

Background

The German Empire 1870-1918 - Stürmer

The Ailing Empire - Haffner

Norman - F.Y.I. The "Background" File will contain Supplemental Files such as "Early 20's" This way I will Not Have to waste time Building another File. So if, as you are making Notes you wish to Have something as just Background, it will Be in the main File. Specified Background will Be Separated according to Parts of Decade. D.

The Ailing Empire

Germany from Bismarck to Hitler

by

SEBASTIAN HAFFNER

Translated by

JEAN STEINBERG



Fromm International Publishing Corporation
New York

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other. It was an unbalanced alliance not only because Bismarck weighted it toward Prussia, but also because from the very beginning it was a paradoxical, unpredictable coalition of disparate forces.

Both Prussia and the German National movement were very recent phenomena in German history. Prussia did not attain statehood until 1701, did not become a great power until the Seven Years' War of 1756-1763, and did not become a major *German* power until the Congress of Vienna of 1815. Up to that time Prussia had always leaned toward Poland, and for ten years, from 1796 to 1806, it came close to being a binational state, partly German and partly Polish. At the time Warsaw belonged to Prussia.

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Not until 1815 was Prussia, turned westward, pushed into Germany, losing a major portion of its Polish possessions in the process. In compensation it received a massive western German area, the Rhineland, even though that region had no common borders with the main Prussian land area to the east. Consequently, Prussia became a geographically scattered state seeking to consolidate itself in Germany. At the same time it became the second major German power after Austria. Strangely enough, the Prussia that dominated German political life in the nineteenth century did not come into being until 1815.

The German National movement itself was not much older. It arose in the Napoleonic era.

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The Bismarck Era

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As discussed, make an extra copy of every BG page and put it in the file.

A AT FIRST GLANCE THE *Year File*

forty-three years between the war of 1870-71 and World War I appear to be a harmonious era, a time when Germany's boundaries and constitution underwent no changes and neither war nor revolution disturbed the peace. These years are the longest uninterrupted period of stability in the history of the German Reich. Yet on closer inspection we find that these forty-three years are in fact two distinctive periods: the Bismarck era up to 1890,

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BC and the Wilhelmine or Imperial era after 1890. One might say that during the Bismarck era domestic policy was largely disorganized and discordant and foreign policy highly circumspect and peaceful, whereas in the Wilhelmine era it was the reverse. Domestically it was a time of much-needed reconciliation, but the foreign policy was rashly adventurous and ultimately led to catastrophe. There is no denying, however, that this very foreign policy enjoyed overwhelming popular support.

Once the elation about the victory over France and the creation of the Reich had begun to simmer down, the mood in the Bismarck era was not overly optimistic, whereas in the Imperial age it was, at least until the outbreak of World War I. In part the reason was economic. After the crash of 1873 and even beyond the Bismarck era, until 1895, the European economy, Germany's included, was stagnant, while the years from 1895 to 1914 were a time of prosperity. It is a truism that, at least in non-Socialist countries, the effect of the economy on public opinion is every bit as great as that of the political situation. And it was Bismarck's bad luck to govern in years of comparative stagnation, whereas during William II's reign the economy boomed, certainly up to World War I and in some respects during the war as well. And still another factor came into play. Bismarck's era was still a time of westward migration, of a steady flow from the Prussian agrarian areas to the

western industrial regions. Twenty years of Bismarckian German emigration soon came to an almost halt. Germans now were able to demand higher wages.

All these considerations, however, are not my real subject. The German Reich (which, as Bismarck once said, was of Prussian birth) was not troubled by domestic problems or domestic policy and Germany's foreign

Nevertheless, Bismarck's policies must not be judged though his Prussian "conservatism" with a deep rift between Liberals, his domestic promise of the Conservative Liberals. He was convicted of standing with his opponents, first satisfying their national demands, once that was done, giving them their affairs. Although Bismarck was a monarchist, the constitution which his Reich rested upon was a parliamentary monarchy, and I think he was after in fact a working coalition of Conservatives and Liberals. On the whole

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twenty years of Bismarck's rule more than a mil-
lion Germans emigrated to America. After his
chancellorship German emigration fell off and
soon came to an almost complete standstill. Ger-
mans now were able to find work at home, and at
higher wages.

