

Count Helledorf

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Wolf-Heinrich von Helledorf  
1896-1944

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# Wolf-Heinrich Graf von Helldorf

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Wolf-Heinrich Graf von Helldorf** (born 14 October 1896 in Merseburg, died 15 August 1944 in Berlin) was a German resistance fighter against the Nazi régime.

A landowner's son, von Helldorf served as a lieutenant from 1915 in the First World War, and from 1918 was a member of a number of Freikorps, among them the well-known *Freikorps Roßbach*. In 1920, he took part in the so-called Kapp Putsch, and thereafter had to flee to Italy and stay there for several months.

Between 1921 and 1928, von Helldorf tried to distance himself from politics, and worked in farming.

Nevertheless, from 1924 to 1928, and again later in 1932, he was a member of state parliament (*Mitglied des Landtages*), first for the National Socialist Freedom Party (NSFP) in Prussia, and from 1925 for the NSDAP. In 1932, von Helldorf was their factional chairman.

Already by 1931, he had joined the SA, and functioned as an SA leader in Berlin. The scope of his work got bigger in 1933 when he was also given responsibility for the SS's Berlin-Brandenburg leadership. At the same time, he was also elected to the Reichstag.

In March of the same year, he was named Police President of Potsdam, and from July 1935, he took on the same function in Berlin.

From 1938, von Helldorf was in communication with the military resistance. For his participation in the July 20 Plot to assassinate Hitler at the Wolf's Lair in East Prussia, he was condemned by Roland Freisler at the *Volksgerichtshof* and later put to death.

Von Helldorf used his office for personal gain. In the Blomberg-Fritsch Affair, he openly leaked to the Wehrmacht leadership exculpatory evidence being withheld by the Gestapo.

On 20 July 1944, he supported the resistance action in Berlin through the police. His motivations are the subject of controversy, and may likely be traced more to opportunism than to any inner conviction on von Helldorf's part.

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Wolf-Heinrich Helldorf was born in Germany in 1896. He fought in the German Army during the First World War and in 1919 became a member of the Freikorps.

Helldorf joined the Nazi Party in 1925 and later became a member of Prussian state assembly. In 1931 he became a Sturm Abteilung (SA) leader in Brandenburg.

In 1935 Helldorf was appointed the Berlin prefect of police. During the Second World War he had growing doubts about Adolf Hitler and became involved in the July Plot.

Wolf-Heinrich Helldorf was arrested by the Gestapo on 20th July, 1944. After being convicted of treason he was executed in Plotzensee prison on 15th August, 1944.



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Helldorf joined the Nazi Party in 1925 and later became a member of Prussian state assembly. In 1931 he became a *Sturm Abteilung* (SA) leader in Brandenburg.

In 1935, Helldorf was appointed the Berlin prefect of police. During the riots of *Kristallnacht*, Helldorf rages at his police officers for obeying orders to stand down and vows that if he had been in Berlin he would have issued orders to shoot the rioters.

During the Second World War, he had growing doubts about Adolf Hitler and became involved in the conspiracy to overthrow the fuehrer. Helldorf was in Berlin on July 20, 1944, to assist Stauffenberg's coup attempt. The same day, he was arrested by the Gestapo. After being convicted of treason, he was hanged in Plotensee prison on August 15, 1944.





Meanwhile Bormann began showing Hitler the lengthy interrogation reports compiled by Kaltenbrunner's staff. Kaltenbrunner clearly did not intend to spare the Führer's feelings. "I could not bear to watch this man running amok," one conspirator (General Stieff) had blurted out ; "smashing his own great works by his obstinacy : we are defending Kirkenes and Crete, but we shall be losing K-nigsberg and Cracow in the process !" A physical revulsion took hold of Hitler as he realized the true scope of the plot ; over half the traitors were army officers, but there were also trade-union officials, lawyers, civil servants, academics, and clergy. Even Count Wolf Heinrich von Helldorf, the pre-1933 brownshirt rowdy and Jew-baiter whom Hitler had made police president of Berlin, now confessed to being one of Stauffenberg's minions—not because he opposed National Socialism, but because he despised its plebeian aura and its creation of a nonaristocratic elite. None of the prisoners had much clue as to what system they were proposing in Hitler's place. The army generals, he reasoned, had failed to appreciate his political imperatives, and the politicians had criticized his generalship. They questioned his orders for the rigid defense of the Demyansk pocket, the Donets bend, the Dnieper line, the Nikopol bridgehead, the Crimea, the Narva line, the Vitebsk salient, and the Cherkassy pocket ; one after another these positions had been lost until by July 1944 the core of the German army was destroyed. They blamed him for these military reverses ; but there was a class element too, for he was the son of an Austrian customs official to whom the officer corps felt bound by neither blood nor brotherhood.

*The New International, January 1935**Hildenf*

Ludwig Lore

## A Nazi Confesses

From *New International*, Vol. 2 No. 1, January 1935, pp. 19-20.  
 Transcribed & marked up by Einde O'Callaghan for ETOL.

THE REICHSTAG fire is more than an event in the history of the Third Reich. It is the symbol of Hitler's power over public opinion, the touchstone of the trust and confidence of the German masses in the fundamental integrity of their rulers.

That is the reason the Reichstag fire question continues to play such an important part in the anti-Fascist movement. Conclusive proof of the complicity and guilt of Hitler, Göring, Göbbels and the rest, if it could be brought home to the German people, would undermine the foundation of hopes and fears on which National Socialism rests.

When the smoke cleared after the June 30 massacre, anti-Hitlerites made the startling discovery, that almost without exception, those persons who had been variously implicated in the Reichstag fire were among the victims. The suspicion that Hitler had used this favorable opportunity to rid himself of dangerous witnesses against his criminal regime was strengthened a few weeks later by the depositions made by the SA man Kruse who, having made his escape to Switzerland, claimed to be the last surviving accomplice in the Reichstag fire tragedy. The depositions of this man, SA Commander-in-Chief Röhm's personal staff, were borne out some time later when Paris reported the existence of a document written by Karl Ernst, SA Commander for the district Berlin-Brandenburg, one of the most brutal and conscienceless scoundrels in the Nazi movement. Persons whose integrity cannot be doubted – among them Senator Dr. Georg Branting of Stockholm whose **White Book on the June 30 Massacre** has just been published – investigated the circumstances surrounding the origin of this letter sent by Ernst to a friend outside of Germany on the 3rd of June, and were completely satisfied as to its authenticity. On December 3, the Paris **Journal** published the Ernst letter in full. Göring called a meeting of foreign correspondents and diplomats in Berlin in a palpable effort to whitewash himself and the Nazi regime. The sophistry of his defense was hardly convincing. It proceeded from the axiomatic assumption that communists prepared the Reichstag fire. To believe that Göring had had his hand in this dastardly crime would be to believe that he had worked in collusion with these deadly enemies of the new Germany. What could be more ridiculous! Calling the Reich court in Leipzig as witness to his innocence, Mr. Göring chose to ignore the fact that this same court had exonerated and freed the communists as well. Altogether his attempt to discredit the Ernst letters was a singularly unhappy one. The Reich government ordered the confiscation of the **Journal**. No other serious attempt has been made by the Nazi leadership to disprove the statements it contains.

"I, the undersigned Karl Ernst," the statement reads, "SA group leader of Berlin-Brandenburg, Prussian state councillor, born on September 1, 1904 in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, do hereby declare that the following is a true report of the circumstances attending the Reichstag fire in which I took part. I am acting on the advice of my friends for there is a rumor that Göbbels and Göring intend to do me an evil turn. In the event of



my arrest, Göbbels and Göring will be informed of the existence of this document outside of Germany. This document is to be published only if I or one of the comrades whose names are appended thereto [Fiedler and Mohrenschild] authorizes publication or if I should die as a result of violence.

"I hereby depose that I set fire to the Reichstag building and was therein aided by the above named assistant SA leaders. We were convinced at the time that we were acting in the interests of our Führer to enable him to fight Marxism, the worst enemy of the German people ... I have no cause to regret my deed. I would do it again. What I do regret is the fact that it has paved the way for the rise of creatures like Göbbels and Göring who betrayed the SA, who are betraying the Führer again and again and are trying to trap him with their lies and calumnies into a net of intrigue against his SA leaders.

"Several hours after we came to power, I was ordered by Count Helldorf to report to Göring. Together with Helldorf I went to him. On the way, Helldorf explained to me that the Führer must be provided with convincing grounds for the immediate suppression of the communist movement. Göbbels was present at the interview and it was he who revealed the plan. During an election meeting to be held in Breslau there would be staged an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Führer as he left his plane. This was to be the signal for a general anti-Communist movement. Heines had been called to Berlin, we learned, to arrange the necessary details.

"Two days later we met in Göring's residence. Göring objected to the idea of a pretended assassination. It might inspire others to imitation. Göbbels, he told us, was vain and would insist on his plan. Would we do what we could to dissuade him? On the following day I received a telephone message asking me to come to Göbbels. When I arrived there the others had already decided to drop Göbbels' plan. Göring was of the opinion that something else would have to be tried.

"How about firing the palace? Göbbels replied with a grin: Better still set fire to the Reichstag. Göring agreed at once. Helldorf and I objected to the plan as too difficult to execute but Göbbels convinced us that it could be done. After some discussion it was agreed that Heines, Helldorf and I should arrange for the fire a week before the election. Göring promised to supply us with an especially inflammable chemical. It was decided that we meet in the party's office in the Reichstag on February 25. As soon as the building was empty we could set to work. I was entrusted with the preparations.

"I saw Göring again on the following day. He had thought the matter over and had decided that it would be a mistake to let well known SA leaders take a hand in the fire. If they should be discovered everything would be lost. We called Göbbels by telephone to meet us and told him of our scruples which he did not share. But the plan was dropped at the last moment because the communists whose room in the Reichstag was just opposite our own, met that night until ten o'clock."

Karl Ernst's confession continues with a description of what followed – how Göring proposed that they make use of the underground passage which leads from his palace to the Reichstag building; how he together with Helldorf investigated the possibilities of the plan; how it was finally decided to postpone the plan for a few days more.

"Two days before the date set we concealed the incendiary material which Göring had provided in a little-used passage. There were several cans of a self-igniting phosphorous preparation and several quarts of petroleum. I hesitated for a long time in my choice of the persons to be entrusted with the work and finally decided that I would have to take a hand myself, together with a few absolutely reliable comrades. After some urging Göbbels and Göring agreed with my plan. Later it came to me that they accepted my offer as a means of keeping me more securely in hand."

Ernst chose his friends Fiedler and Mohrenschild and pledged them to absolute silence. A few days before the date set Count Helldorf, Ernst continues his story, called his attention to a young Dutchman called Van der Lubbe who, he had learned, was known as a slightly demented firebug. Van der Lubbe was persuaded by a certain Sander to enter the Reichstag



building from the outside and set fire to it on his own account. The real work, however, was to be done by the SA men.

"I met my friends at eight o'clock," the story continues, "at the corner of Neue Wilhelmstrasse and Doretheenstrasse. We were in civilian clothes. A few moments later we entered the palace unnoticed. We had put on rubbers to deaden the sound of our footsteps. We reached the underground passage unobserved. At 8:45 we were in the *Sitzungssaal*. One of my friends went back to the passage to get the rest of the material while we set to work under the life-size portrait of Emperor Wilhelm in the corridor. Here and in several places in the *Sitzungssaal* we arranged small heaps of the incendiary material. The phosphorous liquid we poured over the chairs and tables. Curtains and carpets were soaked with kerosene. A few minutes before nine we were back in the *Sitzungssaal*. At 9:08 the work was done and we hurried out of the building. Haste was important for the phosphorous preparation would ignite of its own accord within half an hour. At 9:16 we climbed the outside wall."

