

Mac Donald

Telling of SS Obergrossenführer Heydrich

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THE KILLING
of
SS Obergruppenführer
REINHARD HEYDRICH



Callum MacDonald



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high command, the body was conveyed at a slow march to the Invaliden cemetery, where it was buried with full military honours near the Scharnhorst memorial amongst the heroes of Germany's previous wars.

This spectacle was carefully stage-managed by a commission under the Propaganda Minister, Josef Goebbels, to portray Heydrich as the ideal Nazi, a heroic martyr whose qualities offered an example to all Germans. The cult of Heydrich was particularly strong in the SS, where it was deliberately encouraged by Himmler. A bronze death-mask was sent to the SS officer school at Bad Tölz with a photo album of the funeral and a copy of Himmler's eulogy to inspire the cadets. As one of them later recalled, Heydrich was venerated at Bad Tölz as a 'blond god . . . almost a mystic figure. There was hardly a room in the cadet school without his picture.' A similar death-mask adorned Himmler's office and the Reichsführer SS spent weeks selecting a suitable design for Heydrich's gravestone. The windy rhetoric in the Mosaic Hall and the splendour of the state funeral, however, concealed the fact that few in the Third Reich really mourned Heydrich's passing. Even Himmler was ambiguous about the removal of a figure who had started as a protégé but was developing into a threat. Secret policemen always know too much for the comfort of their colleagues and Heydrich was no exception: 'The decisive thing for him was always to know more than others, to know everything about everyone, whether it touched on the political, professional, or most intimate personal aspects of their lives. . . . He liked to remain in the background and pull strings.' In life his presence was enough to throw a chill into any gathering. It was rumoured that his personal safe contained bulging dossiers on his fellow Nazis whose disclosure could prove embarrassing. When Heydrich died Himmler's first act was to seize the key to this blackmailer's hoard, which he appropriated for his own exclusive use.

Those who met Heydrich were impressed by his ambition, ruthlessness and duplicity. Eugen Dollman, his interpreter on a trip to Italy in 1938, recalled: 'Of all the "great" men with whom I came into contact, he was the only one I instinctively feared,' a judgement shared by the head of the Italian Secret Service, who remarked: 'In Himmler's place, I would never tolerate such a man near me.' Even within the twilight world of the Nazi security police Heydrich was feared rather than loved. His own protégé, Walter Schellenberg, who later rose to head the German intelligence service, found his very appearance sinister:

He was a tall, impressive man with small restless eyes as wide as a full-lipped mouth made one think of the breadth of his hips. He appeared even more sinister and his speech was never

Schellenberg described an acute perception of the weaknesses of others. His ever watchful instincts were ambitious. It seemed as if he proved himself the strongest. Hoettl, another member of Heydrich's staff, described Heydrich as a man with an intrinsic meaning for the gaining of more and more stepping stones for the future. Whether any action was worth it was certainly a question of cold intelligence. According to Pierre Heintz, Heydrich 'had a mind like a machine, never forgetting anything. He never got a break or reacted badly to the end. He was on his best behavior. He was a bad one to catch. These traits were Germany where the war flourished. When he died thousands but was regarded as a Nazi politician. Within a year he was destined for the highest office less than succeeding him.'

This ruthless and ambitious man, the second of three Heydrich brothers, Heinrich, a self-made man, a member of the middle classes by his



He was a tall, impressive figure with a broad, unusually high forehead, small restless eyes as crafty as an animal's and of uncanny power, and a wide full-lipped mouth. His hands were slender and rather too long – they made one think of the legs of a spider. His splendid figure was marred by the breadth of his hips, a disturbingly feminine effect which made him appear even more sinister. His voice was much too high for so large a man and his speech was nervous and staccato.

Schellenberg described his chief as a born intriguer with 'an incredibly acute perception of the moral, human, professional and political weaknesses of others. . . . His unusual intellect was matched by the ever watchful instincts of a predatory animal. . . . He was inordinately ambitious. It seemed as if, in a pack of ferocious wolves, he must always prove himself the strongest and assume the leadership.' Wilhelm Hoettl, another member of the Nazi security service, remembered Heydrich as a man without a moral code: 'Truth and goodness had no intrinsic meaning for him; they were instruments to be used for the gaining of more and more power. . . . Politics too were . . . merely stepping stones for the seizing and holding of power. To debate whether any action was of itself right appeared so stupid to him that it was certainly a question he never asked himself.' His was 'a cruel, brave and cold intelligence' and his life 'an unbroken chain of murders'. According to Pierre Huss, an American journalist who knew him well, Heydrich 'had a mind and mentality something like an adding machine, never forgetting or lapsing into the sentimental. . . . Nobody ever got a break or considerations of mercy.' He disliked criticism and reacted badly to the enquiries of foreign pressmen: 'A single evening of him on his best behaviour was enough to convince every one of us that he was a bad one to deal with if you were on the wrong side of the fence.' These traits served Heydrich well in the jungle of Nazi Germany where the weakest went to the wall and political predators flourished. When he died at the early age of thirty-eight, he had killed thousands but was regarded as a success in the murderous game of Nazi politics. Within the security police it was assumed that he was destined for the highest office and that ultimately he aimed at nothing less than succeeding Hitler as Führer of the thousand-year Reich.

This ruthless and amoral figure was born into a Catholic family in the provincial town of Halle an der Salle on 7 March 1904. He was the second of three Heydrich children, with an older sister Maria and a younger brother, Heinz Siegfried. His father, Bruno Heydrich, was a self-made man, a singer and minor composer who had risen into the middle classes by hard work and a fortunate marriage to Elizabeth



Kranz, the daughter of a prosperous musical family from Dresden. In 1899 the Heydrichs opened a conservatory in Halle which provided a musical education for the children of the aspiring middle classes. There is little doubt that they planned a musical career for their eldest son. Before he left school, Reinhard had developed into a talented violinist and he displayed a continuing love of music for the rest of his life. Although the family enjoyed a comfortable income from the academy, it suffered from unfulfilled ambitions. Elizabeth always regarded Halle as second best and planned that she and her husband should eventually take over the prestigious Dresden conservatory, owned by her parents. This move was blocked by her brothers and she was forced instead to endure provincial life. As for Bruno, he was a deeply frustrated man. His early career as an opera singer was a failure and he never achieved the recognition which he craved as a composer. His Wagnerian productions received some critical acclaim in Cologne and Leipzig but were never staged by the Berlin Court Opera. Nor was he granted the prestigious title of professor by the state authorities, despite numerous applications.

Bruno's professional problems reflected more than a simple lack of talent. There was a question mark over the status of the Heydrichs, who were never fully accepted by polite society in Halle. Bruno's humble origins undoubtedly counted against him in the Kaiser's Germany, where class barriers were strong and it was usual to 'deny social recognition to those who had succeeded in acquiring the material prerequisites of entry into the higher class'. Nor was the family helped by being Catholic in a mainly Protestant society. Bruno's lack of advancement, however, also owed something to the persistent rumour that he was Jewish. As one former resident of Halle recalled, 'most of the inhabitants . . . had not the slightest doubt about his Jewish origin.' In fact the story was completely baseless. After the death of his father, Bruno's mother had taken a second husband, a locksmith called Gustav Süß. As a result the family name was sometimes recorded as Heydrich-Süß, and Bruno was listed under this heading in the *Musical Directory* published in 1916, an entry which was changed in subsequent editions after he had complained to the publisher. Süß was not Jewish and bore no direct relationship to Bruno, but the fact that many Jewish families had the same name encouraged speculation. While Bruno tried to joke about the story, it counted against him. Anti-Semitism was common in imperial Germany, particularly amongst certain sections of the middle classes who felt threatened by rapid industrialisation and social change. These groups rejected the capitalist order of the late

nineteenth century as *Volks-gemeinschaft*, a folk culture where class co-existed restored on the basis of extreme nationalism of the German people, and the Pan-German League policy. In this *völkisch* modern world, the age of socialism and large industry ended the romantic vision of the past, a crude Darwinism which history. These strands were as Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Das Neunzehnte Jahrhundert* enjoyed a great vogue at its peak during the early editions and 100,000 copies, its close ground with the reticent century. Socially, however, the German middle class.

It was Bruno Heydrich. Semitism was well established he was a strong proponent of his social frustrations by his wife was taken religion very serious based on racism and ancestry did nothing to change them more fiercely as acceptance. Bruno Heydrich style he copied in his own work of study with the master of 1890. Like Wagner, the Jews as a danger to Germany work of Houston Stewart Chamberlain debt to Wagner and modern history was shaped by the nations. In this Darwinism succeed and rule. It was



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symbol, a blue cornflower and swastika, was prominently displayed on his bedroom wall along with its slogan 'We are the Lords of the Earth.' According to some accounts, he explained his membership of this body as an attempt to remove the skeleton from the family cupboard: 'Old Heydrich can't be a Jew if his son is such a wild anti-Semite.' At the same time, however, it was more than protective camouflage and represented a natural step for someone raised in *völkisch* ideas. There is no evidence that as a teenager Reinhard Heydrich ever rebelled against his father's philosophy. On the contrary, it was his mother's faith which he abandoned, ceasing to make any pretence of being a practising Catholic. The experience of defeat and revolution merely confirmed the prejudices he had imbibed as a boy and completed the creation of an extreme nationalist.

Although the threat of communist revolution was averted, the Heydrich family, like the rest of the political right, took little pride in the Weimar Republic which succeeded the Kaiser. It was democratic and liberal, the very antithesis of the ideal *völkisch* community, and was regarded as the creation of Jews and socialists, the 'November traitors' who had stabbed the army in the back. It was further damned by its association with the hated treaty of Versailles, which handed over large tracts of German soil to 'inferior races' like the Poles. For the Heydrichs, these prejudices were reinforced by the practical consequences of change. The rise of the working class threatened the social position of the family, while the inflation of the early post-war period destroyed its savings. Bruno was reduced to begging a subsidy from the town council, pointing out the role of his music academy in the cultural life of Halle and emphatically denying that he was a Jew whose efforts had been 'animated by personal enrichment'. His application was rejected, the final blow by an establishment which had never quite accepted him. The experience of revolution and financial uncertainty directly influenced Reinhard Heydrich's choice of career. There was little future in the practically bankrupt conservatory, and chemistry, which he also considered, required a university education which his parents could no longer afford. On 30 March 1922, at the age of eighteen, he reported for duty at the gates of Kiel naval dockyard as an officer cadet.