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All these considerations are pertinent, but
they are not my real subject. The collapse of the
German Reich (which, as the historian Arthur Ro-
senberg once said, was mortally ill from the day
of birth) was not brought on by economic prob-
lems or domestic policies but by external factors
and Germany's foreign relations.

Nevertheless, Bismarck's contentious domes-
tic policies must not go unmentioned. Even
though his Prussian "crisis ministry" had begun
with a deep rift between the government and the
Liberals, his domestic policies rested on a com-
promise of the Conservatives with the National
Liberals. He was convinced that a genuine under-
standing with his opponents could be reached by
first satisfying their national aspirations and then,
once that was done, giving them a say in domestic
affairs. Although Bismarck was a conservative
monarchist, the constitutional compromise on
which his Reich rested provided for a semiparlia-
mentarian monarchy, and the political compro-
mise he was after in founding the Reich was a
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Liberals. On the whole, in his dealings with the

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nter so interesting and crossing class lines. All al parties were class-were the party of the

nobility, the Liberals the party of the rising bourgeoisie, the Social Democrats initially purely a workers' party. The Center on the other hand was not tied to any particular interest group. It encompassed all classes. There was a Catholic nobility, even a Catholic high nobility, a large Catholic bourgeoisie, and, of course, many Catholic workers. The Center tried to integrate all these classes and to resolve their differences internally. This was something entirely new, a kind of party heretofore unknown in Germany or for that matter in Europe—a people's party. Today, of course, almost all governing parties are inclusive.

It was precisely this supraclass structure that Bismarck could not abide. He knew how to deal with class distinctions and was very conscious of his own class, the Prussian land-owning nobility. He was not averse to negotiation with other classes and class-based parties. But a party that represented no class was a state within a state, a *Reichsfeind*, and that is why in the 1870s he tried to smash them rather than deal with them as he had dealt with the Liberals in the 1860s, first opposing them and then pacifying them. In this he failed. The Center was a powerful party from the very beginning, and in the decade of the seventies, the time of the so-called *Kulturkampf*, Bismarck's war of annihilation against the Center, it continued to grow stronger.

The Social Democrats, on the other hand, were a class party, and Bismarck could understand

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Liberals from 1867 to 1879, the Iron Chancellor pursued a liberal course built on a conservative base. At the end he even was ready to accept one of the Liberals, the Hanoverian Rudolf von Bennigsen, into the Prussian government, possibly even as vice minister president. However, nothing came of that. Still, during his liberal period Bismarck stood by his word. What he failed to foresee was that after 1871, despite the compromise with the National Liberals, domestic reconciliation was no longer in the cards.

Concurrent with the establishment of the Reich two completely new political parties and forces appeared on the scene, and Bismarck's response to the challenge they posed was to try and stamp them out. He failed. The two groups were the Center party and the Social Democrats. One might say they were the real parties of the Reich. In Bismarck's eyes they were *Reichsfeinde*, enemies of the Reich. The reason he considered them as enemies of the Reich was their internationalism. The Center was the party of the German Catholics, and the Catholic Church undeniably was and is a supranational institution. Because the Center was strongly Rome-oriented, it was called "ultramontane"—since it looked "beyond the mountains" toward Rome.

But what made the Center so interesting and different was its success in crossing class lines. All the other German political parties were class-based. The Conservatives were the party of the

nobility, the Liberal bourgeoisie, the Social workers' party. The Center was not tied to an encompassed all class ability, even a Catholic bourgeoisie, and workers. The Center classes and to resolve. This was something heretofore unknown in Europe—a party almost all governing.

It was precisely Bismarck could not with class distinction his own class, the Prussian. He was not averse to classes and class-based represented no class *Reichsfeind*, and that to smash them rather had dealt with the Center posing them and the failed. The Center was very beginning, and in the time of the so-called war of annihilation: used to grow stronger.

The Social Democrats were a class party, an

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Yet despite all these developments the popular mood throughout the Bismarck era remained glum and tense, not only because of the economic depression but also because of Bismarck's policies, and perhaps even more because of his political style. Bismarck cannot be accused of having been

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Gerlach in which he said that, despite any possible misgivings he had, the option of cooperation with France should be kept open "because one cannot play chess when sixteen squares out of sixty-four are blocked off by the house." Now he accepted this restriction as inevitable—a terrible handicap, come to think of it.

