Austria were surrendered unconditionally. The avalanche of surrenders, made by military commanders rather than by any political spokesman for the German Reich as a whole, had begun.⁶⁵

The outside world heard nothing more of Himmler until almost three weeks later, 24 May 1945, when it was officially announced that he had committed suicide at the HQ of the British Second Army at Luneberg. His whereabouts, from the time he had last seen Count Bernadotte until his arrest on 22 May were a mystery; it is even unknown whether he associated for a time, freely or under compulsion, with the "Flensburg Government" of Admiral Doenitz, which was arrested on 23 May, the very day of Himmler's suicide. The obscurity of his whereabouts is matched by the even more intriguing question as to his intentions in these last weeks of his life; the intentions, fears, and hopes that motivated him to take to the road in disguise, to reveal his identity and finally to commit suicide.

The facts as reported in the press, however, are these: Himmler was taken at Bremervorde, north-east of Bremen, at 5 P.M. on Tuesday, 22 May 1945. Disguised by the removal of his moustache and the embellishment of a black patch over his right

⁶⁰ *Observer*, 29 April 1945.

⁶¹ *Observer*, 29 April 1945.

⁶² *Observer*, 29 April 1945.

⁶³ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Chronology*, Daily Telegraph, 16 July 1945.

⁶⁴ RIIA, *Chronology*.

⁶⁵ *Sunday Times*, 6 May 1945; "A Student of Europe" in *The Observer*, 6 May 1945.

eye, Himmler with two companions was among eleven men stopped by the field security police at a bridge the party intended to cross. Himmler, travelling under the name of Hitzinger, and his two associates wore civilian clothes and claimed to be members of the German Field Security Police who had been discharged. Their documents did not satisfy the British military police, who took them for questioning to an internment camp, where they told contradictory stories and were detained, being transferred to a camp near the British Second Army HQ.

Soon after his arrival at this camp, at 7 P.M. on 23 May, some twenty-six hours after his capture, Himmler went to the camp commandant, removed his eye-patch, and stated, "I am Heinrich Himmler." Second Army HQ was immediately informed, and at once sent to the camp officers who were satisfied, after questioning, as to Himmler's identity. They then transferred him in a car to a house in Luneberg, where, in the course of medical examination, Himmler swallowed the contents of a phial containing cyanide of potassium, which had been concealed in his mouth.⁶⁶

Accepting the official story as published, it cannot be said that Himmler's behavior in his last days of life showed any constancy of intention or any clear-cut purpose. In fact, it would tend to support the opinion of one of his old colleagues, that he was not capable of an unequivocal decision. Now, in making the supreme decision, he hesitated between life and death, between hope born of illusion and the despair of realism. Like so many of his associates, Himmler must have known that execution as a war criminal might well be his fate; he must have known that above all the other Nazi leaders except Hitler, he would be held supremely responsible for the atrocities of the concentration camps and the other terroristic aspects of the regime, especially towards the Eastern people and the Jews. Yet it would probably be a mistake to assume that the burden of guilt and contrition lay heavily on Himmler's soul; his lack of humanity, a trait noted even by some of his associates hardly less indifferent than himself to human suffering, would have sustained his belief in the rightness of his own course. Had he not, after all, arranged for the freedom of some of the concentration camp inmates, in the last months?⁶⁷ And had he not committed far fewer atrocities than he could have? Such reasoning, not uncommon among the higher officials of the SS, may well have been his. And apart from these ethical considerations, there were the political. Himmler must have believed, as many if not all of the Nazi leaders did, that Britain and America were bound to clash with Russia; his services, after all, could be most valuable to the Western Powers in such a clash. If they were astute, they would realize his value to them, and treat him with the respect due such a force as he. The fact that the Western Powers had apparently been willing to treat with him, in the negotiations initiated through Bernadotte, may have strengthened this wishful thought.