This was not as strange a choice as it might at first appear. The navy had always enjoyed a special status with the middle classes of imperial Germany, which regarded it as a truly national entity, the authentic expression of German unity and claims to world power. It was a technological service, offering a career open to talent where an



educated middle-class youth could serve his country. The construction of the high-seas fleet under Admiral Tirpitz at the beginning of the century enjoyed widespread popular support which was deliberately encouraged by the naval high command. As a boy, Reinhard Heydrich had been impressed by the warships glimpsed on a rare seaside holiday at Swinemünde, and during the First World War the walls of his room were plastered with pictures of battleships and naval heroes. After the armistice, Count Felix von Lückner, a famous commerce raider, was a frequent visitor at the Heydrich house and held the boys spellbound with tales of his exploits. The prestige of the navy was damaged in 1918 when the great mutinies signalled the beginning of the German collapse. It regained its honour on 31 January 1920, however, when the Hochseeflotte scuttled itself in British captivity at Scapa Flow, an act of defiance greeted enthusiastically by the German right. The crews became popular heroes and were repatriated to a triumphant reception. It is hardly surprising, then, that the navy attracted the young Heydrich. It promised him a firm identity as an officer and a gentleman which contrasted starkly with an uncertain future as a civilian in Halle. The navy was impeccably nationalist and fiercely selective, accepting neither Jews nor members of the lower classes as cadets. As one of his schoolfriends later recalled: 'His complex about his alleged Jewish origins must . . . be taken into account. He always wanted to be more "Nordic" than anyone else. Hence his attraction to the "Nordic" navy.'

In other ways, also, a naval career appealed to someone with Heydrich's background and ideology. Although severely restricted by the treaty of Versailles, the navy of the 1920s was regarded by its commander, Admiral Erich Raeder, as the nucleus of a future high-seas fleet. The officer corps played a key role in his plans. Raeder's officers were a self-conscious elite, with a code of behaviour which set them apart from civilian society and the Weimar system. His aim was to create a navy style: 'The implementing of this style, which reflected Raeder's patriarchal and conservative background, extended to all aspects of the officer's life – his dress, religion, family and even his wife, who was expected to adhere to Raeder's code of conduct. Raeder expected the naval officer to set an example for all Germany, especially the youth.' At a time of national humiliation, his men were to uphold the vision of a rearmed Germany with a powerful fleet which would again command the admiration and respect of the world. This navy style was maintained by courts of honour which enforced the unwritten rules and dealt severely with offenders. The navy prided itself on producing not only officers but gentlemen. Although supposedly

apolitical, it had little served. Many officers were armistice and yearned for a system under which they could bask in the sun. It was to them an extreme nationalism neither liked nor understood for the next eight years, a new and more sinister

The tall, awkward-looking young man, the parting gift of his training squad. Heydrich, who viewed with suspicion the voice earned him the respect of his instructors, senior people, difficult for their future from his quarters to the humiliation which gave rise to the rumour about his Jewish origins. Heydrich himself recalled: 'In our year because another member of my family had formerly been known to his fellows as a training and was soon a loner. He attempted to overcome social difficulties, despite the navy. In 1926 he began the rest of his career in various languages, passing examinations he despised foreign culture, the overthrow of the Weimar Republic which would harness his ingenuity to a drive for popularity with the people. He prepared them for the

Heydrich's profession and he received good results through sports, becoming a fencer and rider. He was attended the military school



apolitical, it had little respect for the liberal republic it ostensibly served. Many officers had been active in the Freikorps after the armistice and yearned for the imposition of an authoritarian political system under which Germany would rearm and gain its rightful place in the sun. It was to this organisation that the young Heydrich, already an extreme nationalist, turned for refuge from a civilian world which he neither liked nor understood. The navy was to mould and shape him for the next eight years, teaching him lessons he was later to use in a new and more sinister career.

The tall, awkward adolescent, who arrived in Kiel carrying a violin, the parting gift of his father, rapidly became the odd man out in his training squad. Heydrich had little in common with his fellow cadets who viewed with suspicion his pretensions to culture. His high-pitched voice earned him the nickname of 'billy-goat' and he was bullied by the instructors, senior petty officers who were not averse to making life difficult for their future superiors. One of them regularly routed him from his quarters to play the Toselli serenade on the violin, a ritual humiliation which gave him a lifelong aversion to the piece. The rumour about his Jewish origins, which had plagued him at school, pursued Heydrich into the navy. As a member of his cadet squad recalled: 'In our year Heydrich was considered more or less a Jew, because another member of the group from Halle told us that the family had formerly been called Süss.' It was not long before he was known to his fellows as 'blond Moses'. Although he passed his initial training and was soon promoted, Heydrich remained an introvert and a loner. He attempted to excel in his duties as a means of overcoming his social difficulties, displaying an aptitude for the technical side of the navy. In 1926 he became a wireless officer and remained in signals for the rest of his career at sea. He developed his skills in modern languages, passing examinations in English, French and Russian, but he despised foreign cultures. As a young officer, he dreamed about the overthrow of the Weimar Republic and its replacement by a regime which would harness German economic strength and technical ingenuity to a drive for world power. He was a strict disciplinarian, unpopular with the lower deck because he drove his men hard to prepare them for the coming struggle.

Heydrich's professional qualities were soon noticed by his superiors and he received good efficiency reports. He also sought distinction through sports, becoming an excellent small-boat sailor, swimmer, fencer and rider. He was selected for the naval pentathlon team and attended the military sports school at Wunsdorf where he broke his



officer. The official Nazi version was that between 1928 and 1931, Heydrich was attached to naval intelligence. Although firm evidence has never emerged to back this claim, it is not implausible. The top-secret B-Dienst was based at Kiel while Heydrich was posted there. This was a signals interception and codebreaking unit which had served Germany well during the First World War and had survived clandestinely after the armistice in defiance of Versailles. Its mission was to gain intelligence on Germany's most probable enemies by monitoring and deciphering their radio communications, a task carried out under cover of the Inspectorate of Mines and Torpedoes. Heydrich's technical background and language qualifications made him a candidate for such a unit. Moreover his mentor, Canaris, had a long association with naval intelligence and may have recommended a posting to some form of secret work. Whatever the nature of his duties, Heydrich cannot have been unaware that since the great mutinies of 1918 the navy had kept a wary eye on political subversion and anti-militarism, an activity in which Canaris had once been closely involved. It was a role he was later to perfect as the secret police chief of the Third Reich. In 1931, however, Heydrich seemed destined for a life in the navy and regarded his staff attachment as the path to further promotion. As a young lieutenant, he dreamed of becoming an admiral, the ultimate symbol of professional status. He had little doubt that his career would reach this apotheosis in war. As the economic depression gathered strength after 1929, the Weimar Republic was shaken to its foundations. In the elections of September 1930, the Nazis made their first breakthrough into national politics, gaining 6.4 million votes and 107 seats in the Reichstag, an achievement which stunned observers. Heydrich hoped that Weimar would soon be discredited and replaced by an authoritarian system prepared to harness German resources to a bid for world leadership. A national revolution would crush the internal enemy, the Jews and their Marxist allies, and break the shackles of Versailles. As he remarked to one of his acquaintances when he heard the election results in 1930: 'Now there will be nothing else for [President] Hindenburg to do but name Hitler Chancellor. Then our hour will come.' Heydrich miscalculated this development by three years and, when it occurred, he was no longer a naval officer.

The ambitious young Lieutenant had one weakness which brought him into conflict with his superiors, an insatiable sexual appetite. In his relations with women, as on the sports field, he was never quite a gentleman, a failing which offended against the naval code of honour. By 1928 the gawky adolescent had filled out into a handsome young



man of twenty-four, whose Nordic good looks were marred only by a broken nose and a voice which remained curiously high-pitched. Heydrich capitalised on his appearance and the prestige of his uniform to become a notorious womaniser. This aspect of his character, like his obsession with sport, was based on the need to conquer and dominate in order to prove his own superiority, part of the philosophy of struggle in which he had been raised. As in other areas of life, Heydrich could not bear to be thwarted, a trait which had already threatened to involve him in controversy during a naval visit to the Mediterranean. As a fellow officer recalled: 'We were guests of the German Club in Barcelona. The entire German colony turned out. . . . Heydrich got to know a young lady of impeccable social background and went for a stroll with her in the Club Gardens . . . [where] he behaved in such a manner that the girl slapped him in the face. Red with anger, he came to me to complain. . . . When I told him, "You deserved it," he left the party. . . . The lady in question lodged a complaint, and the following day Heydrich had to make an apology.' On this occasion, Heydrich escaped a court of honour, but his luck eventually ran out. In December 1930, at a dance in Kiel, he met Lina von Osten, a boarder at a teacher-training college in the town. After only four dates, he asked her to marry him. Part of her attraction was her Nordic appearance, which reinforced Heydrich's deep-seated drive to assert his own identity and deny the rumours of his Jewish ancestry. Her family background also counted. Although her father was a humble schoolmaster on the Baltic island of Fehmarn, the family could claim an aristocratic ancestry, a fact not without appeal for someone with Heydrich's inferiority complex. As for Lina, a naval officer was a considerable catch, offering the prestige and status which she believed her family deserved. She had no qualms about the authoritarian sympathies expected of her as a navy wife. The von Osten family were themselves extreme nationalists and anti-Semites. Both Lina and her brother were early members of the Nazi party, regarding Hitler as the only man who could save Germany and restore it to greatness.