For the rest, Bismarck's policies called for many painful concessions, to wit:

1. Renunciation of all territorial expansion in Europe.
2. In connection with that, renunciation of all expansionist efforts in Germany, particularly Greater German aspirations.
3. The disavowal of all claims to the incorporation of the "unliberated" Germans excluded from the newly formed Reich, in particular of Austrian and Baltic Germans.
4. Nonparticipation in the colonial ventures of the other European powers, in the hope that this policy would focus these powers on the outside, "the periphery," and keep them from forming coalitions against the European center.
5. If necessary, active prevention of inner-European wars, even if the German Reich was not directly involved or affected. In view of the tendency of European wars to

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cast its shadow over the new Reich—that is, the
 possible coalition of France, England, and Russia.
 Despite all its power, the German Reich could not
 risk such a coalition by going beyond what had
 been won in 1871.

Bismarck was deeply offended. In making his
 threatening gestures he believed himself to be on
 the defensive, not the offensive, and he reacted
 with bitterness to the English and Russian states-
 men, particularly Russia's chancellor, Prince
 Alexander Gorchakov. But, more importantly,
 after the "war in sight" crisis of 1875, Bismarck's
 "nightmare of the coalitions" gave way to the
 "nightmare" of French revenge. That was the be-
 ginning of Bismarck's active pursuit of a peace
 policy—one that equated the interests of the Ger-
 man Reich with the prevention of a war between
 the European big powers. And on this policy rests
 Bismarck's posthumous reputation. Yet it must
 also be noted that he did not succeed in keeping
 Germany out of dangerous entanglements.

Bismarck laid out the principles of his peace
 policy in the famous Kissingen proclamation of
 1877, in which he said: "The vision I have is not
 of the acquisition of some territory but of a total
 political situation in which all powers except
 France need us and are deterred from forming co-
 alitions against us because of their relationship to
 one another." A brief explanation about his re-
 ference to France is needed here. In 1860 Bismarck
 had written a letter to his mentor Leopold von

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Military reasons seem more compelling. The military saw the fortresses Strasbourg and Metz as keys to the new South German regions of the Reich. As a rule Bismarck did not bow to military arguments. If he did so now, it was probably because he expected a French war of vengeance—"What they will never forgive us is our victory," he was heard to say repeatedly in 1871—and therefore military arguments had to be taken into consideration. Immediately after 1871 Bismarck's nightmare probably was not so much one of possible coalitions as of a possible French war of revenge. That became clear during the first foreign crisis of Bismarck's Reich. In 1875, France, which had rapidly recovered from war and reparations, strengthened its armies. In response, Germany, at first only unofficially, took a threatening stance. The lead editorial in a Berlin paper asked, "Is War In Sight?"

Bismarck always denied that he wanted a second, preventive war against France. That may well be so. He believed he would be able to prevent a French war of retaliation through intimidation. But now something unexpected happened. England and Russia, neither of which had intervened in the war of 1870—Russia had even assumed a position of benevolent neutrality toward Prussia and the emergent German Reich—now intervened in Berlin. They declared that they could not stand idly by while France continued to be weakened. For the first time the possibility of a future war

cast its shadow over possible coalition. Despite all its power, risk such a coalition been won in 1871.

Bismarck was de- threatening gestures l the defensive, not th with bitterness to the men, particularly R Alexander Gorchakov after the "war in sight" "nightmare of the cc "nightmare" of French ginning of Bismarck's policy—one that equa- man Reich with the p the European big power Bismarck's posthumou also be noted that he Germany out of dange

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rightly so—that the colonial fallout with England could be controlled, but that he himself—and to some extent justifiably—was irreplaceable.

Bismarck, after all, was neither a dictator nor a constitutional ruler, but a Prussian minister president and chancellor subject to dismissal. The fact that the early days of the German empire saw an almost twenty-year-long "Bismarck era" was a constitutional anomaly due entirely to the astonishing longevity of Emperor William I. As became obvious after William II's assumption of the throne, Bismarck's position depended on the good will of the emperor. In 1884 Emperor William I was already old, and it was to be assumed that he would soon be succeeded by Crown Prince Frederick, a Liberal linked to England by marriage. Frederick was influenced by his wife and made no secret of his preference for a more liberal domestic policy and a foreign policy tilting toward England. To counteract this and to make it difficult for a future emperor to replace him with a radically different chancellor, Bismarck decided to fan anti-English feelings in Germany and, so it seems to me, intentionally heated things up by his colonial policy.