In closing, Ernst explains that the reports which were published in the world press were false. Only three men were involved in the actual incendiary work. Besides Göring, Göbbels, Röhm, Heines, Killinger and later Hanfstangel and Sander, no one knew of the plan. The Führer himself was left in ignorance until it was all over.

Ernst closes with the words:

"As to that I cannot say. I have known and sworn by the Führer for eleven years. I will remain faithful to him until I die. What I did, every other SA leader would have done for the Führer but it is inconceivable that the SA should be betrayed by the very men who raised it to its present power. I am convinced that the Führer will defeat the dark machinations of those who are conspiring against it. I am writing this for my own protection against the plans of Göbbels and Göring. This document will be destroyed when these traitors have received the reward they deserve."

Two days after he wrote this letter, Commander Ernst wrote another, less formal but much more characteristic of the man, to his friend Edmund Heines, district leader of the SA in Breslau, a notorious anti-Semite, whose name has become a synonym for cruelty and terrorism throughout the German speaking world. This document is taken from Dr. Branting's **White Book**. The letter was written after Rohm had gone to Hitler to warn him of the danger of ignoring the needs of the mass of his followers. Both sides were ready to strike a decisive blow. The letter follows:

"June 5, 1934

"Dear E.,

"The chief has been to see HIM at last. Long conference. The chief tells me it lasted till late in the morning. HE, as usual on such occasions, cried like a baby and earnestly besought the chief to believe that he would a hundred times rather see him at the head of the army than some old codger from the Neudeck Society for the Aged. But Röhm must see, he argued, that this was impossible. The difficulties, international complications, the meeting in Venice and more of that sort. You know his line. You will see the Chief himself shortly and he'll tell you the rest. The end of the conference was a mutual promise to do nothing for the present, to wait for the old man to kick the bucket, they would see.

"That means we'll have to take the matter into our own hands. It's clear as sh - that if we wait for that perfidious Egyptian [Hitler's personal representative, Hess, who was born in Egypt] to unite Gimpty [Göbbels the lame one] and the clotheshorse [Göring] against us, we go to the dogs. We must act and beat these fellows to it. Hermann means business. He can't stand the lame one's guts but against us he joins hand with the Black One [Reichsleader of the Black SS troops, Himmler]!

"We'll light a fire under his behind. I want to settle accounts with Gimpty in person. Too bad that R. stopped me that time. I wanted to bash his head in, you remember, when he made that dirty crack about my marriage.

"I mentioned your letter to the chief. You know I haven't much use for talk and writing. He agrees with you that we must be ready for anything. Gimpty is capable of anything. The chief has his material in safety. After talking it over with him I signed the statement about the February affair that M. wrote under his direction. It is in safe hands. If anything happens to me, the thing will go off. To be doubly sure I am sending you a signed copy. Take good care of it. You should find a safe place for your things. Read it over. It's our best bet if everything else fails. Maybe it will help. Maybe not. When it comes to writing, Gimpty has us beat. Our strength lies in another direction and that's the way we'll have to go.

"But this time you'll have to go through with it. I have a plan that's got anything Gimpty can do beat to a standstill. But you must hold your horses till the thing goes off. It's Gimpty we have to get – that's my idea. The chief is after Hermann's skin. We can get them both. But first we'll have to separate them from HIM. If he goes with us the rest is easy. Fi. will tell you more about my plan. You can trust him blindly. Too bad I can't be with you when you drink on it. I am with the chief all the way but Gimpty belongs to me after he's had his licking. I haven't forgotten the way that dog got me into trouble and then made fun of me for it.

"The chief thinks we should lay low till after the party convention. He's been told the old man is likely to live another ten years. I don't believe it. But the others agree with him so I'll have to go along. But after the convention they'll have to go ahead. I'm taking my vacation next month. I've promised to go away with her. Send me a copy of your material through Fi. Don't put that off. Be careful with Sch. There is all kinds of talk. Don't be seen with him too often. The chief says he spoke to you about that.

"Get things out of the way. Our friend in the Albrechtstrasse [secret police] tells me that the Black One plans to look into our affairs one of these days. Let him come to me. I'll have a nice surprise for him.

"My best, old man.  
"Your, Karlos."

Besides Schlabrendorff and his friends, other people joined Goerdeler's group. The most important was Ulrich Von Hassel, the former German ambassador to Italy. Hassel detested national socialism, and was fired by the Nazis for his views. Hassel, a civilized right winger, found himself in the inner circle of the group. There were others: Hans Bernd Gisevius, a young anti-Nazi that worked as a gestapo clerk, Wolf Heinrich count von Helldorf- the chief of police in Berlin, Erich and Theodor Kordt- clerks in the foreign ministry, Professor Popitz- the finance minister of Prussia, Dr. Schacht- the president of the ReichBank, Herbert count von Bismark- a bureaucrat in Prussia, Fritz count von der Schulenburg- a policeman, the economist and the diplomat Adam Von Trott, pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and other men of the clergy and of the nobility. Four socialist leaders joined the growing movement: Julius Leber, a former S.P.D parliament member, Adolf Reichwein- a socialist philosopher and adventurer, Wilhelm Lauschner, and Jacob Kaiser- the leader of the Christian trade union.



# The Swastika and the Nazis

## 13. The Hanussen Connection

The Weimar Republic--that ill-fated period of German democracy that occurred between the departure of the Kaiser and the arrival of Hitler--produced a large and colorful collection of profets. Prominent among them was Erik Jan Hanussen, the first of a chain of politically oriented oracles that appeared in Germany at the time.

Hanussen claimed to be a Danish baron, but his real name was Herman Steinschneider, the son of a petit bourgeois family from Prossnitz, Bohemia. In the depression-ridden 1930s, Hanussen reached a peak of influence that no man of his calling has achieved in modern times.

Though he began as an above-average vaudeville entertainment, he soon gained national fame as a "psychic detective" by unmasking an embezzler for one of Berlin's largest banking corporations. There is suspicion that the way he found the information had nothing to do with psychic abilities, but the culprit broke down and confessed when Hanussen accused him to his face.



A 1932 photo shows Hanussen conducting an occult session in his villa. His illuminated cocktail bar was engraved with astrological symbols.

Late in 1930, Hanussen switched completely to prophecy. He became the lodestar for thousands of Germans. His following included an array of Nazi officials. Among them was Karl Ernst, the commander of the Berlin Storm Troopers, and Edmund Heines, an S. A. Gruppenführer. There was also Count von Helldorf, one of the leaders of the local Brownshirts with Ernst. These Nazis, and dozens of others like them, mingled with Hanussen's elite patrons as well as with the film and theater starlets who provided additional entertainment.

There is evidence that Hanussen obtained the data for most of his prophetic coups from his guests. For this he kept his ears open and a few palms greased to get advance tips of what was afoot in Germany. Gradually, his prophecies took a distinct Nazi coloring, subtly pushing the cause of the National Socialists. It is known that, at the peak of his Nazi influence, he recommended the adoption of the swastika as an "Indian luck symbol," and indicated that its wearers would be blessed by good fortune. When forecasting election results, he invariably discovered that the planetary conjunction favored Hitler, thereby persuading the masses to "vote with the stars."

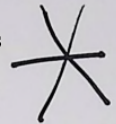
Hanussen was originally introduced to Hitler by Heinrich Hoffman, the Führer's private photographer, who was also to become the sponsor of Eva Braun. Some authors claim that

Hanussen gave Hitler lessons in public speaking, and that Hanussen's coaching was responsible for Hitler's demonic oratory style. It is also said that Hanussen persuaded Hitler of adopting the swastika as the Nazi symbol.

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The "Hitler Collection" was purloined by Private First Class Eric Hamm of the U.S. Army's war crimes branch from Hitler's residence in Munich, and eventually sold by a Chicago auction house. It reflects Hitler's career well-archive photographs of his sketches and paintings, ambassadors' dispatches, reports on the shooting of "professional criminals" while "resisting arrest," a 1925 hotel registration filled out by Hitler (who entered himself as "stateless"), documents on the Spanish civil war, Rohm's preparations for the 1923 beer-hall putsch, an instruction by Martin Bormann that Hitler had agreed to cover bills run up by the peripatetic Princess Hohenlohe but would pay no more, extensive documentation on the Party's relations with the Church; on December 20, 1940, Pierre Laval wrote to Hitler "desiring from the bottom of my heart that my country shall not suffer," and assuring him: "The policy of collaboration with Germany is supported by the vast majority of the French." Hjalmar Schacht several times protested to Hitler about the economic damage caused by anti-Jewish strictures; on August 24, 1935, he wrote that Robert Ley's instruction that Woolworth & Co. was not to buy from Jewish suppliers would result in the company's head office canceling ten million marks of orders from Germany annually "It is not clear to me, and never has been, how I am supposed to bring in foreign currency in the face of such policies." On March 30, 1936, Schacht asked Hitler to receive a certain American silk manufacturer who had been requested by President Roosevelt to "convey personal greetings to the Führer." On June 20, 1938, Count Helldorf, police chief of Berlin, sent to Hitler a report on organized anti-Jewish razzias in Berlin. Later that year the police sent to Hitler a file on the Jewish assassin Herschel Grynszpan, confirming that his parents had been dumped back over the Polish border at Neu Bentschen on October 29-a few days before he gunned down a German diplomat in Paris-pursuant to the Reich's drive against Polish Jews who had settled in Germany. In February 1939 Hitler endorsed the refusal of his embassy in Washington to pay Danegeld to Kurt Ludecke, a former Nazi who had invited the Party publishing house or some other Reich agency to buy up all rights in his scurrilous memoirs to prevent their publication. The same file shows Hitler acting to stop the Nazi heavyweight Max Schmeling staging a return fight against the Negro Joe Louis. ("As you know," Julius Schaub wrote to the sports minister on March 2, 1939, "the Führer was against the fight in the first place.")



Most enigmatic of these documents is one evidently originated by the Gestapo after 1940, typed on the special "Führer typewriter," reporting ugly rumors about Hitler's ancestry-"that the Führer was an illegitimate child, adoptive son of Alois, that the Fuhrer's mother's name was Schicklgruber(3) before the adoption and that the Schicklgruber line has produced a string of idiots." Among the latter was a tax official, Josef Veit, deceased in 1904 in Klagenfurt, Austria. One of his sons had committed suicide, a daughter had died in an asylum, a surviving daughter was feeble-minded. The Gestapo established that the family of Konrad Pracher of Graz has a dossier of photographs and certificates on all this. Himmler had them seized "to prevent their misuse."

The Ribbentrop files reflect his tortuous relations as "ambassador extraordinary" with Hitler and his rivals. He had established his influence by making good contacts with Englishmen of influence-among them not only industrialists like E.W.D. Tennant and newspaper barons like Lord Rothermere, Lord Astor, and Lord Camrose, but also the Cabinet ministers of the day, including Lord Hailsham, Lord Lloyd, Lord Londonderry, and young Anthony Eden, in whom Ribbentrop rightly saw the rising star of the Conservative Party. The files contain records of Ribbentrop's meetings with Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald in 1933 and 1934-which the latter would probably wish had gone unrecorded, as events turned out. They also reflect the tenuous links established between Sir Oswald Mosley and his



lieutenants with the Nazi party leadership in Berlin. Typical of the many handwritten letters from Ribbentrop to Hitler was one dated January 6, 1935, thanking him for the show of confidence betokened by his new appointment to Reichsleiter-"Not only does this clearly define my status in the Party, removing any doubts as to your views on me and my activities, but the appointment also gives me a different position vis-à-vis the foreign ministry both externally and internally." He signed it "your trusty Ribbentrop."