At Christmas 1930, Heydrich and Lina travelled to Fehmarn and won her father's consent to their marriage. Heydrich returned to duty, leaving Lina to complete her holiday with the family. The announcement of his engagement in January 1931 proved to be the prelude to the sudden termination of his naval career. When Lina arrived in Kiel for the beginning of the new term, she was met at the station by an agitated Heydrich who informed her that something dreadful had happened. He was to be brought before a naval court of honour by a previous

girlfriend who claimed he had met this girl at a ball appeared at his rooms on Nothing had occurred being that Heydrich presented difficulty, Lina was persuaded but asked if sub betrothal. Her fiancé rep court of honour heard a persuaded by Heydrich Heydrich himself had in spend the night with him necessity she complied, b The case was made worse Her father was the supe personal friend of Admi narrow, inflexible and wel the result of the court of h improve matters. He atten ing an arrogant disregard f the court. It concluded tha 'the possibility of such ar which was confirmed by f Reinhard Heydrich was di height of the depression an officer nor a gentleman, or Heydrich returned to hi locked himself weeping in l from the navy was the heav earning power which weigh of his being he had clung to his fiancée for the disaster chilly. As for the von Ostens as a prospective husband. proposition from a servin Although Lina refused to br ible until Heydrich found a ment, but an appeal against forcing him to face the fi possibility of the merchan because of the depression,

girlfriend who claimed breach of promise. According to Heydrich, he had met this girl at a ball after the Kiel regatta. She had subsequently appeared at his rooms one evening, asking for lodging for the night. Nothing had occurred between them, but the girl's father was demanding that Heydrich preserve her honour by marriage. Not without difficulty, Lina was persuaded that Heydrich was innocent of misconduct but asked if such an incident was enough to constitute a betrothal. Her fiancé replied bitterly: 'You don't know the navy.' The court of honour heard a different story and, unlike Lina, was not persuaded by Heydrich's version. The evidence suggested that Heydrich himself had invited the girl to Kiel and proposed that she spend the night with him because hotels were too expensive: 'Out of necessity she complied, but managed to resist Heydrich's advances.' The case was made worse by the fact that the girl was well connected. Her father was the superintendent of Kiel naval dockyard and a personal friend of Admiral Raeder. Since Raeder's opinions were narrow, inflexible and well known, Heydrich had every reason to fear the result of the court of honour. His behaviour at the hearing did not improve matters. He attempted to make light of the situation, displaying an arrogant disregard for the naval code of conduct which alienated the court. It concluded that Heydrich's behaviour called into question 'the possibility of such an officer remaining in the navy', a finding which was confirmed by Admiral Raeder. In April 1931, Lieutenant Reinhard Heydrich was discharged from the German navy. It was the height of the depression and he found himself on the beach, neither an officer nor a gentleman, one of over 5 million unemployed.

Heydrich returned to his home in Halle, where he broke down and locked himself weeping in his room. As Lina later recalled: 'Discharge from the navy was the heaviest blow of his life. . . . It was not the lost earning power which weighed on him, but the fact that with every fibre of his being he had clung to his career as an officer.' His mother blamed his fiancée for the disaster and their relations were always to remain chilly. As for the von Ostens, they had second thoughts about Heydrich as a prospective husband. A cashiered naval officer was a different proposition from a serving lieutenant with a guaranteed future. Although Lina refused to break the engagement, marriage was impossible until Heydrich found another job. At first he hoped for reinstatement, but an appeal against the findings of the court of honour failed, forcing him to face the future as a civilian. He investigated the possibility of the merchant marine, but there were few openings because of the depression, and his discharge from the navy counted

June 1931. He joined the SA in Hamburg and was soon involved in bloody street battles against the communists and other opponents of the Nazis. He took this step on the understanding that his association with the beerhall brawlers was to be purely temporary and that von Eberstein would use his influence to secure a speedy transfer to the SS. It is not difficult to see the attraction of this elite organisation for Heydrich, a failure in the eyes of his own social class. Himmler's black order offered both a means to power and an instrument of revenge against a society which had rejected Heydrich as it had rejected his father. Through the SS, he could become a member of a new aristocracy, an alternative to the naval officer corps which had expelled him. Moreover the SS emphasised the creation of a racially pure Germany, laying to rest the ghost of Gustav Süss and offering a vision which had engaged Heydrich since his school days in Halle. For the rest of his life, Heydrich was to be identified with the ruthless struggle for power by the SS, first within Germany and subsequently throughout Europe. The organisation was perfectly matched with the man.

The expansion of the SS under Himmler was supported by Hitler, who regarded the organisation as a means of keeping tabs on potential rivals within the party who aspired either to control or to replace him. In addition to this police duty, the SS also reported on the activities of groups opposed to the Nazis such as the communists and socialists. Until 1931, the work was amateur, haphazard and poorly co-ordinated, a state of affairs which Himmler was determined to remedy. He was already looking towards a future in which Hitler controlled Germany. Knowledge was power and, if the SS was to establish itself not only within the party but also within the state, it required a proper intelligence service. He therefore began to look for someone capable of organising the SS intelligence service on a professional basis and was handed Heydrich's file by von Eberstein. Himmler was impressed by Heydrich's Nordic good looks, which fully met his ideal of an SS man, and by his naval background. He shortlisted the former officer, along with a second candidate, an ex-army captain named Horninger. Heydrich was informed that he was being considered for an important position in the SS and ordered to report to Nazi headquarters in Munich. At the last minute, however, while Lina was packing his bags for the trip, von Eberstein sent a telegram to say that Himmler had a bad cold. The interview was indefinitely postponed. This news threw Heydrich into a panic but Lina insisted that he must go ahead and force the issue. A telegram was sent to warn von Eberstein and Heydrich caught the night express from Hamburg.

His friend was less than pleased to see him on the platform at Munich the following morning, but agreed to telephone Himmler at his chicken farm outside the city and request an appointment. Although plainly irritated to find Heydrich on his doorstep, Himmler was persuaded to grant an audience. When the importunate candidate arrived at the house, the Reichsführer SS wasted no time on social preliminaries. In an abrupt manner, he informed Heydrich that he had twenty minutes to sketch out his plans for an SS intelligence service. Heydrich, who was unaware of the purpose of the interview, was taken aback but quickly rose to the occasion. Whether or not he had ever worked for naval intelligence, as Himmler apparently believed, his knowledge of military organisation made his task relatively easy. He quickly drafted a short memorandum which so impressed Himmler, who was totally ignorant on the subject, that Heydrich was hired on the spot. His hasty scribbles became the basis of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD), which grew into 'National Socialism's greatest informer organisation'. Although he did not know it, Himmler had made a fortunate choice. The rival candidate, Horninger, was an agent of the Bavarian political police.

In August 1931, Heydrich began his new work in Munich. He was to serve the SS well and to offer Himmler unswerving obedience at odds with his usual devious conduct. The reasons were not far to seek. Without the Reichsführer SS and his elite organisation, Heydrich was just another of the anonymous unemployed, an ex-officer without a future. He remained embarrassed by his expulsion from the navy and, in an attempt to curry favour with the 'old fighters' of the party, gave out the story that he had been dismissed for Nazi activities. His SS file omitted the painful details, noting only that he had been dismissed 'on non-service grounds' against the advice of his 'immediate superiors'. Heydrich's rise through the ranks was rapid and by July 1932 he had been promoted to Standartenführer or colonel. Although his pay was small and irregular, he was able to marry Lina von Osten at Christmas 1931 in a Protestant ceremony, conducted by a Nazi pastor. The church was decorated with a swastika and the organ played the Horst Wessel Lied, the anti-Semitic marching song of the SA. Heydrich had long since lost his faith and his Catholic baptism proved no barrier to the marriage. Lina joined her husband in Munich where she threw herself into the role of model Nazi wife and mother. As a newcomer to national socialism, Heydrich was anxious to gain the approval of his superiors. He was privately contemptuous of Himmler, who imagined himself the reincarnation of the medieval king, Henry the Fowler, and

joked with his wife: relationship was co the most obsequiou able, applying what a difficult senior impressed with the: had picked the right was a born intelliger all the threads and w aided Himmler's ow which was to carry later claimed that h colourless Himmler likely that each ex organisational skills established position with Ernst Röhm, Himmler, the godfa Heydrich had priva sexual, but regarded as a means of person and the head of the o His friendship could old guard despised a after Hitler came to conniving at Röhm's

The main threat to old rumour about his his wife later recalled the wedding, Reinha that he had a position that Heydrich was no denunciation was evic former shipmates whi days as a cadet. The party headquarters in gation into the racial cluded that Heydrich Jewish blood' but faile circulate within the N amongst foreign jour

joked with his wife about his chief's 'crazed mysticism', but their public relationship was correct and formal. Heydrich addressed Himmler in the most obsequious terms and attempted to make himself indispensable, applying what he had learned in the navy about the art of pleasing a difficult senior officer. For his part, the Reichsführer SS was impressed with the abilities of his new subordinate and realised that he had picked the right man for the job. According to Himmler, Heydrich was a born intelligence officer, 'a living card index, a brain which held all the threads and wove them altogether'. The information he supplied aided Himmler's own intrigues and provided the basis of a partnership which was to carry both men ever higher in the Nazi hierarchy. Lina later claimed that her husband was the real driving force behind the colourless Himmler, bulldozing him relentlessly forward. It is more likely that each exploited the other, Heydrich's knowledge and organisational skills complementing Himmler's own ambitions and established position in the party. He pursued a less formal relationship with Ernst Röhm, the head of the SA, who became, along with Himmler, the godfather of Heydrich's first child, Klaus, in July 1933. Heydrich had private reservations about Röhm, a notorious homosexual, but regarded a connexion with the powerful stormtroop leader as a means of personal advancement. Röhm was Hitler's closest friend and the head of the organisation to which the SS was still subordinate. His friendship could prove important to a man whom many of the Nazi old guard despised as an upstart. When the political situation changed after Hitler came to power, Heydrich was to have no qualms about conniving at Röhm's murder.

The main threat to Heydrich's progress in these early years was the old rumour about his family, which again surfaced to plague him. As his wife later recalled: 'In February 1932, just a couple of months after the wedding, Reinhard's previous associates in the navy, on learning that he had a position with the SS . . . testified to the Gauleiter in Halle that Heydrich was not really Heydrich but Süß and was a Jew.' This denunciation was evidence of his continued unpopularity amongst his former shipmates which had been firmly established since his earliest days as a cadet. The Nazi official immediately reported the matter to party headquarters in Munich, which launched an exhaustive investigation into the racial background of the Heydrich family. This concluded that Heydrich and his father were 'free from any coloured or Jewish blood' but failed to kill the rumour completely. It continued to circulate within the Nazi establishment and was common knowledge amongst foreign journalists in Berlin. In 1935 and 1937, Heydrich was



forced to threaten legal action against people who declared that he was of Jewish origin. As late as 1940, someone from Halle was jailed for repeating that 'Heydrich and his father were not of Aryan ancestry.' By that stage, however, it was either a brave or foolish man who risked Heydrich's wrath by publicly digging up the past. Those who tried were liable to disappear without trace into the totalitarian police apparatus which he had created.