It is conceivable, then, that when he revealed himself to his captors, on 23 May, these were the hopes that sustained him. Otherwise why reveal himself, when he could either have continued his pathetic masquerade a few days more, or taken the other course and emptied his phial of poison at once? He must have hung, in these last hours, suspended between the thin strand of hope and the stronger band of despair. And in the end the humiliation of being stripped, against which he had protested, and the

⁶⁶ There are conflicting accounts of the exact sequence of events; even in one newspaper, *The Times* of 25 May 1945, there are two conflicting accounts, the one originating with a "senior intelligence officer" at the HQ Second Army suggesting a far more intensive process of medical examination and search for hidden poison than the one emanating from the *Times'* Special Correspondent.

⁶⁷ Kaltenbrunner claims that it was he, not Himmler, who arranged these eleventh-hour releases—*Kaltenbrunner Interrogation*, draft report, May 1945.

consciousness that he was not to be treated with exceptional respect, coupled with the fear of losing that last instrument of escape, his precious phial of poison, may have forced his decision.

H. HIMMLER IN THE NAZI HIERARCHY

It has been suggested that Himmler's importance in the Nazi hierarchy had been overrated, that he was not, after all, one of the most important figures of the Nazi regime.⁶⁸ He was not, according to this analysis, the all-powerful figure that foreign observers had been inclined to picture, and did not possess the unrestricted political authority that he was thought to wield. It is, furthermore, asserted that never, even at the height of his power, did Himmler belong to the innermost group of Hitler's aides. In this respect Bormann, who was appointed Hitler's deputy after Hess' flight from Germany, is held to have been the most powerful figure next to Hitler, at least in the last eight or nine months of the Nazi regime; nor could Himmler compete with Goebbels or even Goering for a place in the innermost circle. In fact, it is asserted, Himmler, conscious of his failure to achieve a dominating position within the Nazi hierarchy, seems to have sought support outside it, not only by trying to impress members of the officers' corps with his own integrity, but even by maintaining contact, through several SS leaders, with opposition groups, with whose help he thought he might himself stage a *coup*. The release of a fairly large number of Jews, first from Hungary and then from the Theresienstadt Camp, is interpreted as part of a Himmler plan to play the role of peacemaker, as he later did in his negotiations with Count Bernadotte. Finally, it is asserted that Himmler did not show that gift for realism which was supposed to characterize him. He misjudged the position of Germany, he misjudged events and his estimate of his own importance bordered upon megalomania.

"In general," the report concludes, "it can be said that the usual picture of Himmler as a brilliant organizer and a coldly calculating political maneuverer who built up his power bit by bit until his position was unassailable, is not borne out by reliable evidence. It seems rather that he was an unrivalled expert in the field of terror and police, but that in other respects he was inferior to his Nazi colleagues, easily misled into confusing wish-dreams with reality, and quite incapable of understanding the underlying international political forces which brought National Socialist Germany to its doom."

It is difficult to separate what seems true and what appears to be mistaken in this conclusion. That Himmler's judgment on foreign affairs was narrow, bound by his political outlook, and therefore perverted, goes without saying. But it is more difficult to agree with the conclusion that Himmler had failed to live up to his reputation as a "brilliant organizer and a coldly calculating political maneuverer who built up his power bit by bit until it was unassailable. . . ." Himmler had so built up his power; it was unassailable, so long as there was a Nazi regime in Germany; after the regime had begun to collapse, a process extending certainly for several years, no member of the regime, not even Hitler, held unassailable power, as was proved by the event. Himmler may or may not have had that constant access to Hitler's presence which implied a pervasive influence on Hitler's decisions; Eva Braun, it is said, had such access, and used it; Bormann, as Hitler's deputy, had such access, and no doubt used it; Goebbels, at the very end, had an apartment adjoining Hitler's in the Chancellery air-raid shelter. Yet two things are indisputable: the first is that Himmler rose higher, so far as offices

⁶⁸ See R&A, *European Political Report*, Vol. II, No. 23, 8 June 1945.