Nothing created such agony when this biography was first published as my analysis of Hitler's role in the Jewish tragedy. Pure vitriol spilled from the pens of my critics, but I see no reason to revise my central hypothesis, which is based on the records of the day: that Hitler grasped quite early on that anti-Semitism would be a powerful vote-catching force in Germany; that he had no compunction against riding that evil steed right up to the portals of the Chancellery in 1933; but that once inside and in power, he dismounted and paid only lip service to that part of his Party creed. The Nazi gangsters under him continued to ride to hounds, however, even when Hitler dictated differently, e.g., in November 1938. As for the concentration camps he comfortably left that dark side of the Nazi rule to Himmler. He never visited one; those senior officials and foreigners who did obtain privileged access, like Ernst Udet or General Erhard Milch or British Members of Parliament in 1933 and 1934, were favorably impressed (but those were early days). Himmler is known to have visited Auschwitz in 1941 and 1942. Hitler never did.

The scale of Germany's Jewish problem is revealed by an unpublished manuscript by Hitler's predecessor as Chancellor, Dr. Heinrich Brüning. Writing in American exile in 1943 he stated that after the inflation there was only one major German bank not controlled by Jews, some of them "utterly corrupt." In 1931 he had brought the banks under government supervision, and had had to keep the government's findings of dishonesty in the banks secret "for fear of provoking anti-Semitic riots." Brüning blamed foreign correspondents for exaggerating the "occasional ill-treatment of Jews" at the beginning of the Nazi regime: "In the spring of 1933 foreign correspondents reported that the River Spree [in Berlin] was covered with the corpses of murdered Jews. At that time hardly any Jews except for leaders of the Communist party ... had been attacked ... If," he pointedly added, "the Jews had been treated so badly from the beginning of the regime, it could not be explained that so very few of them left the country before 1938." In 1948 Brüning would write to the editors of *Life* forbidding them to publish an August 1937 letter he had written to Winston Churchill revealing that "from October 1928 the two largest regular contributors to the Nazi party were the general managers of two of the largest Berlin banks, both of Jewish faith, and one of them the leader of Zionism in Germany." (4)

I had approached the Nazi maltreatment of the Jews from the traditional viewpoint prevailing in the 1960's. Supposing Hitler was a capable statesman and a gifted commander, the argument ran, how does one explain his "murder of six million Jews." If this biography were simply a history of the rise and fall of Hitler's Reich it would be legitimate to conclude "Hitler killed the Jews." He after all had created the atmosphere of hatred with his speeches in the 1930's; he and Himmler had created the SS; his speeches, though never explicit, left the clear impression that "liquidate" was what he meant. For a full-length war biography of Hitler, I felt that a more analytical approach to the key questions of initiative, complicity, and execution would be necessary. Remarkably, I found that Hitler's own role in the "Final Solution"-whatever that was-has never been examined. German historians, the epitome of painstaking essaying on every other subject, had developed monumental blind spots when Hitler himself cropped up: bald statements were made, and blame was laid, without the

shadow of historical evidence in support. British and American historians followed suit. Other writers quoted them. For thirty years our knowledge of Hitler's part in the atrocity had rested on inter-historian incest.

Many people, particularly in Germany and Austria, had an interest in propagating the accepted version that the order of one madman originated the entire tragedy. Precisely when this order was given was, admittedly, left vague. Every document actually linking Hitler with the treatment of the Jews invariably takes the form of an embargo, from the 1923 beer-hall putsch (when he disciplined a Nazi squad for having looted a Jewish delicatessen) right through to 1943 and 1944. If he was an incorrigible anti-Semite, what are we to make of the urgent edict issued "to all Gau directorates for immediate action" by his deputy, Rudolf Hess, during the infamous Night of Broken Glass in November 1938, ordering an immediate stop to such outrage "on orders from the very highest level"? Every other historian has shut his eyes and hoped that this horrid, inconvenient document would somehow go away. But it has been joined by others, like the extraordinary note dictated by Staatssekretar Schlegelberger in the Reich Ministry of Justice in the spring of 1942: "Reich Minister Lammers," this states, referring to Hitler's top civil servant, "informed me that the Führer has repeatedly pronounced that he wants the solution of the Jewish Question put off until after the war is over." Whatever way one looks at this document it is incompatible with the notion that Hitler had ordered an urgent liquidation program. (The document's original is in Justice ministry file R22/52 in the archives at Koblenz.) And Hermann Göring himself is on record as stressing at a Berlin conference on July 6, 1942, how much the Führer and he deprecated the doctrinaire harassment of Jewish scientists for example:

I have discussed this with the Führer himself now; we have been able to use one Jew two years longer in Vienna, and another in photographic research, because they have certain things that we need and that can be of the utmost benefit to us at the present. It would be utter madness for us to say now: "He'll have to go. He was a magnificent researcher, a fantastic brain, but his wife is Jewish, and he can't be allowed to stay at the University," etc. The Führer has made similar exceptions in the arts all the way down to operetta level; he is all the more likely to make exceptions where really great projects or researchers are concerned.(5)

On several occasions in 1942 and 1943 Hitler made-in private-statements which are incompatible with the notion that he knew that a liquidation program had begun. We shall see how in October 1943, even as Himmler was disclosing to privileged audiences of SS generals and Gauleiters that Europe's Jews has been systematically murdered, Hitler was still forbidding liquidations-e.g., of the Italian Jews in Rome-and ordering their internment instead. (This order his SS also disobeyed.) In July 1944, overriding Himmler's objections, he ordered that Jews be bartered for foreign currency or supplies; there is some evidence that like contemporary terrorists he saw these captives as a potential asset, a means whereby he could blackmail his enemies. Wholly in keeping with his character, when Hitler was confronted with the facts he took no action to rebuke the guilty; he would not dismiss Himmler as Reichsführer SS until the last day of his life. It is plausible to impute to him that not uncommon characteristic of heads of state who are overreliant on powerful advisers: a conscious desire "not to know." But the proof of this is beyond the powers of a historian.

For the want of hard evidence-in 1977 I offered, around the world, a thousand pounds to any person who could produce even one wartime document showing explicitly that Hitler



knew, for example, of Auschwitz-my critics resorted to arguments ranging from the subtle to the sledgehammer (in one instance, literally). They postulated the existence of Führer orders without the slightest written evidence of their existence. John Toland, Pulitzer prize-winning author of a Hitler biography published in the United States, appealed emotionally in *Der Spiegel* for historians to refute my hypothesis, and they tried by fair means and foul. Perplexed by Himmler's handwritten note about a call to Heydrich after visiting Hitler's bunker on November 30, 1941-"Arrest [oft Dr. Jakelius. Alleged son Molotov. Consignment [transfer] of Jews from Berlin. No liquidation."-these wizards of modern history scoffed that probably Molotov's son was believed to be aboard a trainload of Jews from Berlin concealed as "Dr. Jakelius" and was on no account to be liquidated. In fact Molotov had no son; Dr. Jakelius was a Viennese neurologist involved in the Euthanasia program; (6) and the consignment of Jews from Berlin had that morning arrived at Riga and had already been liquidated by the local SS commander by the time that Himmler scribbled down Hitler's injunctions.(7)

So far the German historians have been unable to help Mr. Toland, apart from suggesting that "of course" the whole project was so secret that only oral orders were issued. But why should Hitler have become so squeamish in this instance, while in contrast he had shown no compunction about signing a blanket order for the liquidation of tens of thousands of fellow Germans (the Euthanasia program); his insistence on the execution of hostages on a one-hundred-to-one basis, his orders for the liquidation of enemy prisoners (the Commando Order), of Allied airmen (the Lynch Order), and Russian functionaries (the Commissar Order) are documented all the way from the Führer's headquarters right down the line to the executioners.

Most of my critics relied on weak and unprofessional evidence. For example, they offered alternative and often specious translations of words in Hitler's speeches (apparently the Final Solution was too secret for him to sign an order, but simultaneously not so secret that he could not brag about it in public speeches!); and quotations from isolated documents that have however long been discarded by serious historians as worthless or fakes, like the Gerstein Report(8) or the "Bunker conversations" mentioned earlier. Of explicit, written, wartime evidence, the kind of evidence that could hang a man, they have produced not one line. Thus, in his otherwise fastidious analysis of *Hitler and the Final Solution* (London, 1983) Professor Gerald Fleming relied on war crimes trial testimonies, which are anything but safe; reviewing that book, Professor Gordon Craig concluded that even Fleming had failed to refute my hypothesis. Professor Martin Broszat, director of the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich, crudely assailed my biography in a 37-page review in the institute's journal, then refused space for a reply. Unfamiliar with my sources, and unaware that I had in several cases used original files which he and other historians had read only in English translation, he accused me of distorting and even inventing quotations.(9) Amidst such libels and calumnies Broszat was, however, forced to concede: "David Irving has perceived one thing correctly when he writes that in his view the killing of the Jews was partly a *Verlegenheitslösung*, 'the way out of an awkward dilemma.'"

Broszat's corollary, that there was no central Hitler Order for what happened, caused an uproar among the world's historians, a *Historikerstreit* which is not politically limited to Left versus Right. My own conclusion went one logical stage further: that in wartime, dictatorships are fundamentally weak-the dictator himself, however alert, is unable to oversee all the functions of his executives acting within the confines of his far-flung empire; and in this particular case, I concluded, the burden of guilt for the bloody and mindless

massacres of the Jews rests on a large number of Germans (and non-Germans), many of them alive today, and not just on one "mad dictator," whose order had to be obeyed without question.

I also found it necessary to set very different historical accents on the doctrinaire foreign policies which Hitler enforced—from his apparent unwillingness to humiliate Britain when she lay prostrate in 1940, to his damaging and emotional hatred of the Serbs, his illogical and over-loyal admiration of Benito Mussolini, and his irrational mixtures of emotions toward Josef Stalin.

For a modern English historian there was a certain morbid fascination for me in inquiring how far Adolf Hitler really was bent on the destruction of Britain and her Empire—a major *raison d'être* for our ruinous fight, which in 1940 imperceptibly replaced the more implausible reason proffered in August 1939, the rescue of Poland from outside oppression. Since in the chapters that follow evidence extracted again and again from the most intimate sources—like Hitler's private conversations with his women secretaries in June 1940—indicated that he originally had neither the intention nor the desire to harm Britain or destroy the Empire, surely British readers at least must ask themselves: what, then, were we really fighting for? Given that the British people bankrupted themselves (by December 1940) and lost their Empire in defeating Hitler, was the Führer right after all when he noted that Britain's attitude was essentially one of "Après moi le déluge—if only we can get rid of the hated National Socialist Germany"?

Unburdened by ideological idealism, the Duke of Windsor suspected in July 1940 that the war was continuing solely in order to allow certain British statesmen (he meant Mr. Churchill and his friends) to save face, even if it meant dragging their country and Empire into financial ruin. Others pragmatically argued that there could be no compromise with Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. But did Britain's leaders in fact believe this? Dr. Bernd Martin of Freiburg University has revealed the extent to which secret negotiations on peace continued between Britain and Germany in October 1939 and long after—negotiations on which, curiously, Mr. Churchill's files have officially been sealed until the twenty-first century, and the Cabinet records blanked out. Similar negotiations were carried on in June 1940, when even Mr. Churchill showed himself momentarily willing in Cabinet meetings to deal with Hitler if the price was right.