Heydrich spent the two years before Hitler came to power building up the SD, uncovering spies in the party apparatus and evading the unwelcome attentions of the Bavarian political police. It was a dangerous and uncertain period. Murderous street battles between the Nazis and their opponents were common and there was much talk of civil war. At times the SA and the SS were proscribed and Heydrich was forced to work underground. His salary remained irregular and he and his staff were often reduced to living off a thin soup prepared by Lina. None of this, however, deterred Heydrich. He was prepared to work tirelessly for a Nazi victory, regarding his own salvation and that of Germany as inextricably bound up with the triumph of Adolf Hitler. From the beginning, Heydrich displayed a natural ability for intelligence work. He created a central card index of potential opponents and toured Germany to recruit a corps of full-time agents, which included his brother, Heinz, now a journalist in Berlin. His aim was to create a service staffed with professionals as a separate elite within the SS. He was confident enough to surround himself with clever young men, but kept a wary eye on his subordinates, never letting them know the complete picture or allowing them independent access to higher authority. He withdrew his network of agents from local SS units and established his staff in a secluded house on the outskirts of Munich, well away from Nazi headquarters, where too many people could pry into its work. His aim was to build up the SD as a separate organisation within the SS, answerable only to himself. It was to have its own mystique, an SD style as exclusive as that of the naval officer corps which had expelled him. Heydrich's model was the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), an example he had encountered only in the pages of the spy fiction which he devoured in the navy. Like many Nazis, he was fascinated by the British Empire and attributed its success to the cunning of British intelligence. He believed that the British treated spying as an honourable profession, a calling fit for gentlemen and patriots. According to Heydrich, every decent Englishman was 'ready to aid the Secret Service, regarding it as his obvious duty. . . . British power was really based on the Secret Service for the

best-informed have a great adv of commercial competition and were very much the same thin this English view of intelligence British agents were the cream elite. Heydrich set himself to recruiting middle-class young, his later protégé, Walter Schel 1934 because it contained 'the Heydrich, SD agents were to be the best of motives and enjoyed of their achievements, their pro sober judgement'. It was even because this was the traditional it is doubtful if Heydrich possibly early days of the SD and he probably cannot have escaped his not known as 'Der Chef' (the Boss). symbol both of a desire to identify power which shaped his entire

Despite his emphasis on the organisation in his own image. To German middle classes, who society, 'spiritually rootless' you generally accepted norms of conduct to regard Heydrich as a mere to offered his skills to the SS to come from the navy. His cold exterior emotional drives which made HSD was deliberately designed by revolution. Once the Nazis had and Marxists, crushing the enemy preliminary to a war of conquest Versailles and usher in a thousand struggle for German living space such as had occurred in 1918. Targets. In Heydrich, the urge to desire for revenge, not only against the symbols of the old imperial symbols of this Germany – the Churches – was absolute and

best-informed have a great advantage over others. That was true both of commercial competition and of politics – and in England the two were very much the same thing. . . . The SS had adopted as its ideal this English view of intelligence work as a matter for gentlemen. British agents were the cream of the establishment, an elite within an elite. Heydrich set himself to copy this pattern, concentrating on recruiting middle-class young men with an academic background like his later protégé, Walter Schellenberg, a lawyer who joined the SS in 1934 because it contained 'the better type of people'. According to Heydrich, SD agents were to be 'trusted people who acted purely from the best of motives and enjoyed the respect of the community by virtue of their achievements, their professional ability and their objective and sober judgement'. It was even said that he chose to call himself 'C' because this was the traditional cover name for the head of SIS. In fact it is doubtful if Heydrich possessed this piece of information in the early days of the SD and he probably found his example nearer home. It cannot have escaped his notice that amongst old Nazis Hitler was known as 'Der Chef' (the Boss), or 'C'. His adoption of the term was a symbol both of a desire to identify with the Führer and of the lust for power which shaped his entire personality.

Despite his emphasis on the British model, Heydrich created an organisation in his own image. The SD was staffed with the sons of the German middle classes, who shared his alienation from Weimar society, 'spiritually rootless' young men, 'uninhibited by any of the generally accepted norms of conduct'. It would be a mistake, however, to regard Heydrich as a mere technician, an amoral opportunist who offered his skills to the SS to escape the consequences of dismissal from the navy. His cold exterior concealed powerful ideological and emotional drives which made Heydrich a truly dangerous man. The SD was deliberately designed by him as the tool of Hitler's national revolution. Once the Nazis had gained power, it would root out Jews and Marxists, crushing the enemy on the domestic front as the preliminary to a war of conquest which would reverse the verdict of Versailles and usher in a thousand-year Reich. In this final cataclysmic struggle for German living space, there was to be no stab in the back such as had occurred in 1918. Nor were Jews and Marxists his only targets. In Heydrich, the urge towards power was fuelled by a primitive desire for revenge, not only against the 'November traitors', but also against the symbols of the old imperial Germany. His contempt for the symbols of this Germany – the officer corps, the bureaucracy, the Churches – was absolute and he was to seek their destruction

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Hitler's appointment power and removed power and removed power, overthrown by the National Socialists. Himmler and Heydrich created by Hitler's appointment and weak to serve their holding an outpost in the party, it was natural and in particular upon this - of all public institutions the greatest scope . . . measures and deviation was no national police provincial governments. This system and fuse it with which would act as the directly responsible to restraints. This security in the new Germany and outside the party. In January his position as head of this responsibility for implementation organisation was pushed concentrated on seizing the There were many observations the entire German police shifted from Munich to Berlin.

Hitler's Secret Policeman

Hitler's appointment as chancellor in 1933 opened a legal path to power and removed politics from the streets. The state would not be overthrown by the Nazis but infiltrated and seized from the inside. Himmler and Heydrich rapidly realised that in the new situation created by Hitler's appointment the SS and SD alone were too small and weak to serve their ambitions. The future depended on seizing and holding an outpost in the state bureaucracy which could then be shaped to serve their own purposes. As the SS always had a police role in the party, it was natural that their efforts should focus on the police and in particular upon the political police: 'There was good reason for this - of all public institutions the political police was the one providing the greatest scope . . . for secret processes, unauthorised executive measures and deviation from normal rules.' In Weimar Germany there was no national police force and control was exercised by the various provincial governments. Himmler and Heydrich planned to centralise this system and fuse it with the SS to create a new state protection corps which would act as the instrument of the Führer's will. It would be directly responsible to Hitler and free of either legal or political restraints. This security empire would guarantee the SS a leading role in the new Germany and could be turned against rivals inside and outside the party. In January 1933, Heydrich temporarily abandoned his position as head of the SD to serve on Himmler's staff with direct responsibility for implementing this plan. The small intelligence organisation was pushed into the background while its creators concentrated on seizing the levers of state power.

There were many obstacles to overcome before the SS controlled the entire German police. After January 1933, the focus of Nazi activity shifted from Munich to Berlin as Hitler manoeuvred to consolidate his



police who had expected the worst from the Nazis only to be retained by Heydrich and to gain later notoriety as head of the Gestapo. Heydrich was astute enough to realise that self-interest guaranteed the loyalty of these new subordinates who faced a grim future without the protection of the SS. The new force created by Heydrich was employed by Himmler to smash and overawe all sources of opposition to the consolidation of Nazi power in Bavaria. The police became an instrument of administrative terror unrestrained by the courts. The leadership of the political parties, trade unions and the Jewish community were arrested and consigned to a newly created detention camp at Dachau on the outskirts of Munich. By the end of 1933 over 16,000 people had suffered beatings and humiliation behind its barbed wire. The majority were conditionally released after a short stay in order to spread the word about the fate which awaited opponents of the Nazis. Himmler was careful to maintain his own control over this coercive apparatus by a policy of divide and rule. Heydrich was denied jurisdiction over Dachau, which was run by SS Oberführer Theodore Eicke, a former policeman. 'Papa' Eicke made his own brutal rules, encouraging a virulent hatred of the prisoners and warning his guards that pity for an enemy of the state was unworthy of an SS man.

From their position in Bavaria, Himmler and Heydrich were able to take over the police of the smaller German states. Prussia, however, the largest of the provinces, remained outside their jurisdiction despite a series of intrigues. Until Prussia fell, the dream of a totalitarian police system controlled by the SS remained incomplete. Power in Prussia was held by Hermann Göring, first as Minister of the Interior and subsequently as premier. While Heydrich was engaged in his Swiss escapade, Göring was consolidating his position in the front rank of the Nazi party through his control of the Prussian police. Indeed he seemed likely to foreclose on the SS scheme by adopting it himself. The uniformed police was reinforced with Nazi auxiliaries and anti-Nazi officials were dismissed. In April 1933, the Prussian political police was removed from legal control and consolidated into an independent force, the Gestapo, with its headquarters in a converted art school on the Prinz Albrechtstrasse in Berlin. Göring openly boasted that his security forces were above the law and would be employed to crush any opposition. Himmler's representative in Berlin, Obergruppenführer Kurt Daluge, threw in his lot with Göring, hoping to replace Himmler as Reichsführer SS by attaching himself to someone with real power. When Heydrich visited Daluge in March 1933 to assert Himmler's control, he was refused an interview and was

ignominiously expelled from Prussia. According to Göring, Himmler and Heydrich would 'never get to Berlin'.