were concerned, than any other member of the hierarchy, and those offices were derived from Hitler; the second is that Himmler was more indispensable to Hitler than any other figure in the regime. Himmler may be dismissed as the technician of terror; but in a regime based upon terror that is the highest profession to which one can aspire. Goebbels was no doubt much more clever than Himmler; Goering, for a period at least, certainly had more popularity. Both held important offices and at the outbreak of the war the latter had even been nominated to the succession by Hitler. Yet was either Goering or Goebbels indispensable to Hitler's power, when it began to slip so rapidly after 1942? Himmler held in his hands the only power that could prolong the regime, and with it the war; and he held in his own hands, too, the power of life and death over Hitler. Himmler most certainly could have disposed of Hitler, or permitted his assassination, thus saving Germany those hopeless months of destruction: instead he was the most ruthless persecutor of those who chose this means of saving Germany.

Himmler was important to Hitler in the days of the *Machtübernahme*, in the springtime of Hitler's power; but in its winter, Himmler was the Führer's mainstay. Just as the Nazi Party, by its very nature, always foundered in times of prosperity, so Himmler, by the very nature of his talents, could only emerge as first mate when the ship was already sinking. The overthrow of Mussolini made him Minister of Interior; the *attendant* of 20 July 1944 made him Chief of Home Defense. The resistance of the conquered gave him increased powers in the occupied lands; the defection of generals and diplomats enhanced his influence over Foreign Office and Army. In the end, Goebbels' propaganda, Goering's *Luftwaffe*, were of no avail against the moral and physical superiority of the Allies; still Himmler's civilian and military *Leviathan* kept the craft afloat, and above all, protected the captain, without whom it would have sunk long before May 1945.

For Himmler and his SS served to the end as they had at the beginning, as the guardians of the Führer and his regime. Himmler may be denounced as unrealistic for his failure to evaluate properly the balance of forces arrayed against Germany; but he must have understood both the nature of the Nazi regime and of his own position in it; he must have seen that his political life would end with Hitler's death. Thus Himmler could not, until the days when Hitler was finished as a political force, bring himself to adopt as his own the aims of the conspirators of 20 July 1944, whom he so mercilessly pursued. It is here that we must find the real clue to Himmler's power, and to his suicide as well. Himmler's power was of Hitler; it lacked any other foundation whatever. Goering may have aspired to be Führer; Himmler could never really envisage power except in the shadow of the Führer. His ambitions and his achievements always implied the presence of Hitler at the pinnacle of the structure of the regime. If he aspired to rule, if his megalomania carried him so far that he thought of being the real power in Germany, then he could only think of ruling through the Führer.

It may indeed be entirely futile to attempt to make a mathematical calculation of Himmler's place in the regime. That place would vary from year to year and circumstance to circumstance, to emerge finally, in the writer's view, to that of second in command during the last year of the crumbling Reich. Yet in the final analysis it was not because he held high office, or controlled a huge army and police system, or because he was an intimate of Hitler, that Himmler came to be the most powerful figure among Hitler's entourage. Himmler's power was due rather to the fact that next to Hitler himself he most clearly expressed, in his character, his ideas, and his career, the spirit and nature of the regime he served.

APPENDIX "A"

Chronology of the Career of Heinrich Himmler

1900-1923

- 7 Oct. 1900 Heinrich Himmler born at Munich
- 1905 (?) - 1910 (?) Pupil at *Volkschule*, Munich
- 1910 (?) - 1917 Student at *Gymnasia*, Munich and Landshut
- 1917-1918 Officer cadet in 11th Bavarian Infantry Regiment
Rank of *Fahnenjunker* upon demobilization 1918
- 9 Nov. 1918 *Outbreak of revolution in Germany*
- 11 Nov. 1918 *Armistice, followed by demobilization of German Army*
- 1919-1923 Member (*alter kaempfer*) of National Socialist Party (founded 1919)
Member of several *Freikorps*, including one organized by Gregor Strasser; Standardbearer to Captain Ernst Roehm, Chief of the SA
"Secretary" to Gregor Strasser
- 1919-1922 Student of agriculture at Munich Technical Academy; *Diplom. Landwirt* 1922
- 1922-1923 Assistant (or clerk) at the Stickstoff-Land-Embs, a fertilizer factory at Schleissheim
- 8-9 Nov. 1923 Participant in the Munich *putsch*; member of *Clutorden*
- 9 Nov. 1923 *Failure of the putsch, followed by imprisonment of many leaders and disintegration of the Party; Roehm's desertion*