Of course, in assessing the real value of such negotiations and of Hitler's publicly stated intentions it is salutary to know that on June 2, 1941, he admitted to Walther Hewel: "For myself personally I would never tell a lie; but there is no falsehood I would not perpetrate for Germany's sake!" Nevertheless one wonders how much suffering might have been spared if both sides had pursued the negotiations—might all that happened after 1940, the saturation bombing, the population movements, the epidemics, even the Holocaust itself, have been avoided? Great are the questions, yet modern historiography has chosen to ignore the possibility, calling it heresy.

The facts revealed here concerning Hitler's recorded actions, motivations, and opinions should provide a basis for fresh debate. Americans will find much that is new about the months leading up to Pearl Harbor. The French will find additional evidence that Hitler's treatment of their defeated nation was more influenced by memories of France's treatment of Germany after World War I than by his respect for Mussolini's desires. Russians can try to visualize the prospect that could conceivably have unfolded if Stalin had accepted Hitler's



offer in November 1940 of inclusion in the Axis Pact; or if, having achieved his "second Brest-Litovsk" peace treaty (as momentarily proposed on June 28, 1941) Stalin would have accepted Hitler's condition that he rebuild Soviet military power only beyond the Urals; or if Hitler had taken seriously Stalin's alleged peace offer of September 1944.

What is the result of these twenty years' toiling in the archives? Hitler will remain an enigma, however hard we burrow. Even his intimates realized that they hardly knew him. I have already quoted Ribbentrop's puzzlement; but General Alfred Jodl, his closest strategic adviser, also wrote in his Nuremberg cell on March 10, 1946:

... But then I ask myself, did you ever really know this man at whose side you fed such a thorny and ascetic existence? Did he perhaps just trifle with your idealism too, abusing it for dark purposes which he kept hidden deep within himself? Dare you claim to know a man, if he has not opened up the deepest recesses of his heart to you—in sorrow as well as in ecstasy? To this very day I do not know what he thought or knew or really wanted. I only knew my own thoughts and suspicions. And if, now that the shrouds fall away from a sculpture we fondly hoped would be a work of art, only to reveal nothing but a degenerate gargoyle—then let future historians argue among themselves whether it was like that from the start, or changed with circumstances.

I keep making the same mistake: I blame his humble origins. But then I remember how many peasants' sons have been blessed by History with the name, The Great.

"Hitler the Great"? No, contemporary History is unlikely to swallow such an epithet. From the first day that he "seized power," January 30, 1933, Hitler knew that only sudden death awaited him if he failed to restore pride and empire to post Versailles Germany. His close friend and adjutant Julius Schaub recorded Hitler's jubilant boast to his staff on that evening, as the last celebrating guests left the Berlin Chancellery building: "No power on earth will get me out of this building alive!"

History saw this prophecy fulfilled, as the handful of remaining Nazi faithfuls trooped uneasily into his underground study on April 30, 1945, surveyed his still-warm remains—slouched on a couch, with blood trickling from the sagging lower jaw, and a gunshot wound in the right temple—and sniffed the bitter-almonds smell hanging in the air. Wrapped in a gray army blanket, he was carried up to the shell-blasted Chancellery garden. Gasoline was slopped over him in a reeking crater and ignited while his staff hurriedly saluted and backed down into the shelter. Thus ended the six years of Hitler's War. We shall now see how they began.

*David Irving*  
*London, January 1976*  
*and January 1989*

## Notes

1. CSDIC (UK) report SRGG.1133, March 9, 1945, in Public Records Office, London, file WO.20814169.
2. Matthias Schmidt, *Albert Speer: The End of a Myth* (New York, 1984).

3. In fact Hitler's father was the illegitimate son of Maria Anna Schicklgruber. Nazi newspapers were repeatedly, e.g., on December 16, 1939, forbidden to speculate on his ancestry. Werner Maser states in *Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP* (Bonn, 1965) that on August 4, 1942, Heinrich Himmler had instructed the Gestapo to investigate the Führer's parentage; their bland findings were graded merely geheim (secret). The document quoted above is, however, stamped with the highest classification, Geheime Reichssache (top secret).
4. Bruning's 1943 manuscript is in the Dorothy Thompson collection of the George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University, New York. His letter to Daniel Longwell, editor of *Life*, dated February 7, 1948, is in Longwell's papers in the Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.
5. First session of Reich Research Council, July 6, 1942; a stenographic record is in Milch documents, vol 58, pp. 3640ff.
6. Cf. Benno Müller-Hill, *Tödliche Wissenschaft. Die Aussonderung von Juden, Zigeunern und Geisteskranken 1933-45* (Rowohlt, Hamburg), p. 107.
7. The most spine-chilling account of the plundering and methodical mass murder of these Jews at Riga is in CSDIC (UK) report SRGG.1158 (in file WO.208/4169 of the Public Record Office): Major General Walther Bruns, an eyewitness, describes it to fellow generals in British captivity on April 25, 1945, unaware that hidden microphones are recording every word. Of particular significance: his qualms about bringing what he had seen to the Führer's attention, and the latter's renewed orders that such mass murders were to stop forthwith.
8. On which, see the fine doctoral dissertation by Henri Roques: "Les 'confessions' de Kurt Gerstein. Etude comparative des différentes versions," submitted at the University of Nantes, France, in June 1985. This reveals the extent to which previous historians had been deceived by the various versions of the "report." Such was the outcry aroused that Roques was stripped of his doctoral degree! I have ensured that his 372-page thesis is freely available in the Irving Collection at the Institute of Contemporary History, Munich. [The Roques thesis has been translated and published in English by the Institute for Historical Review.-Ed.]
9. "Hitler and the Genesis of the Final Solution, an Assessment of David Irving's Thesis," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, No. 25, 1977, pp. 739-75; republished without correction in *Aspects of the Third Reich* (ed. H.W. Koch, Macmillan, New York, 1985) pp. 390-429, and in *Yad Vashem Studies*, No. 13, 1979, pp. 73-125, and yet again, still uncorrected, in *Nach Hitler: Der schwierige Umgang mit unserer Geschichte* (Oldenburg, 1988); and extensively quoted by Charles W Sydnor in "The Selling of Adolf Hitler," in *Central European Historic* No. 12, 1979, pp. 169-99, 402-5.



*Roehm, Helldorf*

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## Chapter Four

## THE FOUNDING AND EARLY YEARS OF THE NAZI PARTY

What was to become the Nazi Party began as an outgrowth of the Thule Society in late 1918. It started as a nationalist discussion group called the Political Worker's Circle whose goal was to "extend the appeal of the Thule's nationalist ideology for the working classes" (Goodrick-Clarke:150). The discussion group developed the idea of forming a political party in December of 1918, and did so on January 5, 1919, at the *Fuerstenfelder Hof* tavern in Munich. Adolf Hitler became a member of the German Worker's Party in September of that year. Shirer writes,

There were two members of this insignificant party who deserve mention at this point; both were to prove important in the rise of Hitler...Captain Ernst Roehm...had joined the party before Hitler...A tough, ruthless, driving man — albeit, like so many of the early Nazis, a homosexual — he helped organize the first Nazi strong-arm squads which grew into the SA...Dietrich Eckart...often called the spiritual founder of National Socialism...became a close advisor to [Hitler]...introducing him to...such future aides as Rudolf Hess (Shirer:64f).

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In a very short time Hitler and Roehm began to wrest control of the small group from its founders. Within a few months they had forced the resignation of its Chairman, Karl Harrar, and begun to turn the group away from its origins as a secret society and toward a new identity as "a mass party" (Fest, 1975:120). On April 1, 1920, they changed the name of the party to the National Socialist German Worker's Party. Historian Joachim Fest describes the process Hitler and Roehm used in these earliest days of Nazism:

At the beginning [Hitler] went at things according to a sensible plan. His first task was a personal one, to break out of anonymity, to emerge from the welter of small-time nationalist-racist parties with an unmistakable image...making a name for himself — by unceasing activity, by brawls, scandals, and riots, even by terrorism if that would bring him to the forefront...[but] Ernst Roehm did more for the NSDAP than anyone else. He held the rank of captain as a political advisor on the staff of Colonel Epp and was the real brain of the disguised military regime in Bavaria. Roehm provided the young National Socialist Party with followers, arms, and funds (Fest, 1975:126f).

By August of 1921, Hitler and Roehm had completed their takeover of the party. On the third of that month they founded the SA and began to assemble the cadre of sexual deviants who would form the core of Nazi leadership for years to come. A pamphlet circulated by disgruntled Nazi members prior to the Hitler takeover shows that the homosexuality of his supporters was no secret. Speaking of Hitler they said, "It grows more and more clear that his purpose is simply to use the National Socialist Party as a springboard for his immoral purposes" (Igra:70f). Former high Nazi functionary and close Hitler confidant, Otto Strasser reports,

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Hitler did three things to popularize the party and quiet the threatening clash of wounded vanities. He shortened the name from Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei to the letters NSDAP; he adopted the brown shirt of Lieutenant Rossbach's veteran organization for the entire party; and he assumed the all-too-familiar swastika from Erhardt's group (Strasser, 1943:34).

## Hitler's Clique of Pederasts

As we will see, almost all of the new leadership of the party were sexual deviants. But this fact raises a question that is foundational to our understanding of the Nazis. Who chose these men as Nazi leaders? Roehm, with whose lifestyle we are now quite familiar, was to some historians the true power behind Hitler's throne. As noted above it was primarily Roehm who organized, funded and armed the terrorist military arm of the party, choosing only homosexuals as officers. And it is true that the party met frequently in the *Bratwurstgloeckl* (Fest, 1975:135f), a homosexual bar where Roehm kept a reserved table.

Yet, despite Roehm's importance to the party, Adolf Hitler himself was the central figure of Nazism and increasingly it was he who determined the fate of every member of the party. Despite suggestions to the contrary, Hitler was not anti-homosexual. In fact, like Roehm, Hitler *preferred* homosexual companions and co-workers. In addition to Roehm and Hess, two of his closest friends, Hitler apparently chose homosexuals and other sexual deviants to fill key positions nearest to himself. Heiden reports that in fact Hitler intentionally "surrounded himself with men of... [homosexual] tendencies" (Heiden, 1935:417).

Rector attempts to dismiss sources that attribute homosexuality to leading Nazis, but nevertheless lists them in some detail:

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Reportedly, Hitler Youth leader, Baldur von Schirach was bisexual; Hitler's private attorney, Reich Legal Director, Minister of Justice, butcher Governor-General of Poland, and public gay-hater Hans Frank was said to be a homosexual; Hitler's adjutant Wilhelm Bruckner was said to be bisexual;...Walther Funk, Reich Minister of Economics [and Hitler's personal financial advisor] has frequently been called a "notorious" homosexual...or as a jealous predecessor in Funk's post, Hjalmar Schacht, contemptuously claimed, Funk was a "harmless homosexual and alcoholic;"...[Hitler's second



in command] Hermann Goering liked to dress up in drag and wear campy make-up; and so on and so forth (Rector:57).

Igra, who confidently asserts that the above men were homosexuals, cites still other Hitler aides and close friends who were known homosexuals. He states that Hitler's chauffeur and one-time personal secretary, Emile Maurice, for example, was homosexual, as well as the pornographer, Julius Streicher, whom Hitler appointed *Gauleiter* of Nuremberg. Igra writes,

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Julius Streicher, the notorious Jew-baiter, was originally a school teacher, but was dismissed by the Nuremberg School Authorities, following numerous charges of pederasty brought against him...His paper, *Der Stuermer*, was frequently confiscated by the police, even at the height of the Nazi regime, because of the sexual obscenities displayed in the drawings and described in the text" (Igra:72f).