The perennial power struggle amongst the Nazi leaders, however, soon offered them their opportunity. Although Hitler crushed the political opposition and the trade unions in 1933, he was reluctant to challenge other centres of power, most notably the officer corps, which was capable of overthrowing his regime if its privileges were threatened. Hitler's caution did not suit everyone in the party, and in particular his temporising alienated Ernst Röhm, the head of the SA, who called for a thorough purge of the old order. A brutal anarchist, without the bureaucratic skills of Himmler and Heydrich, Röhm demanded a 'second revolution' from which his swaggering brown-shirts would emerge supreme. Röhm made no secret of his desire to take control of the armed forces and to abolish the traditional power of the German officer corps. He dismissed the generals as 'old clods' and lobbied Hitler to appoint him Minister of War. His contempt was fully reciprocated by the military leaders, who regarded the SA as a rabble of peculators, drunkards and homosexuals. Röhm's activities were increasingly unwelcome to Hitler, who had exploited the revolutionary threat of the stormtroopers in the struggle for power but now found their demands politically embarrassing: 'Henceforth he was the State, and it was undignified to have to play up to old comrades whose only recollections were of fighting in the streets and bashing policemen on the heads.' In the bitter quarrel between the SA and the army, Göring sided with the generals. He had his own eyes on the War Ministry and viewed Röhm as a dangerous rival. It was a situation which could be exploited by Himmler and Heydrich to improve their own position. In April 1934 Göring reluctantly surrendered control of the Gestapo to Himmler in return for SS support in his feud with Röhm. Neither side had any doubts about the real meaning of this bargain, which aimed at nothing less than the murder of the entire SA leadership.

Göring and Himmler delegated the details of their conspiracy to Heydrich, who acted with his usual combination of cynicism and efficiency. Apparently he had no qualms about planning the death of a man who only months before had acted as godfather to his eldest child. Heydrich's task was to exploit the growing tension between the army and the SA to force Hitler into drastic action against his erstwhile comrade. His men were soon hard at work, manufacturing evidence that Röhm was planning a coup and planting rumours calculated to inflame the situation. Heydrich found willing accomplices in the generals who were prepared to accept any ally in order to bring Röhm

down. The head of the A General Walther von Reichenau headquarters: 'He . . . four days later] provided barracks, and the army intended to hold the dirty work. At first 30 June 1934 he finally destroyed the political power believed that Röhm was planning the army would not allow the support of the army the regime provided Hitler with a political necessity. While the SS death squads went into holiday retreat in Bavaria, Munich along with the army, Heydrich's men fanned out death-lists compiled long time leadership in the city was ro squad at the SS barracks in 1 down prominent SA men considered a danger to the Franz von Papen, Hitler's V the Catholic centre party. attempted to manipulate the influence of his assistants he Nazis in public. On 30 June office, shot his press secretary. The safes were blown open intervention of Göring save were not so lucky. Another Director of the Reich Ministry Gestapo agent who was ordered faking a suicide.

The blood purge represented mindless activism of the street failed to grasp the importance price. Hitler had favoured the SD the sole intelligence the importance he attached to authority within the movement

down. The head of the Armed Forces Office at the War Ministry, General Walther von Reichenau, was a frequent visitor at Gestapo headquarters: 'He . . . found Heydrich a congenial partner . . . [and later] provided barracks, weapons and transport for the great coup.' The army intended to hold itself aloof from the purge while the SS did the dirty work. At first Hitler hesitated to deal with Röhm but on 30 June 1934 he finally launched the so-called 'blood purge' which destroyed the political power of the SA. Whether or not he seriously believed that Röhm was planning a coup, it was clear that the officer corps would not allow the situation to continue and that without the support of the army the regime could not survive. Heydrich's efforts provided Hitler with a convenient pretext for what had become a political necessity. While the soldiers remained in their barracks, the SS death squads went into action. Röhm was arrested by Hitler at his holiday retreat in Bavaria and executed at the Stadelheim prison in Munich along with the rest of his staff. Meanwhile, in Berlin, Heydrich's men fanned out through the capital acting on the basis of death-lists compiled long before the supposed emergency. The SA leadership in the city was rounded up without a fight and shot by firing squad at the SS barracks in Lichterfelde. The Gestapo not only hunted down prominent SA men but settled scores with others who were considered a danger to the regime. One of Heydrich's targets was Franz von Papen, Hitler's Vice-Chancellor, a conservative member of the Catholic centre party. Von Papen was one of those who had attempted to manipulate Hitler, only to realise his mistake. Under the influence of his assistants he had begun to take the risk of criticising the Nazis in public. On 30 June the SS smashed down the doors of his office, shot his press secretary dead and arrested the rest of his staff. The safes were blown open and their contents seized. Only the intervention of Göring saved von Papen from an SS bullet. Others were not so lucky. Another conservative Catholic, Dr Erich Klausner, Director of the Reich Ministry of Transport, was shot dead by a Gestapo agent who was ordered by Heydrich to cover up the crime by faking a suicide.

The blood purge represented the victory of technocrats over the mindless activism of the streets. Unlike Himmler and Heydrich, Röhm failed to grasp the importance of infiltrating the state and paid the price. Hitler had favoured Himmler even before 30 June by making the SD the sole intelligence agency of the Nazi party, a symbol of the importance he attached to the SS as the ultimate guarantor of his authority within the movement. After the purge the SS made further



destruction of the new Germany in league with international Jewry. There must be ceaseless vigilance to unmask and root out all sources of potential opposition. He was the surgeon who would save the nation by ruthlessly excising any trace of ideological or moral infection. In pursuit of these doctrines, the Gestapo was removed from the last vestiges of legal control and became an autonomous body. It had the power of detention without trial and could commit its prisoners directly to the growing SS concentration camp empire under Theodore Eicke. It was not only potential political opponents who suffered under this system. Heydrich's security police also attempted to rid Germany of 'anti-social malefactors' such as habitual criminals, homosexuals, drunkards and the 'work shy'. People in these categories were simply rounded up and consigned to the camps on no other basis than their past record. In the security police, Heydrich had an instrument of tyranny unparalleled in German history but his thirst for power remained unsatisfied. He intrigued constantly to take over the concentration camps and thus to gain control of the entire machinery of repression. The brutal 'Papa' Eicke, however, was protected by Himmler, who was wary of granting his energetic subordinate such unlimited powers: 'Eicke and his empire continued to constitute a tiresome gap in Heydrich's web.'

The Jews occupied a special place in Heydrich's attempt to purge Germany of 'anti-social' elements. In Nazi mythology, the Jews were the enemy, the agents of a malign international conspiracy against the Aryan race. From the beginning, Jewish organisations were closely monitored by the security police and by 1939 the SS had assumed a leading role in the 'Jewish question'. For Himmler and Heydrich, the solution was simple. The Jews had no place in the new Germany and must be removed by a combination of expropriation and deportation. In this process, rich Jews must be forced to pay for the emigration of their poorer brethren. The approach was first pioneered on a large scale by an obscure young SD officer named Adolf Eichmann in Vienna after the Nazi seizure of Austria in March 1938. He perfected a centralised bureaucracy for robbing and expelling the Austrian Jews, placing modern management skills at the service of the irrational anti-Semitism which defined national socialism. In January 1939, the system was extended to the rest of the Reich as the result of a directive establishing a Central Office for Jewish Emigration under Heydrich's direction, a task he delegated first to Gestapo Müller and subsequently to Eichmann. The directive, which cut across competing state and party jurisdictions, symbolised the final supremacy of the SS in the

to Viktor Lutze, a political power. The SS was freed from its ties to the party and became an independent organisation loyal only to Hitler. In the wake of the seizure of power, the Gestapo was reorganised with the transfer of its headquarters from Bavaria to Berlin. Simultaneously the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice allowed the expanding machinery of the security police. Lawyers, even soldiers of the SS, who were not of the party will. The creation of this new security police was completed in June 1936 when the German police, a position held by Heinrich Himmler, became the head of the SS. Heydrich became the head of the Gestapo and Kurt Daluge was given the post of head of the SD. The personnel of both the SD and the Gestapo were transferred to the SS to create a force loyal to the party but to Hitler. Heydrich was transferred into SIPO although there was a clear distinction between ambitious young men and professional policemen. Heydrich, who had considered amalgamating the SD and the Gestapo into a single police, he found it useful to keep them separate. The SD, so a complete merger was not achieved. The SD were directly subordinated to the Gestapo. The RSHA, the various agencies controlled by Heydrich, had jurisdiction over the SD and the Gestapo. Heydrich found it useful to keep his subordinates and

Heydrich regarded the police as the 'defence of the people', a role which was defined by the seizure of power. Heydrich the old enemies of the Nazi seizure of power. They continued to plot the



struggle to control Jewish policy. Nor was this surprising. The Jewish question was defined from the beginning as a matter of national security concerning the racial defence of the German people and thus the natural business of the security police. For the SS, as for Hitler, the 'racial cleansing' of the Reich, like rearmament, was designed to prepare Germany for war, the ultimate aim of the Nazi state. Before the inevitable struggle for living-space began, the country was to be purged of the internal enemy. The German people must never again be robbed of their imperial destiny by the 'stab in the back' which had betrayed the army in 1918.

The police were not only an instrument of repression but also a weapon in the byzantine politics of the Third Reich. Himmler aimed at the elimination of all competitors inside and outside the party and the ultimate creation of a Nazi state dominated by the SS. A start had been made with the murder of Röhm but many barriers remained, in particular the continued influence of the old elites in the early years of Hitler's government. Unlike Röhm, Himmler did not seek an open quarrel with the establishment but proceeded indirectly, chipping away at its position by a stream of intrigues and smears. In this campaign, Heydrich's security organisation played a leading role. In mounting an attack on the remnants of the old order, Himmler could not have chosen a better subordinate. From the beginning Heydrich betrayed a deep personal hatred for the old Germany and sought not only to discredit but to humiliate its representatives, often by sexual scandals either real or invented. One target of the SS was organised religion and in particular the Roman Catholic Church. Himmler was suspicious of an institution which attempted to maintain an independent existence within the Nazi state and which owed its ultimate allegiance to Rome. He saw it as an ideological challenge to the SS, the Jesuits of the new Aryan order, and regarded its influence on youth as pernicious. Heydrich pursued the SS vendetta against the Church with relentless venom. While he was contemptuous of the archaic Teutonic mysticism which absorbed Himmler, he also despised Christianity as the religion of the weak, the antithesis of the philosophy of war and struggle which alone could make Germany great. He regarded the Catholics as a particular danger because they owed moral allegiance to the Pope, thus threatening the vision of a German racial community united behind the Führer. It was no accident that the SS singled out prominent Catholic politicians such as von Papen and Klausner during the Röhm purge, since it was committed to the eradication of the political power enjoyed by the Church under the Weimar Republic. Heydrich could not forgive

himself for missing von hound him after he became member of his staff was a second vanished when his mutilated body was found no doubts that the Gestapo life as long as Heydrich remained.