1924-1932

- 1924 Enrolled at Munich University as student of economics
- 27 Feb. 1925 *Hitler reorganizes Nazi Party; Gregor Strasser becomes leader for Northern Germany*
- 1925 One of first members of newly formed Party *Schutzstaffel* (SS)
- 1925 "Manager" of Party Districts (*Gaue*) of Lower Bavaria-Upper Palatinate; soon after, of Upper Bavaria-Swabia, with Munich headquarters
- Jan. 1926 *Organization of SS on nation-wide basis; personal loyalty to Hitler*
- 1926 Deputy *Gauleiter* of Lower Bavaria; later of Upper Bavaria
- 1926 Member of *Reichsleitung* (National leadership) of Party
- 1926 *SS given custody of the Blutfahne ("blood banner")*
- 1926-1930 Deputy Reich Propaganda Leader
- 1927 Deputy Reich Leader of SS

- 1928 Settles on chicken farm at Waldtrudering
- 1928 Abandons Strasser in intra-Party struggle; chooses complete loyalty to Hitler
- 6 Jan. 1929 Reich leader of SS (RFSS); entrusted by Hitler with task of its expansion
- 1929-1932 Vast expansion of SS from 280 to 50,000; Spartan regulations (1931); participation in Party struggle for power; combat against enemies within and without the Party
- 14 Sept. 1930 Elected member of *Reichstag* in first great National Socialist election victory (107 members)
- Jan. 1931 *Roehm recalled to serve as Chief of Staff of SA and SS; Himmler, as RFSS, now under Roehm*
- 1932 Preparations for rule of terror
- 1933
- 4 Jan. 1933 With Hitler at crucial Hitler-Von Papen meeting, Cologne
- 30 Jan. 1933 *Hitler Chancellor; majority of cabinet not National Socialists; Frick, Reich Minister of Interior, promises that SA (presumably including SS) would not be incorporated in armed forces of Reich*
- Feb. 1933 Goering, Reich Minister and Commissioner for Prussian Ministry of Interior, gives SA and SS officers police posts in Prussia; SA and SS march of terror
- 22 Feb. 1933 Goering orders arming of 50,000 auxiliary police, including 15,000 SS; decisive revolutionary act of the regime
- 25 Feb. 1933 *Burning of the Reichstag*
- 28 Feb. 1933 *Schutzhaft (Protective custody) and other extreme police measures sanctioned by Presidential decree*
- 5 Mar. 1933 *Election; Nazis win 211 seats; reign of terror follows*
- 9 Mar. 1933 *Nazi coup in Bavaria; Governor, General von Epp; Himmler Police President of Munich*
- 23 Mar. 1933 *Enabling Act creates dictatorship*
- 11 Apr. 1933 *Goering becomes Prussian Prime Minister*
- 26-27 Apr. 1933 *Establishment of Gestapo in Prussia*
- May 1933 *Himmler Chief of Political Police in Bavaria*
- May 1933 Goering forbids his police officials to belong to SA or SS
- July 1933 Himmler appointed member of Goering's Prussian State Council
- 11 July 1933 *Frick declares Revolution at an end*
- Aug. 1933 Goering disbands SA and SS auxiliary police