\* Among the homosexuals closest to Hitler, Heiden lists "Heines, Reiner, Ernst, Von Helldorf, Count Spreti [and] Count du Moulin-Eckhardt, jr" (Heiden, 1935:417).

The evidence for homosexual leanings in another leading Nazi, Joseph Goebbels, is rather thin, but adds further insight to the inner workings of the group. Goebbels, Reich propaganda leader and close aide to the *Fuehrer*, is reported to have had a party in 1936 that degenerated into a violent homosexual orgy. The party featured "torch-bearing page boys in tight fitting white breeches, white satin blouses with lace cuffs and powdered rococo wigs" (Grunberger:70). Grunberger writes that Nazi roughnecks "were so affected by the rococo setting that they hurled themselves upon the bewigged page boys and pulled them into the bushes. Tables collapsed, torches were dimmed, and in the ensuing fracas a number of Party old fighters and their comely victims had to be rescued from drowning" (ibid:70).

Goebbels may not have participated in the revelry himself, though Klaus Theweleit writes that "there is a significant moment in Rossbach's account where he contests the right of Goebbels 'of all people' to act as a 'moral arbiter,'" apparently assuming that his meaning is "common knowledge" on the internal grapevine" (Theweleit, Vol 2:327).

Ralf George Reuth, in *Goebbels* (Harcourt Brace, New York, 1993), reports that Goebbels was accused by Roehm of pederasty. After Roehm's homosexuality was exposed in the German press, Goebbels [a longtime rival] tried to get him dismissed from the party. "Roehm took revenge by spreading in return all sorts of rumors about Goebbels' relationship with Magda Quandt. He went so far as to suggest that Goebbels was interested less in Magda than in her young son. So along with Roehm's homosexual excesses, people were talking about the 'cloven foot's' 'impossible (and immoral) relationship'" (Reuth:138f). (Goebbels' club foot apparently gave rise to the epithet.). We also know that homosexual SA figure Wolf von Helldorf escaped assassination in the Roehm purge due only to intervention by Goebbels (Reuth:137).

In his own diaries, Goebbels revealed an animosity toward homosexuals in the party, although that does not prove he did not have such inclinations himself. Diaries are, after all, generally written with one's posterity in mind.

Another close Hitler associate was Albert Speer. An October 30, 1995 book review in *Newsweek*, titled "Inside a Third Reich Insider" featured the book *Albert Speer: His Battle With Truth* by Gitta Sereny. The article speaks of a "homo-erotic (not sexual) relationship" between Speer and Hitler that was discussed in a previous book by a German psychoanalyst, Alexander Mitscherlich. Sereny writes that "Speer himself acknowledged that Mitscherlich 'came closest to the truth.'" Although Sereny

claims this relationship was non-sexual, he reports that Speer's secretary said Speer gave himself to Hitler "body and soul." Sereny also observes that Speer never told Hitler he was married because of his "romantic" feelings for Hitler. (Sereny:109).

In Albert Speer: The End of a Myth, German historian Dr. Matthais Schmidt commented on an "erotic" element to Speer's relationship with Hitler. While Speer was remodeling Hitler's official residence, Hitler invited him to lunch. "At lunch, Speer sat at Hitler's side. The conversation became personal — and the two men 'fell in love at first sight'" (Schmidt:41f). Aside from these insinuations we have no evidence of an actual homosexual relationship between Hitler and Speer.

Langer writes in the 1940s that "[e]ven today Hitler derives sexual pleasure from looking at men's bodies and associating with homosexuals" (Langer:179). He adds, quoting Strasser, that Hitler's personal body-guard was "almost always 100% homosexuals" (ibid.:179).

It should be remembered that Hitler's greatest hero was Frederick the Great, a well known homosexual (Garde:44). Clearly, Adolf Hitler was not anti-homosexual, at least not in his personal lifestyle. Indeed, the evidence of Hitler's apparent preference for homosexuals is so overwhelming that, as have many historians before us, we naturally ask the question, "Was Hitler a homosexual?"

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## Was Adolf Hitler a Homosexual?

Until the publication of Professor Lothar Machtan's powerful biography The Hidden Hitler in 2001, we were much less confident in stating that Hitler was indeed a homosexual. Machtan, a history professor in Bremen, Germany, set out to prove Hitler's homosexuality and did so most convincingly, drawing upon hundreds of period documents. We shall consider the evidence at length.

One point upon which we remain unconvinced was whether Hitler was exclusively homosexual or whether he had relations with women. Machtan writes,

[A] small number of contemporaries...were pretty explicit on the subject of Hitler's sex life. These include August Kubizek, Kurt Ludecke, Ernst Hanfstaengl, Rudolf Diels, Erich Ebermayer, Eugen Dollman, Christa Schroder and Hans Severus Ziegler. They are all unanimous in stating, quite positively, that Hitler did not have sex with women. Some of them expressly say that Hitler was homosexual; others convey the same thing obliquely (Machtan:23)



There are at least four women, however, including his own niece, Gely, with whom Hitler is reported to have had sexual relationships. These relationships were not normal, if in fact they occurred. Both Waite and Langer write that Hitler was a coprophile (a person who is sexually aroused by human excrement) and suggest that his sexual encounters with women included expressions of this perversion as well as other extremely degrading forms of masochism. It is interesting to note that all of these women attempted suicide after allegedly becoming sexually involved with Hitler. Two succeeded (Langer:175f). Hitler contemporary Otto Strasser writes of an encounter he had with Hitler's niece Gely:

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Next day Gely came to see me. She was red eyed, her round little face was wan, and she had the terrified look of a hunted beast. "He locked me up," she sobbed. "He locks me up every time I say no!" She did not need much questioning. With anger, horror and disgust she told me of the strange propositions with which her uncle pestered her. I knew all about Hitler's abnormality. Like all the others in the know, I had heard all about the eccentric practices to which Fraulein Hoffmann was alleged to have lent herself, but I had genuinely believed that the photographer's daughter was a little hysteric who told lies for the sheer fun of it. But Gely, who was completely ignorant of this other affair of her uncle's, confirmed point by point a story scarcely credible to a healthy-minded man (Strasser, 1940:72).

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Langer suggests that Hitler may very well have engaged in homosexual behavior, saying "persons suffering from his perversion sometimes do indulge in homosexual practices in the hope that they might find some sexual gratification. Even this perversion would be more acceptable to them than the one with which they are afflicted." (Langer:179). He reports, for example on the testimony of Hermann Rauschnig, a trusted Hitler confidante whom Hitler appointed President of the Danzig Senate in 1932 (Wistrich:240, Snyder:282). He later fell out of favor and fled Germany in 1936 (ibid.). Langer writes,

Rauschnig reports that he has met two boys who claimed that they were Hitler's homosexual partners, but their testimony can hardly be taken at face value. More condemning would be the remarks dropped by [Albert] Foerster, the Danzig gauleiter, in conversation with Rauschnig. Even here, however, the remarks deal only with Hitler's impotence as far as heterosexual relationships go without actually implying that he indulges in homosexuality. It is probably true that Hitler calls Foerster "Bubi," which is a common nickname employed by homosexuals in addressing their partners. This alone is not adequate proof that he has actually indulged in homosexual practices with Foerster, who is known to be a homosexual (Langer:178). [Significantly, Foerster was Julius Streicher's protégé.]

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Waite concurs:

There is insufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that Hitler was an overt homosexual. But it seems clear that he had latent homosexual tendencies...It is true that Hitler was closely associated with Ernst Roehm and Rudolf Hess, two homosexuals who were among the very few people with whom he used the familiar *du* ["thou"]. But one cannot conclude that he therefore shared his friends' sexual tastes. Still, during the months he was with Hess in Landsberg, their relationship must have become very close. When Hitler left the prison he fretted about his friend who languished there, and spoke of him tenderly, using Austrian diminutives: "Ach mein Rudy, mein Hesserl, isn't it appalling to think that he's still there." One of Hitler's valets, Schneider, made no explicit statement about the relationship, but he did find it strange that whenever Hitler got a present he liked or drew an architectural sketch that particularly pleased him, he would run to Hess — who was known in homosexual circles as "Fraulein Anna" — as a little boy would run to his mother to show his prize to her...Finally there is the nonconclusive but interesting fact that one of Hitler's prized possessions was a handwritten love letter which King Ludwig II had written to a manservant (Waite, 1977:283f). [*Hess was known by other names in the German "gay" subculture. In recent years, long sealed Soviet archives have been opened to the West. In Deadly Illusions, authors John Costello and Oleg Tsarev report of seeing the "so-called 'Black Bertha' file, named from Hess's reported nickname in Berlin and Munich" (Costello and Tsarev:xix).*]

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Other writers offer similar assessments. According to Wilfried Daim, Frau Elsa Schmidt-Falk of the Nazi Genealogy Office of Munich observed that Hitler was so enraptured by the '*maennerbuendleische*' (the young male students) on parade, that on this fact alone she concluded that Hitler was at least unconsciously homosexual (Daim:41). Desmond Seward, in Napoleon and Hitler, quotes Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, who referred to Hitler as "that horrible sexual degenerate" (Seward:148). He also reports that "the files of the Viennese police list him [Hitler] as a homosexual" (Seward:299). Writer Charlotte Wolff, M.D. quotes Magnus Hirschfeld about Hitler in her book Magnus Hirschfeld. (Hirschfeld, you will remember, was Director of the Sex Research Institute of Berlin which was destroyed by Hitler in 1934.

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About three years before the Nazis came to power we had a patient at the Institute who had a liaison with Roehm. We were on good terms with him, and he told us a good deal of what happened in his circle...He also referred to Adolf Hitler in the oddest possible manner. 'Afi is the most perverted of us all. He is very much like a soft woman, but now he makes great propaganda in the heroic morale'" (Wolff:438).



## Adolf, the Boy Prostitute

In Germany's National Vice, Samuel Igra wrote that as a young man Hitler "had been a male prostitute in Vienna and Munich" (Igra:67). Lending credence to this is the fact that for quite a long time Hitler "chose to live in a Vienna flophouse known to be inhabited by many homosexuals" (Langer:192). That "flophouse" was the *Meldemannstrasse* Hostel. Hitler's long-time "gay" friend Ernst Hanfstaengl identified this residence as "a place where elderly men went in search of young men for homosexual pleasures" (Machtan:56). "It was an open secret at the beginning of the 20th century," adds Machtan, "that municipal hostels for homeless males were hubs of homosexual activity... [where many young men] kept themselves afloat by engaging in prostitution. Hitler spent over three years in this environment" (Machtan:51).

This would help to explain Hitler's close relationships to his purportedly homosexual patrons Dietrich Eckart and Karl Haushofer. Rector writes that, as a young man, Hitler was often called "*Der Schoen Adolf*" ("the handsome Adolf") and that later his looks "were also to some extent helpful in gaining big-money support from Ernst Roehm's circle of wealthy gay friends" (Rector:52).

But Hitler was apparently not involved with homosexuality solely to survive financially. Even in his pre-Nazi years, most of Hitler's reputed homosexual encounters were consensual meetings in which no money changed hands. Machtan suggests that each of Hitler's longer-term relationships in his youth -- with Reinhold Hanisch, August Kubizek, Rudolf Hausler and Ernst Hanfstaengl -- were homosexual "love affairs."