The ultimate aims of the Catholicism to the destruct and moral authority. Heydrich engineering a number of smuggling and sexual misdeeds given wide publicity in the developed a more elaboration of organised religion. A Heydrich intended to disorganise his own men to the theological 'Within ten or fifteen years positions [in the hierarchy] will begin their deadly work of directed against the Protestant realised since Hitler decided Christianity until after the curbed his campaign. His attachment, who remained a strict She was never reconciled with support her financially from the

Another object of SS attack had connived at the Röhm purge down to size, the generals found dangerous rival. The tradition of arms in the German nation found SS military formations during the Röhm affair, Himmler's order to carry out the SS by the Führer. These SS shock troops directly available disorder, the imperial guard unpopular with the army command monocled representative of Prussia block the further expansion of

* after Röhm



himself for missing von Papen on that occasion and continued to hound him after he became Ambassador to Vienna in 1934. One member of his staff was accused of homosexuality and forced into exile. A second vanished when the Nazis annexed Austria in March 1938 and his mutilated body was found floating in the Danube. Von Papen had no doubts that the Gestapo was responsible and went in fear of his own life as long as Heydrich remained alive.

The ultimate aims of the SS went beyond the eradication of political Catholicism to the destruction of the Church itself as a centre of power and moral authority. Heydrich attempted to discredit the clergy by engineering a number of show trials based on accusations of currency smuggling and sexual misconduct by priests and nuns which were given wide publicity in the SS journal, *Das Schwarze Korps*. He later developed a more elaborate plan to speed the decline and disintegration of organised religion. According to the SD agent Wilhelm Hoettl, Heydrich intended to disrupt the Church from the inside by sending his own men to the theological seminaries for training as priests: 'Within ten or fifteen years his emissaries would have attained ... positions [in the hierarchy] from which it would be possible for them to begin their deadly work of destruction.' A similar scheme was to be directed against the Protestant Churches. This ambition was never realised since Hitler decided to postpone a final reckoning with Christianity until after the war and in 1941 Heydrich was forced to curb his campaign. His attacks on the clergy led to a break with his mother, who remained a strict Catholic despite her Nazi sympathies. She was never reconciled with her eldest son, although he continued to support her financially from his SS salary.

Another object of SS attack was the German officer corps, which had connived at the Röhm purge. In assisting Himmler to cut the SA down to size, the generals found that they had created a new and more dangerous rival. The traditional position of the army as the sole bearer of arms in the German nation conflicted with Himmler's desire to found SS military formations. As a reward for his services to Hitler during the Röhm affair, Himmler was allowed to raise three infantry regiments in order to carry out 'the special internal tasks' allocated to the SS by the Führer. These SS military formations were to be political shock troops directly available to Hitler for the suppression of civil disorder, the imperial guard of the new Nazi state. The decision was unpopular with the army commander, General Werner von Fritsch, a monocled representative of Prussian tradition, who was determined to block the further expansion of Himmler's military empire. As a result,



* after Röhm, comes Heydrich!

he soon became the target of Heydrich's sordid intrigues. In pursuing the SS dispute with the army, Heydrich was working off a personal grudge which dated back to his ignominious dismissal from the navy in 1931. The officer corps represented a tradition which had expelled and humiliated him and on which he wished to be revenged. Moreover the general staff was a rival in his chosen field of intelligence. There was growing friction between Heydrich's expanding police system and the military espionage and counter-espionage organisation, the Abwehr, particularly when the SD began to trespass into the field of foreign intelligence after 1933. The professionals of the Abwehr regarded Heydrich's brash young men as blundering amateurs, often with reason for the early foreign operations of the SD were anything but subtle. In 1934 Heydrich attempted to kidnap Rudolf Formis, a German radio engineer and member of the dissident Nazi organisation, the Black Front, who was broadcasting anti-Hitler propaganda from a secret wireless station just over the Czech border. The affair was entrusted to a small team under SS Sturmbahnführer Alfred Naujocks, a character more noted for brawn than intelligence. Instead of masterminding a quiet abduction, Naujocks became involved in a gun battle with Formis in a Czech hotel room. The SD man was wounded in the affray and Formis killed. While a second agent rounded up the hotel staff at gun-point, Naujocks destroyed the transmitter with a thermite bomb, burning himself badly in the process. The two then fled across the border leaving a trail of obvious clues for the Czech police, including their car, which they abandoned at the frontier. The affair had to be hushed up at governmental level and Heydrich raged at his unfortunate subordinates, whose blunders reflected badly on the authority and prestige of the SD.

Heydrich intrigued constantly to discredit and undermine the Abwehr. By the end of 1934 the situation had become serious enough for the War Minister, General Blomberg, to remove the head of military intelligence, an unimaginative naval captain named Patzig. His replacement was Wilhelm Canaris, an officer who seemed the ideal candidate to resolve the tension. He had worked in naval intelligence during the First World War and was a convinced right-wing nationalist with a record of support for the Freikorps after the armistice. Moreover Heydrich had been his protégé and admirer as a young naval officer, a fact which might smooth over the rivalry between Abwehr and SD. On the surface a cordial relationship soon developed between the little white-haired Admiral and his former subordinate. The two families lived near each other in a respectable Berlin suburb and joined

together for picnics, revived memories of the intelligence chiefs went seemed to be reflected at was reached between F jurisdiction of the SD and ments, however, were bre The Heydrich-Canaris r bitter power struggle. Wh Heydrich did not trust the the general staff. In the V telephones of both the V undoubtedly been placed Canaris attempted to colle ancestry which might p between army and SS.

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together for picnics, croquet matches and musical evenings which revived memories of the old days in Kiel. Every morning the two intelligence chiefs went riding in the Tiergarten. This friendship seemed to be reflected at the professional level. In 1935 a compromise was reached between Heydrich and Canaris which defined the jurisdiction of the SD and the Abwehr. The so-called ten commandments, however, were breached almost as soon as they were signed. The Heydrich-Canaris relationship concealed the continuation of a bitter power struggle. Whatever the face he chose to put on in public, Heydrich did not trust the 'levantine' Canaris or the 'shady barons' of the general staff. In the summer of 1935 bugs were discovered in the telephones of both the War Ministry and the Abwehr, which had undoubtedly been placed there by Heydrich's agents. For his part, Canaris attempted to collect evidence on Heydrich's supposed Jewish ancestry which might prove useful in the underground struggle between army and SS.

This wider dispute rapidly centred on the person of Werner von Fritsch, the leading military critic of the SS. Himmler and Heydrich made a series of attempts to discredit the army commander. In 1935-6 Heydrich's agents spread rumours that he was planning a military coup against Hitler in an attempt to force his dismissal. A covert campaign also began to involve von Fritsch, an austere bachelor, in a sex scandal. The General was unwise enough to offer accommodation to an unemployed member of the Hitler Youth who was planted on him by the Gestapo in an attempt to find evidence of homosexuality, an offence against both German criminal law and the military code of honour. Although this ploy proved unsuccessful, Heydrich was able to find a professional blackmailer, a petty criminal named Schmidt, who was prepared to testify that he had witnessed von Fritsch commit a homosexual act with a youth picked up at a Berlin railway station. Neither the planted rumours of a coup, nor the dossier on von Fritsch's supposed sex life, however, could move Hitler to action. The Führer remained unwilling to alienate the officer corps, whose support he required for the rearmament programme. When Himmler produced the file based on Schmidt's testimony in August 1936 he was ordered by Hitler to burn 'this muck'. Heydrich, however, did not give up. The file was not destroyed but saved for a more propitious occasion and when von Fritsch visited Egypt on leave in 1937 he was discreetly trailed by SD agents in the hope that he would sample the carnal delights of Cairo. Since the army commander was merely seeking a cure for bronchial catarrh, the SS bloodhounds were once again disappointed.



The SS feud with the general staff was behind Heydrich's involvement in the Tukachevsky affair of 1937, one of the most controversial foreign operations launched by the SD before the outbreak of war. Through contacts in the Russian émigré community in Paris, Heydrich learned that the Soviet army commander, Marshal Tukachevsky, was planning a coup against Stalin with the encouragement of prominent German generals. This fantastic tale was probably planted by the Russians as part of their preparations for the great purge of the Red Army which occurred in the summer of 1937. Heydrich's informant was a double agent who derived an income from both the SD and the Soviet NKVD. It is likely that Heydrich was aware of this but saw the possibility of using the information to his own advantage. As he informed his protégé, Walter Schellenberg: 'We can show that these contacts have as their purpose a double military putsch, in Moscow to get rid of Stalin, in Berlin to get rid of Hitler. We can kill two birds with one stone.' While providing Stalin with an excuse to purge his general staff, the SS could also eliminate those German officers it considered unreliable. It would not be difficult to produce a dossier containing evidence of treason in both Moscow and Berlin. After the First World War the German army had co-operated closely with the Russians in order to evade the disarmament provisions of the Versailles treaty, a covert programme cancelled by Hitler on ideological grounds. It was only necessary to combine edited material from this period with documents provided by the SD forgery department to demonstrate the existence of a conspiracy. It is likely that von Fritsch was again one of Heydrich's main targets. As the German army commander he was the natural candidate for the role of co-conspirator with his Soviet opposite number. Moreover in the 1920s he had been an ardent champion of the secret co-operation with Russia terminated by the Nazis.