This interpretation is also borne out by the fact that in the late 1880s, when contrary to all expectations the old emperor lived to be almost ninety-two and the crown prince became mortally ill, Bismarck dropped the colonial policy like a hot potato. With the threat of a German Gladstonian

cabinet thus warded Bismarck's interest in as quickly as it had famous comment ag. in 1888, when he told a socialist who showed him to all the hidden riches is very nice, but my Here is Russia, and he middle. That is my m

Germany's "social place among the world dead; however, they Bismarck's departure whole, Bismarck himself 1884–85, was a man who repeatedly stressed that world power was not for could not afford it, though with preserving and strengthening Europe.

Nonetheless Bismarck's difficulties in Europe soon culminated in the proclamation of 1877. The Ottoman empire, and the Christian, largely Slav nations, largely Slav nations to break away, had a problem along Europe's southern

The Russians supported liberation movements of the reasons, the first ideological

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walks of life suddenly fell under the spell of a grand national vision, a national goal. It was as though they were telling themselves, "We shall become a world power, we will expand throughout the world, Germany will lead the world." Their patriotism took on a new aspect. What inspired them and raised their spirits was "nationalism," not so much a feeling of community as the consciousness of being somehow special, the wave of the future.

This change was also connected with the great improvement in everyday life wrought by technology and industry. It was now possible to talk over the telephone, switch on a light bulb, or even operate a sort of wireless transmitter. Undreamed-of new frontiers were opening up. In many fields the Germans were in the forefront in Europe. While things were moving forward only slowly in England and even more haltingly in France, and while Russian industrialization was still in its infancy, German technology and industry were moving forward at record speed, and Germans were filled with pride. Unfortunately, this pride often took the form of braggadocio, of overweening self-congratulation.

Like the rest of Europe Germany was of course a class society. And it is true that Bismarck's compromise of 1879, which introduced protective tariffs and forged the coalition of industry and agriculture, had put the upper classes, the big landowners and the industrialists, on an equal footing, with the landowners possibly exercising a bit more

influence than to. In that respect many was some Imperial era this heavy industry now began to s This shift had when Germany tural country in until the Wilhe began to make haps only by far the means for e said to have pro expansionism, t policy was inter and commercial lieve that this ac policy. Rather, gr of Germany's str in Germany's re sessment one mig course of the Eur

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 to. In that respect it would be fair to say that Ger-
 many was somewhat backward. However, in the
 Imperial era this alliance of large landowners and
 heavy industry underwent a change. The weight
 now began to shift from agriculture to industry.
 This shift had already started under Bismarck,
 when Germany began to change from an agricul-
 tural country into an industrial one, but it was not
 until the Wilhelmine era that German industry
 began to make unparalleled strides, rivaled per-
 haps only by faraway America. And by furnishing
 the means for expansionism, industry might be
 said to have prompted the turn to the policy of
 expansionism, to imperialism. German foreign
 policy was intertwined with German industrial
 and commercial expansionism. Still, I do not be-
 lieve that this accounts for the change in foreign
 policy. Rather, granted the growing consciousness
 of Germany's strength, the reason is to be found
 in Germany's reassessment, its mistaken reas-
 sessment one might say in retrospect, of the future
 course of the European powers.

As late as 1888 Bismarck had said that *his*
 map of Africa lay in Europe, by which he meant
 that Germany, being so hemmed in, had enough
 problems in Europe without going in search of
 adventure abroad, an opinion not shared by every-
 one even then. By now it had undergone a basic
 change.