There are numerous other incidents ("one night stands") in which Hitler was purported to have been the solicitor and not the solicited one. Eugen Dollman, former member of Himmler's staff and one-time Hitler interpreter, cited testimonies from the files of the Munich vice squad in which a series of young men identified Hitler as the man who had "picked them up" on the streets for homosexual relations (Machtan:135ff). Dollman himself was also homosexual (ibid.).

Additional allegations addressed homosexual conduct by Hitler during the first World War. The so-called "Mend Protocol," a document prepared by German military intelligence under Admiral Canaris, contains the testimony of Hans Mend. Considered highly credible, Mend had this to say about Hitler:

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Meanwhile, we had gotten to know Hitler better. We noticed that he never looked at a woman. We suspected him of homosexuality right away, because he was known to be abnormal in any case. He was extremely eccentric and displayed womanish characteristics which tended in that direction....In 1915 we were billeted in the Le Febre brewery at Fournes. We slept in the hay. Hitler was bedded down at night with "Schmidl," his male whore. We heard a rustling in the hay. Then someone switched on his electric flashlight and growled, "Take a look at those two nancy boys." I myself took no further interest in the matter (Ibid:68)

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Hitler and "Schmidl" (Ernst Schmidt) were, in Schmidt's words, "always together" during their war

years. They remained very close friends and were occasional housemates for over thirty years (ibid.:89ff).

A year or so after the incident described by Mend, Hitler supposedly “posed nude for a homosexual officer named Lammers -- a Berlin artist in civilian life -- and subsequently went to bed with him” (ibid.:100). This may be the incident to which Rauschning referred when he later told U.S. Investigators “that Lance Corporal Hitler and an officer had been charged with engaging in sexual relations” (ibid.).

The homosexual connection certainly helps to explain how Hitler became involved with the nationalists generally, and Ernst Roehm specifically, after the war. It is likely that Roehm’s homosexual inclinations were the reason that Colonel Ritter von Epp, the Freikorps commander, chose Roehm as his adjutant. “There are many indications that the relationship between Roehm and Epp was homoerotic,” writes Machtan, “and Hitler once let slip in later years that Roehm’s homosexuality first became known around 1920” (ibid.:106f). Roehm, in turn, brought Hitler into the homoerotic Freikorps brotherhood.

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### The Bayreuth Connection

We have mentioned above that Hitler allegedly identified his favorite composer, Richard Wagner, as a pederast. We are not certain that this is true. What is certain is that Wagner’s Bayreuth was “a notorious international rendezvous for prominent homosexuals” whose absorption with Wagner achieved “a cultlike quality” (ibid.:39). One factor in this attraction may have been that Wagner’s sons Richard and Siegfried were homosexuals. Richard later committed suicide (ibid.:254). Siegfried, pressured to have an heir, married a woman much younger than himself and had several children but surreptitiously continued his homosexual affairs (Wagner:p.197).

Hitler was very close to the Wagner family and spent a great deal of time in Bayreuth. He made numerous private visits there between 1925 and 1933, often with male homosexual companions (ibid.:253ff). One common companion was Julius Schreck, whose photograph hung beside that of Hitler’s beloved mother in his (Hitler’s) private quarters (ibid.:174f). Machtan cites one incident, however, in which he and Schreck failed to keep an appointment to vacation with their Bayreuth hosts. Instead, Schreck and Hitler turned aside at the *Bad Berneck* health resort, some 20 miles away, where they spent Christmas alone -- the only guests at the inn (ibid.:174).

Hitler may have had yet darker motives for visiting the Wagner home. Only recently revealed is the accusation by Wagner family members “that Hitler sexually abused the young Wieland [Wagner’s grandson, now past 75] during the ‘20s.” These allegations came to light in a *Time* magazine interview with American author and former diplomat to Germany, Frederic Spotts, whose research for the book *Bayreuth* (about the Wagnerian opera festival of the same name) included interviews with the Wagner family (*Time*, August 15, 1994:56).

“Spotts says that his original source was one of Wieland’s own children...Now a respected academic, Spotts says it was while he was researching “Bayreuth” that he interviewed his source -- who, he insists, is totally reliable and has no reason to lie. Spotts writes:



This family member told me Hitler sexually abused Wieland in the 1920s when the boy was a preadolescent'...Hitler, who idolized Richard Wagner's supernationalistic operas (as well as his anti-Semitism), had become a close friend of Wieland's mother's. Winifred Wagner gave him the run of the child's nursery. Far from being revolted by what allegedly happened to him, Wieland avidly collaborated with his right-wing family during World War II (*Penthouse*, undated:32).

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Weiland later became Hitler's protégé (Wagner:228) and was exempted from military service by Hitler's personal intervention (ibid.:105). The weight of the evidence indicates that Hitler was deeply involved in a series of short and long-term homosexual relationships. Even more certain is that he knowingly and deliberately surrounded himself with practicing homosexuals from the time he was a teenager. His later public pronouncements against homosexuality were designed to hide the life-long intimacy -- sexual and/or homoerotic -- which he maintained with the various men he knew and accepted as homosexuals.

Finally, in our look at Adolf Hitler, the man, we turn to Samuel Igra, a Jew who fled Germany in 1939 after twenty years of observing Hitler and the Nazis:

For the purposes of the present investigations Hitler is important for what he has represented...when he embarked the German people on the policy that brought about the world catastrophe. He was the central figure around which a number of men grouped themselves, from the 1920's onwards, in a movement to gain supreme control of the German people. As the movement developed they were aided and abetted and supported financially as well as politically by the industrial capitalists of the Rhineland; but the initiative did not come from the latter. It came from Hitler as the condottiere [leader] of a band of evil men who were united together by a common vice [homosexuality] (Igra:26).

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## The Nazi Rise to Power

Through the 1920s, Hitler continued to capitalize on the political unrest of the German people to build the Nazi organization. The party's public image was greatly enhanced by the recruitment of Hermann Goering, a former World War I fighter ace who was revered as a war hero. Goering was probably not a homosexual though he was said to have been very fond of "painting his nails and putting rouge on his cheeks" (Fuchs:160). He joined the party after hearing a speech by Hitler in which he vowed to rebuild Germany's military and throw off the yoke of the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler immediately set him to the task of training the SA as a military organization (Toland:123), an accomplishment that further increased Nazi power.

By the fall of 1922, Hitler had become the symbol of renewed German nationalism to many in Germany, although the average citizen had little knowledge of Hitler's personal life or the lives of the

Nazi leaders. At this point Hitler believed he would ultimately assume power in Germany through military strength, and he was not terribly concerned with portraying an image of morality. "The Party newspaper," writes Edouard Calic, "explained that Hitler wanted to organize the movement on a military basis to achieve power, and that if it was necessary he would lead an uprising to renounce the Versailles Treaty" (Calic:33). However, his attempt to implement his plan in the infamous Beer Hall *Putsch* proved so disastrous that Hitler was forced to develop a different strategy.

On November 8, 1923, Hitler attempted to take advantage of a period of political turmoil to seize control of the government of Bavaria. This ill-fated maneuver (later dubbed the Beer Hall *Putsch*) not only failed militarily, it put Hitler in prison for nine months, thus nearly ending the party. When he was finally released from Landsberg prison on December 20, 1924, he announced that thereafter the Nazi Party would seek power through legitimate political means (ibid:64). This decision put the actions and goals of the party to the test of public opinion. Immediately, Hitler was confronted with this challenge. Shirer describes the internal condition of the party:

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...in those years when Hitler was shaping his party to take over Germany's destiny he had his fill of troubles with his chief lieutenants who constantly quarreled not only among themselves but with him. He, who was so monumentally intolerant by his very nature, was strangely tolerant of one human condition -- a man's morals. No other party in Germany came near to attracting so many shady characters...pimps, murderers, homosexuals... Hitler did not care, as long as they were useful to him.

When he emerged from prison he found not only that they were at each other's throats but there was a demand from the more prim and respectable leaders such as Rosenberg and Ludendorf that the criminals and especially the perverts be expelled from the movement. This Hitler frankly refused to do. (Shirer:173).

Hitler learned that public opinion was not with him in the matter of homosexuality, despite Germany's international reputation as a haven for homosexuals. Incriminating letters which had been stolen from Roehm by a male prostitute (Plant:60) became a public matter when Roehm took the matter to court (Hohne:81). This, of course, exacerbated the conflict among Hitler's lieutenants, and led Hitler to initialize the first in a series of public relations efforts to hide Nazi perversions from the German people. The greater part of these conflicts, interestingly, were between the homosexuals themselves who, according to Shirer "quarreled and feuded as only men of unnatural sexual inclinations, with their peculiar jealousies, can" (Shirer:172). He writes,

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By 1926...the charges and countercharges hurled by the Nazi Chieftains at one another became so embarrassing that Hitler set up a party court to settle them and prevent his comrades from washing their



dirty linen in public. This was known as the USCHLA from Untersuchung-und-Schlichtungs-Ausschuss — Committee for Investigation and Settlement. Its first head was a former general, Heinemann, but he was unable to grasp the real purpose of the court, which was not to pronounce judgment on those accused of common crimes but to hush them up and see that they did not disturb party discipline or the authority of the Leader. So the general was replaced by...Major Walter Buch, who was given two assistants. One was Ulrichs Graf, the former butcher who had been Hitler's bodyguard; the other was Hans Frank, a young Nazi lawyer...This fine judicial triumvirate performed to the complete satisfaction of the Fuehrer. A party leader might be accused of the most nefarious crime. Buch's answer was, "Well, what of it?" (ibid.:174).

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Obviously, the act of assigning Buch, Graf and Frank to this intra-party "court" rendered it a complete sham (at least in regard to homosexual crimes), since all were homosexuals. The only purpose of this and later efforts ostensibly designed to address charges of sexual perversion among the Nazis was to hide the truth from the public. Here is the root of Nazi "anti-homosexual" policies.

As Nazi power grew, Hitler became increasingly dependent on the support of the German population. And, understandably enough, the German people were at the same time growing increasingly disgusted with the debaucheries taking place in German cities. This twofold influence on Hitler led him to take ever more hard-line public stands against homosexuality in order to cover up the truth about the party.

The severity of his public reactions to each new scandal (especially the later ones) mitigated the impact of rumors which constantly circulated in German society about Nazi leaders. Hitler's strategy regarding all moral issues was to craft his rhetoric carefully "in order not to offend the sensibilities of the people" (Mosse:159).

Roehm, of course, presented a particularly difficult problem for the Nazis because of his militant support for what we know today as "gay rights." His SA men began to be referred to by the anti-Nazis as the "Brown Fairies" (Rector:56). Some time after Roehm's exposure as a homosexual (in his 1925 trial against the male prostitute, Herman Siegesseits,) he left Germany to take a post in the Bolivian Army. It is unclear whether he made this move in response to a personal sense of disgrace about the publicizing of his pederastic activities, or whether Hitler had convinced him to get out of the public eye for the good of the party. In any case, Roehm's absence was only temporary. Plant writes,

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In 1929 a party squabble threatened to tear the SA apart; a rebel group under Captain Walter Stennes had started a mutiny. Stennes taunted Roehm's stalwarts at a rally, dismissing them as "sissies in frilly underwear who couldn't order their boys around." As the rebellion grew more serious, Hitler ordered his old friend to return to Germany. Roehm did not hesitate to heed his Fuehrer's call and his armed squads quickly and ruthlessly suppressed the mutineers (Plant:60f).