According to Schellenberg, Heydrich's plans for a double blow against the Russian and German military elites ran into opposition from Hitler. When Himmler raised the subject, the Führer insisted that the operation be strictly limited to incriminating Soviet generals. Decapitating Stalin's armed forces was one thing, backing the SS against the German army quite another. Heydrich was forced to curb his ambitions and accept this restriction. His dossier on the Tukachevsky conspiracy was handed over to the Russians in May 1937 for a cash payment of 3 million roubles by the hero of the Formis affair, Alfred Naujocks, posing as a corrupt SD agent. It is doubtful if the NKVD was taken in by this transparent ruse, particularly since it was

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As long as Hitler resisted plots against the army were however, relations between starting to fray. While the increasing reservations at which they feared would still be unprepared. It was hoped to turn to their own not by the SS but by General Werner Blomberg ceremony which was held. Unfortunately for Blomberg mother had run a message; she herself had posed for the of the criminal police. The had been watching her since 1935. Nevertheless Himmler ahead in the hope of starting



probably behind the original story of a Soviet military plot. In keeping with the cynicism of the whole affair, the Russians paid for Heydrich's masterpiece with forged currency, which proved unfortunate for SD agents in the Soviet Union who later tried to pass the notes. It is unclear what role the dossier played in the subsequent arrest and execution of Tukachevsky and his fellow officers but Heydrich was quick to take the credit. It was immaterial to him whether or not he had been used by Stalin. What mattered was the way the affair was perceived in Germany, where it was portrayed as a shrewd blow against the Red enemy by the master plotters of the SD. Canaris, who learned about Heydrich's role only after the execution of Tukachevsky, was shocked. For him it displayed not only the scope of Heydrich's ambitions in the intelligence field, but the depths of cynicism to which he could sink. From that moment he was under no illusions about the SS. As he complained to his predecessor Patzig in October 1937, they were 'all criminals from top to bottom, and bent on ruining Germany'. In the following years Canaris became involved in a series of military plots against Hitler. While he never took a leading role in these affairs, he allowed the Abwehr to harbour a group of committed anti-Nazi officers, most notably his deputy, Colonel Hans Oster. It is hardly surprising that Heydrich, who soon had wind of these developments, regarded military intelligence as a nest of traitors, another item in the reckoning against the 'shady barons' of the general staff.

As long as Hitler resisted pressure to purge the officer corps, SS plots against the army were doomed to frustration. By the end of 1937, however, relations between the Führer and his military leaders were starting to fray. While the generals supported rearmament, they had increasing reservations about Hitler's plans for armed expansion, which they feared would plunge Germany into a war for which it was still unprepared. It was a situation which Himmler and Heydrich hoped to turn to their own advantage. Matters were brought to a head, not by the SS but by Göring. In January 1938 the War Minister, General Werner Blomberg, married a young secretary in a quiet ceremony which was honoured by the attendance of Hitler. Unfortunately for Blomberg, his wife was a lady with a past. Her mother had run a massage parlour in the red-light district of Berlin and she herself had posed for obscene photographs which were in the files of the criminal police. The Gestapo was well aware of the situation and had been watching her since the discreet affair with Blomberg began in 1935. Nevertheless Himmler and Heydrich allowed the marriage to go ahead in the hope of starting a second time-bomb ticking under the

general staff. This plot came to fruition prematurely when Göring acquired the compromising photographs early in the new year. He immediately took the evidence to Hitler, hoping to start a scandal which would provoke the removal of Blomberg and his own appointment as War Minister, a post he had coveted since 1933. Himmler and Heydrich exploited these premature revelations about Blomberg to pursue their own feud with the army. The old dossier on von Fritsch was immediately revived and presented to Hitler as further evidence of moral corruption amongst the top military leaders. The SS hoped to humiliate the officer corps, using the real evidence against Frau Blomberg to lend credence to the false charges against von Fritsch. The army, trapped by Prussian tradition, would be unable to resist. Its rigid code of honour could never tolerate a prostitute as a general's wife and a homosexual as a commander. The situation must have given Heydrich particular satisfaction as he recalled the circumstances of his own dismissal in 1931.

1939 In reviving the charges against von Fritsch, Himmler and Heydrich nearly overreached themselves. Hitler seized on the double scandal to reorganise the high command, removing his critics and assuming personal control of the War Ministry. At the same time, he was careful not to push the army too far and conceded an investigation of the charges against von Fritsch by a military court of honour, a development unforeseen by Heydrich. It was soon clear that the evidence against the army commander had been wholly manufactured to support the ambitions of the SS. Canaris exploited this situation in an attempt to discredit a dangerous rival, lobbying senior commanders to demand the dismissal of Himmler, Heydrich and the entire leadership of the security police for attacking the honour of the German army. For a time the situation hung in the balance and Berlin was swept by rumours of an impending military coup. Heydrich was well aware of the dangers and displayed an agitation at odds with his usual appearance of icy calm. Preparations were made to defend Gestapo headquarters against the Berlin garrison and Schellenberg, a crack shot, found himself invited to supper in his chief's office with instructions to bring his pistol and plenty of ammunition. The crisis was defused by the Nazi seizure of Austria on 12 March 1938 which delayed the trial of von Fritsch. When the court reconvened three weeks later, it was rapidly proved that the Gestapo case rested on perjured evidence and von Fritsch was acquitted. The army, however, demanded neither his reinstatement nor the dismissal of Himmler and Heydrich. In the wake of the Austrian operation, few officers were prepared to confront

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a triumphant Führer. Von Fritsch was pensioned off and the power struggle between army and SS, Abwehr and SD, remained unresolved. The real winner was Hitler, who consolidated his power over the officer corps and removed a possible obstacle to his expansionist military plans. Von Fritsch never recovered from his ordeal. In 1939 he deliberately sought an honourable death on the battlefield, falling to a sniper's bullet at the siege of Warsaw. Heydrich greeted the news with a typically sneering remark about the old man's suicide.

On 1 September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, beginning the struggle for 'living-space' for which Heydrich had longed since his days as a young naval cadet. Forty-eight hours later, Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany. Hitler had originally intended to postpone a showdown with the western powers until a later date and tried to offer them an excuse for evading their obligations to their Polish ally. To this end, Heydrich was ordered to engineer a series of frontier incidents which would place the blame for the German invasion 'on other shoulders', an operation codenamed TANNENBERG. Heydrich's plan called for a series of fake Polish attacks across the German frontier on the eve of the Nazi invasion. The destruction of Poland could then be presented to the world as a legitimate response to unbearable provocation. As Heydrich emphasised, 'actual proof' of Polish attack was essential 'both for the foreign press and for German propaganda'. Bodies dressed in Polish uniforms must therefore be found at the site of the incidents and displayed to the press. These were to be provided by condemned prisoners from the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, a task entrusted to Gestapo Müller under the macabre codename, CANNED GOODS. By the middle of August 1939, the preparations for TANNENBERG were complete. In strict secrecy, a special SD squad was assembled at the police school in Bernau and issued with Polish uniforms, weapons and papers. It was assigned three targets in Silesia, personally selected by Heydrich – the German customs house at Hochlinden, the forestry school at Pitschen and the local radio station at Gleiwitz.

The radio station at Gleiwitz was considered the most important objective, since it was intended to provide immediate public evidence of Polish aggression. The transmitter was to be seized while on the air and the noise of shooting, followed by an impassioned tirade in Polish, relayed throughout Germany on the national network. Heydrich assigned this part of the operation to Alfred Naujocks, the SD thug who specialised in strongarm tactics. Naujocks spent several days in the Gleiwitz area with a small team of six men, reconnoitring the target



and awaiting the code words from Berlin which would launch the raid: 'Grandmama dead'. They came on the evening of 31 August as the German army prepared to invade Poland at dawn the following day. Naujocks and his men drove in two cars to a wood near the transmitter, where they changed into Polish uniforms. At 8 p.m., they broke down the doors of the radio station and burst into the foyer, firing pistols in the air and yelling in Polish. The staff were beaten up and handcuffed while a Polish-speaking agent prepared to read his prepared text into the microphone. At this stage, things began to go wrong, for Naujocks and his men could not find the switch which would relay the broadcast to the transmitter at Breslau and thus on to the national radio network. With time running out, they abandoned the effort, and the speech was hastily gabbled out on the local wavelength before the attackers fled. As Naujocks left the building, he stumbled over a corpse which had been dumped at the entrance. Unlike the bodies which were being simultaneously deposited at the scenes of the other attacks, this one did not come from a concentration camp. It was the corpse of a well-known nationalist from the Polish minority in the area who had been murdered on Heydrich's orders to lend the Gleiwitz attack added credibility.

Although Operation TANNENBERG failed to prevent an Anglo-French declaration of war, Heydrich had no regrets about the affair. Nor had he any qualms about the cold-blooded murder of concentration-camp prisoners. As far as Heydrich was concerned, the victims were expendable in the interests of the Nazi state. His war, which began with the killings involved in TANNENBERG, rapidly involved him in larger programmes of mass murder. The racial cleansing which he had supervised in Germany was extended to the occupied territories and became by 1941 a programme of deliberate genocide which swallowed up Jews, gypsies, Slavs and other 'undesirables', who were ruthlessly extirpated to clear the way for an Aryan empire. This grisly process began with the occupation of Poland. On 22 August 1939, Hitler informed Himmler that Poland was to be 'wiped off the map'. The ruling class was to be exterminated and the population reduced to slavery. This political task was unsuitable for the regular armed forces and the Führer looked to the SS to do what was required. Himmler delegated the task of murder to special units of Heydrich's security police, the notorious Einsatzgruppen, which rapidly imposed a reign of terror behind the front. As Heydrich coarsely remarked: 'We'll spare the little men, but the aristocrats, priests and Jews must be killed.' Within three weeks of the invasion he was able to boast that only three

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per cent of the Polish ruling class remained alive. The scale of these atrocities caused new friction with the army, which questioned the legality of Heydrich's murderous campaign. Military representatives at Führer headquarters refused to shake hands with SS officers and there were protests to Hitler. This atmosphere was exploited by Canaris, who hoped that pressure from the generals would curb the growing power of the SS. There was fresh talk of a military coup and an Abwehr agent was sent to the Vatican to explore the possibilities of a compromise peace with the allies. In the end, however, the generals backed away. The army was diverted by the triumphant campaign in the west which ended with the fall of France in June 1940, and Poland was left at the mercy of the SS and the Nazi party. Heydrich, who had picked up rumours of Canaris' activities, filed the information away as yet another count against the Abwehr.

The Polish massacres proved to be merely the preliminary to a vaster piece of macabre social engineering, the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' for which Heydrich became the executive agent in the summer of 1941. Despite the activities of the Einsatzgruppen in Poland, the approach favoured by the security police at first remained forced emigration. In the summer of 1940, after the fall of France, Eichmann began working on a plan to transform the island of Madagascar into a 'Jewish reserve' controlled and exploited by the SS, an idea which came to nothing when Britain failed to surrender and the continent remained blockaded. As emigration routes were cut by the extension of hostilities and increasing numbers of foreign Jews began to fall under the sway of the thousand-year Reich, a more radical approach evolved. This applied the cold bureaucratic technique perfected by Eichmann, not to emigration but to deportation and mass murder under the camouflage offered by total war. It is unclear when the policy of genocide received final approval but it certainly developed from Operation BARBAROSSA, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. This was envisaged by Hitler as a racial war for living-space, the final cataclysmic battle in the eternal conflict between German and Slav. In this struggle, the 'Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia' was to be eliminated. Hitler made it clear to his generals that the normal rules of war were to be suspended and that communist officials were to be shot out of hand, a decision communicated to army group commanders in the notorious 'commissar order'.