- Dec. 1933 *Roehm, Chief of Staff of SA and SS, appointed member of Reich Cabinet*
- By end 1933 Himmler holds title Political Police Commander of the German States; is political police chief of all Germany except Prussia
- 1933-35 Rigorous weeding-out process and selection policy in SS to maintain strict loyalty to Hitler; growth, 50,000-210,000; organization of full-time SS formations, beginning in 1933, and of foreign SS; beginning of large SS "penetration" of all levels of German life
- 1934
- 30 Jan. 1934 *Transfer of sovereign rights of States to Reich; extends police powers*
- 20 Apr. 1934 Himmler appointed Deputy Chief of Prussian Gestapo; gives him actual control of entire secret political police in Germany; begins amalgamation of SS and Gestapo
- May 1934 *The "succession" crisis; Roehm demands SA incorporation into Army*
- 7-30 June 1934 Development of crisis culminating in "blood purge," in which Strasser and Roehm, Himmler's mentors, both perish; Himmler and SS play a leading role in executions
- July 1934 Himmler, after "blood purge," placed in complete control of SS, accountable only to Hitler; political power of SA broken; SS established as ruling caste within the Party
2. Aug. 1934 *Death of President von Hindenburg; Hitler takes titles of Führer and Chancellor*
- 1934-1936 Consolidation of Gestapo and Secret Police under Himmler
- 1934-1939 Formation of Death's Head SS Formations to police Concentration Camps; expansion of SS, until its armed formations numbered 40,000 and the General SS, 250,000 in 1939; extension of SS institutions and influence upon German life
- 1936-1938
- 10 Feb. 1936 Basic decree governing Gestapo's powers; "Law Concerning Secret Police"
- 17 June 1936 Himmler appointed Chief of the German Police in the Reich Ministry of Interior, with access to Cabinet on police matters; means control over entire German police
- 26 June 1936 Himmler decree for reorganization of Reich police; establishment of two main branches, Orpo under Daluege, Sipo under Heydrich
- 20 Sept. 1936 Regional organization of police strengthened by appointment of regional "little Himmler's"
- 19 Oct. 1936 Himmler, with Heydrich and Daluege, visits Mussolini in Rome

- 15 May 1937 Himmler given power of "ministerial decision" in police matters
- 1937-1938 Complete nationalization of police services; constant growth
- 4 Feb. 1938 *Hitler replaces Blomberg as supreme commander of the Reichswehr; a Himmler "plot" against Blomberg suspected*
- 11 Mar. 1938 Nazi conquest of Austria; Himmler plays important role
- Sept. 1938 Munich Crisis; Himmler in the extreme "war party"; creates incidents
- 10-12 Nov. 1938 Himmler's SS and police take part in brutal program against Jews; decree issued 12 Nov. 1938
- 11 Nov. 1938 Sicherheitsdienst (SD) of SS officially made a State agency, related to Gestapo and Kripo
- 1939
- Mar. 1939 Conquest of Czechoslovakia; Himmler and SS in usual role
- Aug. 1939 War crisis; Himmler in extreme "war party"; again creates incidents
- 1 Sept. 1939 *Poland attacked; World War begins*
- 12 Sept. 1939 Himmler appointed by Goering Deputy Chief of Reich Administration, under Frick
- 7 Sept. 1939 Sweeping death penalty decree extends Himmler's power over home front
- 13 Sept. 1939 Police and SS troops merged in Special decree; 15 SS leaders appointed as Police Chiefs
- 19 Sept. 1939 Himmler with Führer at Danzig
- Sept. 1939 Conquest of Poland; first of conquered countries (during the War) to fall under Himmler's police and SS administration, and suffer his racial policy
- Oct. 1939 Himmler appointed Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germanism; in charge of transfer of Baltic Germans to greater Reich
- Oct. 1939 Beginning of Waffen SS, which grew into an independent armed force numbering over one million by May 1945; decline in membership in *Allgemeine SS*
- 8 Nov. 1939 Bomb attack on Hitler in Munich; Georg Elser arrested 21 Nov. 1939
- 1940-1942
- 27 Feb. 1940 Motherhood out of wedlock sanctioned by Himmler
- 1941 Formation of first SS air raid companies
- Sept. 1941 Reinhard Heydrich, Chief of Sipo and SD, becomes head of German administration of the "Protectorate"