While Roehm was away, the Nazis had been fairly successful at keeping their perversions out of sight. Most of the Nazis remained "in the closet," or at least out of situations that their political enemies could use against them. This, of course, changed when Roehm returned. Once again, stories of Roehm's

exploits were passed along the grapevine. It would be old news, however, that hurt the Nazis again when Roehm's damaging letters were published by the newspapers belonging to the Social Democrats. These, along with articles on the homosexual practices of subordinate SA leaders, were published on the occasion of Roehm's appointment to head the SA (Oosterhuis and Kennedy:239n). "Social Democrats and Communists," write Oosterhuis and Kennedy, "suggested [in their newspapers] that nepotism and abuse of power in the SA and the Hitler Youth had contributed to making homosexuality an essential characteristic of the fascist system" (ibid.:251). Herzer comments that the press campaign against Roehm "invoked the possibility that 'large segments of German youth' could be led to homosexuality through abuse of military authority by SA members, most of whom were teenagers" (Herzer:225n). He writes:

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The prospect of Roehm's exploiting his military authority over young Nazis for his "private" interests was the target of such headlines in the leftist press as "Captain Roehm Abuses Unemployed Young Workers," "Fox Guards Chicken Coop," or Physical and Moral Health of German Youth at Stake." It could scarcely go unremarked...that regulations otherwise rigorously implemented were suspended precisely in the Nazis private army, that the professional proscription of homosexuality that applied to every teacher, every officer, and every church functionary did not apply among the Nazis (Herzer:214).

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Hitler, confronted with this threat to the Nazi image, responded with a dual strategy. He first offered a limited defense of Roehm, saying, "His private life cannot be an object of scrutiny unless it conflicts with basic principles of National Socialist ideology" (Bluel:98). Hitler also attempted to draw a distinction between the party and the SA by portraying Roehm's proclivities as an aspect of military society. "[The SA] is not an institute for the moral education of genteel young ladies," said Hitler, "but a formation of seasoned fighters" (Bluel:98). The implication seems to have been that homosexuality was an odd quirk of military life that should be overlooked in light of the value of these soldiers' mission and experience. Furthermore, he promised expulsion from the party for anyone who continued to engage in "tongue-wagging" and "letter-writing" (Koehl: 43).

Homosexuality was clearly not limited to the SA, however. Attorney and Hitler contemporary Erich Ebermayer, also a homosexual, observed in his diary that

During its time of struggle, the National Socialist movement -- and not just the Roehm clique -- was a fraternity such as Blueher portrayed in his books, its motive force being homoeroticism...My exceedingly trustworthy sources of information about these confidential matters...have hitherto...*proudly* stressed the homoerotic orientation of the Fuehrer and his inner circle (emphasis in the original. Machtan:232).

Secondly, Hitler strengthened his rhetoric against homosexuality in German society at large. An article that appeared in the official Nazi newspaper went so far as to threaten homosexuals with extermination. Once again this was empty rhetoric. Adolf Brand, whose openly homosexual magazine,



*Der Eigene*, was by this time widely read in Germany, responded to the Nazi article with one of his own. Brand writes,

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Men such as Captain Roehm, are, to our knowledge, no rarity at all in the National Socialist Party. It rather teems there with homosexuals of all kinds. And the joy of man in man, which has been slandered in their papers so often as an oriental vice although the Edda frankly extols it as the highest virtue of the Teutons, blossoms around their campfires and is cultivated and fostered by them in a way done in no other male union that is reared on party politics. The threatened hanging on the gallows, with which they allege they want to exterminate homosexuals, is therefore only a horrible gesture that is supposed to make stupid people believe that the Hitler people, in the matter of male-to-male inclinations, are all as innocent as pigeons and pure as angels, just like the pious members of the Christian Society of the Virgin...The public threat against the homosexuals has in the meantime not frightened any youth-friend or man-friend into deserting this party. One knows perfectly well that all those public threats are only paper masks (Brand in Oosterhuis and Kennedy:236f).

## Power and Abuse

Despite Brand's protestations, Hitler's ruse was quite successful in regard to the Nazis' political fortunes. As Machtan notes, "What would now be rightly condemned as discriminatory disparagement of a minority was then still regarded as a criminological fact: that homosexuals make exceptionally skillful liars" (Machtan:103). The party fared well in the elections of 1932, and on January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany. The Nazi Party had finally come to power. However, the elections following Hitler's appointment, called by Hitler himself, were even more critical to the Nazis.

Hitler was demanding the power of authoritarian rule over Germany, but public support for his plan was ambiguous (Toland:288). The greatest threat came from the Communists who had significant power and support of their own. The Nazis' diabolical solution to this problem involved the burning of the German Reichstag (another famous incident in Nazi history which is tied to the homosexuals in the party). Carroll Quigley, in Tragedy and Hope writes,

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[I]t was evident a week before the election that the German people were not convinced [that the Nazis should gain the increased power they sought]. Accordingly...a plot was worked out to burn the Reichstag building and blame the Communists. Most of the plotters were homosexuals and were able to persuade a degenerate moron from Holland named Van der Lubbe to go with them...Most of the Nazis who were in on the plot were murdered by Goering during the 'blood purge' of June 30, 1934" (Quigley:437f). Van der Lubbe was executed for the crime.

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Van Der Lubbe was homosexual as well. Oosterhuis quotes a 1933 book prepared by the World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism:

Enquiries in Leyden have definitely established the fact that he [Van Der Lubbe] was homosexual. This is of great importance for his later history....Van Der Lubbe's homosexual connections with the National Socialist leaders and his material dependence on them made him obedient and willing to carry out the incendiary's part (Oosterhuis:253).

In The Life and Death of Hermann Goering, authors Ewan Butler and Gordon Young list the Reichstag fire conspirators. "The camarilla which finally drew up plans for the 'frame-up' against the Communists consisted, besides Captain Goering, its originator, of Goebbels, Roehm, Heines, Count Helldorf, leader of the Berlin S.A., Karl Ernst, a certain *StandartenFuehrer* (regimental commander) of the S.A. named Sander and two other members of the S.A., Fiedler and von Mohrenschild" (Butler and Young:111).

The strategy succeeded. The people, perceiving the Nazis as saviors in a time of crisis, gave the party complete control of German government. Not everyone in Germany, however, was pleased with Hitler's ascension to power. Former Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher gave voice to an inner fear that foreshadowed his own death: "This pack of scoundrels, these criminals, these filthy boy streetwalkers! Well, they better not come near me" (Rector:64). Schleicher was killed in Munich by Hitler's murder gang during the Roehm Purge (Fest, 1975:465).

Once the party had come to power several homosexuals in the Nazi leadership believed they could act with impunity in regard to their homosexual exploits. This attitude would lead to severe consequences for these few men and indirectly dictate Hitler's official policy regarding homosexuality.

By the spring of 1934, Ernst Roehm's homosexual activities had become more flagrant than ever, to the extent that Himmler himself made a special trip to plead with Roehm to be more discrete. Roehm pretended to accede but, as Gallo reports

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The next morning Himmler's agents report that one of the most fantastic orgies they had ever seen took place the night before at Roehm's headquarters. Bottles thrown from the windows smashed on the pavements below, and the sound of raucous laughter echoed in the street. Roehm himself had been an all-night participant, with his *Lustknaben*, his male prostitutes. Himmler is furious. (Gallo:68).

Roehm's exploits also began implicating the more genteel homosexuals in the party. Roehm's entourage now included "young sons of the nobility, who form a brilliant staff with the faces of perverse angels: Baron von Falkenhausen, Count von Spreti, the Prince von Waldeck: all aides-de-camp to Captain Roehm" (Gallo:46). (Waldeck was the first member of the old nobility to join the Party and had been recruited by Himmler, himself -- Snyder:371).

At this same time Edmund Heines was appointed Chief of Police of Breslau. Gallo writes,



His staff resembles Roehm's -- they are the objects of its chief's amorous passion. The homosexual Engels is OberstuermbannFuehrer (Lieutenant Colonel), and the young Schmidt is aide-de-camp. This twenty-year-old is Heines' latest folly. Whatever that handsome young blonde does, he is protected by his lover. Once, in a moment of drunkenness, he publicly kills a drinking companion with his sword, but the Chief of Police forbids the public prosecutor to intervene....Beside this couple, the depraved Engels, a watchful intriguer, plays the part of Heines' evil genius. He is one of those who use the SA organization and the Hitler Youth to recruit participants for his erotic games (ibid.:70).

Samuel Igra also noted the increasingly public nature of the Nazi leaders' activities:

It was not merely that these men practiced their vices in private and among their own clique; but they made a system, almost a cult, of their moral corruption, and used their positions of power to molest with impunity innocent boys and girls whose features and physique they fancied. When Kube and his staff visited the villages of his district, *Kube ist da* was the warning passed from mouth to mouth among the people, whereupon parents hid their boys and girls in the cellars or in the back kitchens. The scoundrel needed so much money for his filthy orgies that he had his accomplices appointed to positions in the local savings banks and borough treasurers' offices, where they systematically robbed the tills. In Frankfort-on-Oder, for instance, Kube's accomplices robbed the Post Office Savings Bank of 180,000 marks (about £15,000), and though the case was proved against him in court, he was dismissed only for a while and reinstated in the Party again.

These incidents divided the Nazi elite as no other issue had. Amoral scoundrels all, the majority were nevertheless practical men who knew the importance of discretion, even for dictatorial tyrants. The unquenchable arrogance of these SA leaders forced Hitler into an untenable position -- one which Roehm's enemies within the party would soon exploit. Hitler first would soon be compelled by Roehm's powerful enemies to assassinate the worst offenders in his ranks. Second, to counter the public impression that his party was rife with homosexuality, Hitler would be forced to publicly take a harder line against sexual deviance.

Eric Jan Hanussen?

Hanussen, E.J.  
Clairvoyant to A.H.



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Eric Jan Hanussen?  
B 6/2.1889  
in Prossnitz, (Vienna's  
Gttakring District)  
Birth Name:  
Herschmann-Chaim Steinschneider  
- A Jew.  
Listed as A.H.'s Clairvoyant.  
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## Count Helldorf and the German Resistance to Hitler

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**Book profile : Count Helldorf and the German Resistance to Hitler**

Harrison, Edward

European history (ie other than Britain & Ireland)

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**Overall User Rating :** Not Rated

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## Erik Jan Hanussen (Herman Steinschneider)



### ***Hanussen: The Devil's Prophet*** by Paul Tabori

LATE IN April, 1933, the farmworker Mathias Hummel had the unpleasant experience of finding a corpse in a small wood about fifteen miles from Berlin. The body, riddled with bullets, had been hastily buried in a shallow grave; but the spring rains had washed the topsoil away and a well-shod, large foot was sticking out of the mud.

Hummel ran to tell the police. Seven hours later *Kriminalrat* Mölders faced a slim, fair-haired young man in his office at police headquarters in the Alexanderplatz.

The young man's name was Dzino Ismet, a Bosnian of German origin.

"I need your help," Mölders told him. "It might be unpleasant... but I can't spare you the trouble. We've found a corpse. We have reason to think that it might be Hanussen."

Dzino, his face haggard, nodded silently. A few minutes later, in the basement morgue of the huge red-brick building, a uniformed policeman lifted a coarse sheet from the body. Dzino gave it a quick glance, then turned away.

"Give me a cigarette," he asked the *Kriminalrat*. "That's

him."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I recognize his teeth."