The 'special tasks' involved in this war of annihilation were assigned to the SS. Einsatzgruppen were once again formed from Heydrich's security police to follow behind the advancing armies, imposing order

in the rear areas and combing the POW camps for communist officials. Heydrich was anxious to avoid the military interference which had hampered police operations during the Polish campaign and was careful to work out in advance the exact relationship between his murder squads and the army. The agreement which he secured assigned to his units 'particular tasks of security policy' behind the front and authorised 'executive measures . . . against the civilian population', a form of words broad enough to allow his commandos to 'commit every crime known to God or man, so long as they were a mile or two from the firing line'. Nevertheless, Heydrich was careful not to define the full meaning of his mission. This was only revealed to the Einsatzgruppen commanders in an oral briefing just before BARBAROSSA. In these secret instructions, Heydrich ordered his death squads to go beyond enforcement of the commissar order and to murder every Jew in their operational areas: 'Judaism in the east' was 'the source of Bolshevism and must therefore be wiped out'. Heydrich's men were to 'sweep the steppes clean'. In the first weeks of the invasion, Einsatzgruppen reports camouflaged mass murder as anti-partisan activity, a sign of Heydrich's continued concern about possible military complaints. Only when it became clear that the army, fully committed to Hitler's version of total war in the east, would raise no objections was this ruse abandoned and the extermination of the Russian Jews as a people openly admitted.

The massacre of Soviet Jewry left untouched the Jewish population of Germany and occupied Europe. On 31 July 1941, while the Einsatzgruppen were pursuing their murderous campaign behind the Russian front, Heydrich was ordered by Göring to 'carry out all the necessary preparations with regard to organisational and financial matters for bringing about a complete solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence in Europe'. The full meaning of this directive was never spelt out but that autumn the SS began to construct extermination camps at Belzec and Chelmno in Poland, and in September the first experimental gassings were carried out at Auschwitz. Heydrich had no part in this aspect of the 'Final Solution'. His task was to co-ordinate the deportation of the European Jews eastwards to meet their fate, a role which would undoubtedly have earned him a death sentence at Nuremberg had he survived the war. Such a vast task required meticulous preparation. As a first step, Heydrich had to secure the co-operation of the various bureaucracies needed to implement the 'Final Solution', from the railways which would provide the deportation trains to the Foreign Office which would arrange for

the surrender of Jews from Slovakia. In November 1941, Heydrich met the relevant state and party officials in the suburb of Wannsee. The meeting was twice postponed, but finally took place on 9 January 1942, when Heydrich set out his thoughts on the 'Final Solution'. The Jews were to be 'combed through from the front in temporary transit ghettos where the able-bodied were kept for the Reich. A large natural wastage' and the rest were to be 'treated according to their own nature, originally unfit to work. A few minutes, had no doubt been recalled at the trial in Jerusalem, the bureaucratic language of mass murder. Nobody could deny the annihilation of 11 million Jews, concerned with the practical population of Europe to

Eichmann, who was in charge after the meeting. Heydrich's cigars for a cosy chat with the army and yet could find various agencies required of Wannsee, what had been to become formal, comprehensive such as the railways, the harmony towards a single had private reservations: was 'sheer madness to him'. In his account, however, contrary, Heydrich carried out which allowed for no exception from Berlin to Minsk to death had attempted to with his execution. The war had turned Semite into a mass murderer, an Aryan empire which was

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the surrender of Jews from satellite countries such as Hungary and Slovakia. In November 1941, he summoned representatives of the relevant state and party offices to a conference in the pleasant Berlin suburb of Wannsee. The guests were informed that drinks and lunch would be provided to see them through the rigours of the day. The meeting was twice postponed and did not finally occur until 20 January 1942, when Heydrich outlined to the assembled bureaucrats his thoughts on the 'Final Solution'. According to Heydrich, Europe was to be 'combed through from west to east for Jews', who would be held in temporary transit ghettos before being transported further east where the able-bodied would be formed into work gangs to build roads for the Reich. A large number would 'doubtless drop out through natural wastage' and the survivors, the fittest of their race, would have to be 'treated accordingly'. He said nothing of the fate of those originally unfit to work. Adolf Eichmann, his 'Jewish expert', who kept the minutes, had no doubts about what was being proposed. As he recalled at the trial in Jerusalem which sentenced him to death, behind the bureaucratic language, the participants were knowingly discussing mass murder. Nobody raised a moral objection to the proposed annihilation of 11 million people. The conference was wholly concerned with the practical details involved in transporting the Jewish population of Europe to its death.

Eichmann, who was in considerable awe of his chief, recalled that after the meeting Heydrich relaxed beside an open fire with brandy and cigars for a cosy chat with his staff. He had just colluded in mass murder and yet could find satisfaction in having co-ordinated the various agencies required to implement the 'Final Solution'. As a result of Wannsee, what had been tentative, fragmentary and spasmodic was to become formal, comprehensive and efficient. The technical services such as the railways, the bureaucracy and the diplomats would work in harmony towards a single goal.' According to Schellenberg, Heydrich had private reservations about the 'Final Solution', remarking that it was 'sheer madness to have created this Jewish question'. Schellenberg's account, however, is supported by no other evidence. On the contrary, Heydrich carried out his orders with a merciless efficiency which allowed for no exceptions. On one occasion he flew all the way from Berlin to Minsk to deliver a personal reprimand to an official who had attempted to withhold certain categories of German Jew from execution. The war had transformed Heydrich from a convinced anti-Semite into a mass murderer. He was intoxicated by Hitler's vision of an Aryan empire which would last for a thousand years and regarded

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the annihilation of the Jewish race as a necessary step towards this end. In this respect, he echoed the views of Hitler, who proclaimed to the Reichstag only ten days after the Wannsee meeting that the Jews were the implacable enemies of the German race. Either one or the other must go to the wall. According to Hitler, the war would not end with the 'uprooting of the Aryans' but with 'the complete annihilation of the Jews'. This was all the justification that Heydrich required. To those who complained about his activities, he replied that 'neither he nor the RSHA had prompted these liquidations but that it was Adolf Hitler's personal command'.

The services rendered by Heydrich in the occupied east confirmed his image as the ideal SS man, a role he had always coveted. His blond good looks already gave him a start on the bespectacled Himmler, who despite his uniform and imposing titles always appeared like a displaced headmaster. Moreover he displayed to the full the qualities of physical and moral hardness expected of the new Nazi man. As a former SS officer cadet later recalled: 'I cannot repeat all the qualities attributed to him but one was outstanding – his hardness. . . . It is significant that, almost without exception, his pictures showed him as the winner of the Reich route march.' Heydrich believed that the SS must display physical toughness to show its superiority to the old ruling classes and to offer an example to German youth. As in the navy, he threw himself into sports with an absolute determination to succeed. He was often pictured as the captain of the SS fencing team and persuaded Himmler that all senior SS officers should be compelled to practise with the sabre. Unwilling to be a mere desk warrior, he learned to fly and bought his own stunt plane, overcoming Himmler's protests that his life was too valuable to risk in this way. At the beginning of the Polish campaign, he joined the Luftwaffe as a reserve officer and flew as a turret gunner in a bomber squadron. In 1940 he flew fighters over Norway and France to the acute distress of Himmler, who was awed by the determination of his subordinate to put himself deliberately in harm's way. His flying career came to an end only when he was shot down near Bersina in the early weeks of BARBAROSSA and had to be rescued by German troops. This was too much for Himmler and he was grounded. He had reached the rank of major and earned himself the iron cross first and second class and the front-line flyer's badge in bronze and silver. Combat flying reflected Heydrich's obsession with competition. It became the ultimate sport in which he staked his life on his personal skills. It also displayed his continued determination to prove the superiority of the SS. He wanted to show his military critics

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that the SS was not a bunch of asphalt soldiers who lurked behind the front, but a warrior elite worthy of a leading role in the thousand-year Reich.

Heydrich's physical hardness was combined with emotional hardness, the quality most prized by the SS. As Himmler informed SS officers after the Polish campaign: 'We have had to be hard. We have had to shoot thousands of leading Poles to show how hard we can be. I must proclaim aloud that it is much easier to advance against the enemy in battle than to master an enemy population of inferior race, to shoot, to deport, to hunt down shrieking and weeping women.' Heydrich had already proved himself in this area as head of the security police and his wartime activities in the occupied east provided any confirmation that was needed. SS officers were meant to combine physical and moral hardness with a sense of German decency. As Himmler later argued: 'One principle must be absolute for the SS man: We must be honest, decent, loyal and comradely to members of our own blood and to no one else.' SS officers must be able to commit acts of extreme brutality for the Reich and yet in their private lives show an example of clean Aryan living to the German people. Heydrich fulfilled this role by posing as a good husband and father, devoted to the 'dear intimacy of the family circle'. In a letter to his wife on the eve of the Polish campaign, which she was to open in the event of his death, he wrote: 'I may have faults . . . but you are infinitely dear to me and I love my children equally. Please think of our life together with respect and love and, when time has done its healing work, give the children a father again - but he must be a real man, like the one I wanted to be.' Lina was urged to raise their sons in the SS creed to be 'kind and generous towards their own people and ruthless against our enemies at home and abroad'. At his funeral in 1942 his marriage was hailed as a glowing example of Nazi family life, a political statement as well as a personal commitment.

The private life of this ruthless paragon of Nazi virtue failed to live up to the public image. In reality, Heydrich was a profoundly divided personality. The sportsman, pilot and father of official propaganda was a familiar figure in the red-light district of Berlin. He would often compel his subordinates to accompany him on epic binges in the bars and brothels of the capital, occasions dreaded by his staff since he was dangerously unstable when drunk and displayed a strong sadistic streak. They came to fear the afternoon phone call from their chief, the leering voice and the suggestion that they join him for dinner and then 'go places'. Heydrich remained a compulsive womaniser but regarded