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- 15 Mar. 1942 Waffen SS appears as completely independent part of the armed forces
- May 1942 Assassination of Heydrich; replaced by Daluge, who retired in autumn of 1943 when Frick became Reich "Protector"
- 1942 Further development of RSHA with appointment of Kaltenbrunner (Chief) and Schellenberg (Chief Amt VI, SD)
- 1942 Sipo and SD take over Secret Field Police from Abwehr
- 1942 Himmler takes control of ARP system from Goering
- 1942 Stricter SS penal code promulgated
- Nov.-Dec. 1942 *Turning of tide of the war with Stalingrad, North Africa landings*
- 1943-1944
- 25 July 1943 *Mussolini deposed; crisis results in Reich*
- 24 Aug. 1943 Himmler appointed Reich and Prussian Minister of Interior; Himmler appointed Chief of Reich Administration. Becomes member of Council for Defense of the Realm, with power to issue decrees
- Sept. 1943 Himmler directs plans for "liberating" Mussolini and shares in negotiations leading to Republican Fascist regime in Italy
- May 1944 Himmler addresses *Abwehr* officers on forthcoming transfer to RSHA
- 1 June 1944 Control of *Abwehr* passes from OKW to Himmler's RSHA; gives Himmler victory over Army High Command and control over entire German Intelligence Service at home and abroad
- 1 June 1944 Formation of SS (Civilian) battalions of foreign nationality for policing duties in Germany, in preparation for Allied invasion
- 6 June 1944 *Allied landings in France; Soviet advances continue*
- 20 July 1944 *Plot to kill Hitler and overthrow the regime fails*
- 20 July 1944 Himmler appointed Chief of Replacement Army and Chief of Home Defense; severe punishment of civilian and military plotters
- Sept. 1944 Himmler's military functions increase; at the Moselle front
- Oct. 1944 Himmler's organ, *Schwarze Korps*, announces completion of plans for guerilla resistance to invaders
- Oct. 1944 Himmler in command of the *Volkssturm*
- 9 Nov. 1944 Himmler reads Hitler's proclamation on *putsch* anniversary
- 1945
- Mar. 1945 Himmler discussion of Bernadotte negotiations with his aides
- 18 Apr. 1945 Himmler delegates regional authority to his subordinates, among them Kaltenbrunner for Austria, Berger for Bavaria

- 19-21 Apr. 1945 Himmler offers surrender of Germany to Western Allies through Count Bernadotte
- 30 Apr. 1945 Count Bernadotte, in Stockholm, renews contact with Schellenberg
- 1 May 1945 *Death of Hitler announced by German radio; Doenitz assumes position of Führer*
- 3 May 1945 *German Armies begin to capitulate*
- 22 May 1945 Himmler captured at Bremervörde
- 23 May 1945 *Flensburg "Government" arrested; some suicides*
- 23 May 1945 Himmler reveals his identity, 7:00 p.m.
Himmler commits suicide, 11:00 p.m.

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APPENDIX "B"

Party and State Positions Held by Himmler

NSDAP

1925 Business Manager of Bavarian (including Upper
Palatine, Swabian) Party Districts

1926 Deputy *Gauleiter* of same districts

1926 Member of *Reichsleitung* of the Party

1926-1930 Deputy Reich Propagander Leader

1927 Deputy Reich Leader of SS

1929 Reich Leader of SS

STATE

1930 Member of Reichstag

1933 Police President of Munich
Chief of Political Police of Bavaria
Political Police Commander of the German States
(except Prussia)
Member of the Prussian State Council

1934 Deputy Chief (actual head) of Prussian Gestapo, in
charge of all secret political police in Germany

1936 Chief of the German Police in the Reich Ministry of
Interior

1939 Deputy Chief of Reich Administration
Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Ger-
manism

1943 Reich and Prussian Minister of the Interior
Chief of Reich Administration
Member of the Council for the Defense of the Realm
(War Cabinet)

1944 Chief of the Replacement Army
Chief of Home Defense
Commander of the *Volkssturm*