After the *post mortem* the corpse was released for burial. But it was not claimed. Erik Jan Hanussen, who less than three months before had packed the huge *Scala*, Berlin's leading variety theatre, every night, owned newspapers, cars, jewels, a fabulous villa and a yacht, ended in a cheap pine-wood coffin, in a pauper's grave. Not a word of his murder was published in the German newspapers. Mölders was told to close the case. The bullets extracted during the autopsy were not examined by ballistic experts. No witnesses were heard. These were the orders - given by Goebbels, the all - powerful head of Ministry of Propaganda of the Third Reich, then not quite six months old. ▶



## Hitler's clairvoyant

A new biography tells the bizarre tale of the Jewish psychic who met with the future F hrer for private sessions and predicted his rise.

By Stephen Lemons

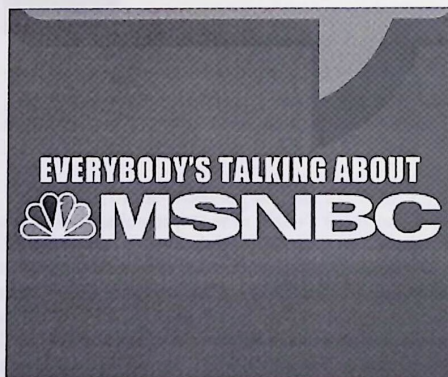
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February 27, 2002 | In the weeks leading up to Adolf Hitler's appointment as Reichschancellor on Jan. 30, 1933, there was nothing inevitable about the Austrian corporal's ascension to power. Results of the 1932 November Reichstag elections were disappointing for his National Socialist Party, with the Nazis suffering losses in the German parliament while retaining about a third of the seats there.

Nazi coffers had been drained dry by the campaign. Hitler had endured significant defections from his movement and threatened suicide. Some Nazis began to wonder if he had the right stuff to be their F hrer.

It was at this point that Hitler, falling back on his belief in the occult, called the most renowned clairvoyant in the land to his headquarters at the Hotel Kaiserhof in Berlin for a private session. The man Hitler met with that day is the subject of a recent biography (the first in the English language), "Erik Jan Hanussen: Hitler's Jewish Clairvoyant," by Mel Gordon.



Hanussen, 43 at the time of the Hotel Kaiserhof session, was a man whose name was synonymous with psychic phenomena in Central Europe. The Vienna-born con man/celebrity seer was known for predicting the future, casting prescient horoscopes and astounding audiences with his feats of hypnotism and mind reading. In Berlin, Hanussen was a rock star before there were rock stars, with a vast business enterprise trading on the voracious German hunger for all things paranormal.

Hitler became a Hanussenite when in March of 1932 the psychic's own weekly newspaper, Erik Jan Hanussen's Berliner Wochenschau, printed the startling prophecy that within one year's time the future Führer would become Reichschancellor. Most Berliners scoffed. For many, Hitler was a megalomaniacal clown.

But if the average Berliner thought Hanussen's prognostication absurd, Hitler certainly didn't. When Hanussen came to him that cold day in January, the Nazi leader was filled with dread anticipation, and kept the meeting secret should the results be negative. Hanussen placed Hitler on a seat in the middle of the room, examined his hands, counted the bumps on his head and sank into a mystical trance. The words he spoke filled the Führer with elation, says Gordon.

"I see victory for you," Hanussen said. "It cannot be stopped."

By the end of the month, Hitler had cut a deal with his enemies and become titular head of a coalition government. Hanussen's vision had given him hope in his hour of uncertainty. One can only wonder the intensity of his rage, if the raving anti-Semite had known at the time that the man he had adopted as his personal soothsayer, the chap nicknamed "the Prophet of the Third Reich," the decadent mystic who had just run his hands through his Aryan locks, was in fact ... a Jew. According to Gordon, a professor of theater arts at the University of California at Berkeley and author of such colorful tomes as "The Grand Guignol: The Theater of Horror and Terror," and "Voluptuous Panic: the Erotic World of Weimar Berlin," Hanussen started life as Hermann Steinschneider, with a birth certificate that read "Hebrew male." An unlikely beginning for one destined to become Hitler's favorite fortuneteller.

Gordon's complicated, fascinating tale is one familiar to many Germans, but completely unknown to Americans, save for some devotees of magic who regard Hanussen's name, acquired while his career was in its infancy, with a reverence second only to that of Harry Houdini's. Despite the 1988 film "Hanussen" by Hungarian director Istvan Szabo (starring Klaus Maria Brandauer in the strangely Aryanized title role), and a number of articles written in English by German migrants in the 1930s and '40s, Americans have had almost no exposure to this bizarre tale of a Jew who played the part of psychic advisor to Hitler. No wonder the uninitiated roll their eyes when Gordon starts to talk about it.

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"It's like saying, 'Hitler's favorite rabbi,' people are waiting for the punch line," confesses Gordon. "But it's not a joke. Hitler and Hanussen did meet about a dozen times between 1932 and 1933. Of course, if Hitler had known that Hanussen was Jewish, he would have disposed of him as fast as he could have. But it's not so much later that he was disposed of. After the Reichstag fire, everything changed."

The burning of the Reichstag on Feb. 27, 1933, for which German communists took the fall, paved the way for the consolidation of power in Hitler's hands and the suspension of all civil liberties. Eerily, the day before, Hanussen had predicted the event through a medium during the opening soiree of his newly minted pagan temple, the Palace of the Occult, a marble and gold-decked Taj Mahal of the black arts in Berlin decorated with astrological signs and religious statues. There, in the presence of Nazi officials and assorted VIPs, the seer claimed to see a "great house" in flames during a sance in his sanctum sanctorum, the Room of Glass. Hours later, the Reichstag was engulfed in a mysterious conflagration. "The Reichstag fire is such a big story -- the first mystery of WWII. It's still not resolved to this day," says Gordon, "sort of like a European Kennedy assassination question. Did Goebbels somehow have a communist patsy, Marinus van der Lubbe, ignite the Reichstag? Did the



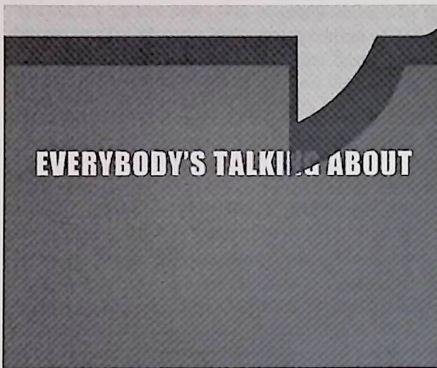
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12/28/2006

Despite his Semitic origins, Hanussen had extremely close ties to the Nazi party, especially since his fateful augury that Hitler would somehow become Reichschancellor. He had lent hundreds of thousands of marks to high-ranking leaders of the Nazis, like Hermann Goering, and held IOUs from them. He had befriended Count Wolf Heinrich von Helldorf, the sadistic, depraved commander of Berlin's SA, and referred to Hitler as "my pal Adolf." Certainly, Hanussen could have had inside information of a Reichstag plot. Or perhaps he was even more directly involved.

Gordon relates that some conspiracy theorists believe Hanussen may have hypnotized the fall guy van der Lubbe to do his bidding, either with or without the help of Nazi conspirators. As far-fetched as the possibility sounds, one suddenly sees how the presence of Hanussen in this story becomes an uncomfortable dilemma for historians. To dwell too much on Hanussen's involvement smacks of indirectly tainting the primary victims of the Holocaust with assisting in Hitler's takeover of Germany and, subsequently, their own destruction.

Perhaps this was the reason Istvan Szabo's cinematic treatment of the Hanussen tale conveniently omits Hanussen's Jewishness. And it could account for the dearth of information on Hanussen in English-language texts. However, Gordon, who is himself Jewish, asserts his belief that Hanussen somehow participated in a plot to set fire to the Reichstag.



"My personal feeling is that all the evidence points to the fact that at the very least Hanussen was involved or he couldn't have known about it. Unless you believe in clairvoyance, which I don't. The other story is why he was killed. That is, he had to be eliminated because he knew too much," says Gordon.

There were other reasons why the Nazis wanted Hanussen dead. Goebbels and Goering both saw him as an interloper and a potential rival for the Führer's attentions, and there was the little matter of all those IOUs Hanussen had collected. Hanussen also, supposedly, had film footage of SA members involved in homosexual orgies. But perhaps more than anything, it was his Jewishness that made him a liability. The communist press had long published reports that Hanussen was Jewish, but it wasn't until the Reichstag fire bequeathed totalitarian powers to the Nazis and allowed them to eliminate the communists as a threat that they had the time to focus on Hanussen's bloodline.

Hanussen's time was up, and he knew it. In a missive written in invisible ink, he informed a colleague, "I always thought that business about the Jews was just an election trick of theirs. It wasn't." On the morning of March 25, 1933, Hanussen was arrested by the SA and summarily executed. His lifeless body was left in a field on the outskirts of Berlin.

So ended Europe's greatest oracle since Nostradamus. But questions endure. For instance, why would any Jew, even an assimilated Jew, collaborate with a pack of power-mad racists filled with hatred for his people? Moreover, is there some possibility that Hanussen possessed a sixth sense that allowed him to correctly predict



Hitler's rise and the Reichstag blaze while blinding him to the inevitable consequences of his own dalliance with the fascists?

"One fellow Jewish clairvoyant Fred Marion asked Hanussen if he was afraid that if the Nazis came to power they would kill him if they found out he was a Jew," says Gordon. "Hanussen told him it was a problem, but that he wanted to convince Hitler that there are good Jews like us who aren't communists or capitalists. A vain thought, but he believed Hitler just needed his friendship to learn that there were good people everywhere."

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As for Hanussen's purported extrasensory perception, Gordon ascribes Hanussen's psychic home runs to an amazing perspicacity on the part of "the Prophet of the Third Reich," which evidently failed him when it came to foreseeing his own demise. For Gordon, Hanussen also represents the mania for the occult that swept Germany at this time, as well as the dilemma of assimilated Jews when faced with the virulent anti-Semitism of Nazism.

"It's such a bizarre story that people wonder why they haven't heard of it before. They think it's either a Hitler diaries forgery or some great exaggeration of some tiny little thing of no consequence," says Gordon. "That's why I include so many pictures and inserts from Hanussen publications in the book. In Germany certainly, it's not a lost story, there's all kinds of stuff all the time on it. But in America, the typical person who watches the History Channel is unaware of it. That's why I wrote the book."

# Hanussen, Erik Jan

## CLAIRVOYANT (GERMANY)

**BORN** 2 Jun 1889, Ottakring (now Wien) - **DIED** 25 Mar 1933, Berlin

**REAL NAME** Steinschneider, Hermann

**GRAVE LOCATION** Berlin: Südwestfriedhof, Stahnsdorf (Block Charlottenburg, Gartenblock III, Gartenstelle 50 )

Hermann Steinschneider came from a poor Jewish family, but by 1918 he had become very famous as a clairvoyant and occultist. In later years it became clear that his experiments were bluffs, but in his days he performed in Europe, Asia and America. He even wanted to start a school of occultism of his own, but this project failed.

Although he was a Jew he supported Hitler after 1930. He was probably in contact with leaders of the SA, which might explain how he was able to predict the fire at the Reichstag in 1933. On Feb 26th, 1933 he said at a private seance that he saw "a large house burning". On March 24th he was arrested and on April 7 workers found his murdered body in the woods near Berlin. After the post mortem his body was released, but it was never claimed. There was not a letter in the papers on the death of this man who had filled large halls only months before. He was buried in silence at Stahnsdorf cemetery in Berlin.

### Sources

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### Images



The grave of Erik Jan Hanussen at the Südwestfriedhof, Stahnsdorf, Berlin.

Picture by Androom (10 Apr 2003)