In Europe the late nineteenth and early twen-

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tieth centuries were the years of colonial imperialism. All the powers, regardless of size, tried to expand beyond Europe, to pursue *Weltpolitik*, to become "world powers." England was the first and the most successful. The British Empire was, or at least appeared to be, an impregnable world power. But France also ruled over a large colonial empire in Asia, and even more so in Africa. As Spain and Portugal had earlier, Russia expanded eastward, and smaller countries like Holland and Belgium, and later Italy, followed suit. A seemingly irresistible and plausible idea spread throughout Europe. It held that the era of the purely European power system and balance was about to be replaced by a system of world power in which the European powers, which saw themselves as the rulers of the world, would form large colonial empires and transform the European balance into a world balance centered on Europe.

Those who shared this view—and in Germany a great many opinion leaders did—also believed that considering its industrial strength, Germany was lagging behind. True, Bismarck had founded a few African colonies (only to ignore them soon thereafter), but certainly nothing like a German world empire existed. Germany was still only a European power, not the world power it wanted to be. In 1895 Max Weber furnished the Wilhelmine age with its rationale when he said: "We must understand that the unification of Germany was a youthful prank committed by the nation in

its old age and, be it would have done if it turned out to point of a German

In the pursuit bound to come up power, England. The empire was never German later. But German European balance of England, by a world would stand besides others, and England with the others. Chances thus: "We do not want but we also want to

Strangely enough Germans did not gain possessions. In the remote Chinese lease agreement, in the empire until 1987), a since the division of great powers seem now know, it never over, Germany acquired islands, also very relevant in the event of a significantly expanded maintained a pipe dream

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the years of colonial imperialism, regardless of size, tried to pursue *Weltpolitik*, to "England was the first and the British Empire was, or be, an impregnable world ruled over a large colonial even more so in Africa. As earlier, Russia expanded countries like Holland and y, followed suit. A seemingly plausible idea spread held that the era of the system and balance was a system of world power powers, which saw them the world, would form large transform the European balance centered on Europe. This view—and in Germany leaders did—also believed industrial strength, Germany he, Bismarck had founded only to ignore them soon y nothing like a German Germany was still only a the world power it wanted ber furnished the Wilhelmiale when he said: "We the unification of Germany mitted by the nation in

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its old age and, because of the cost [of that prank], it would have done better to have left things alone if it turned out to be the end and not the starting point of a German *Weltmachtpolitik*."

In the pursuit of that policy the Reich was bound to come up against the dominant world power, England. The destruction of the British empire was never Germany's goal, neither then nor later. But Germany did want to replace the European balance of power, which was controlled by England, by a world balance in which Germany would stand beside the established colonial powers, and England would be just one power among the others. Chancellor Bülow summed this up thus: "We do not wish to put anyone in the shade, but we also want to have a place in the sun."

Strangely enough, in the Wilhelmine era the Germans did not gain all that many new overseas possessions. In the nineties they did get the very remote Chinese lease territory of Kiaochow (the lease agreement, incidentally, was not due to expire until 1987), a remarkably farsighted move since the division of China among the European great powers seemed imminent, although, as we now know, it never actually came to pass. Moreover, Germany acquired a number of South Sea islands, also very remote and hard to hold on to in the event of a conflict. Apart from that a significantly expanded German colonial empire remained a pipe dream.

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Erzberger signed. The armistice took effect on No-
vember 11.

How did the German people react to this? Un-
til August they had been led to believe that Ger-
many was winning. Only in October, when a
cease-fire was first mentioned, did they learn that
the government—though not necessarily the Su-
preme Command—considered the situation hope-
less. Then, on November 9, the Social Democrats
became the ruling party, there was a revolution,
and the princes abdicated; presumably the em-
peror abdicated as well. At any rate, he fled.

What did all this mean? The mass of not par-
ticularly well-informed Germans saw the situa-
tion thus: Just as we were about to win the war
those characters who always wanted a negotiated
peace took over the government and threw in the
towel. Then came the revolution and they signed
an armistice that made us powerless.

That was the basis for the later "stab-in-the-
back" myth, first openly proclaimed by Luden-
dorff, although Ebert of all people had already
paved the way for it. Ebert's main domestic con-
cern was to salvage whatever could still be sal-
vaged: to carry on either with a constitutional
monarchy, or with a republic if need be, and to
suppress the revolution. To begin with, Ebert con-
cluded a pseudo-armistice with the revolution. On
November 10, at a meeting of the Berlin workers'
and soldiers' councils, he got himself appointed as
head of a six-man Council of People's Delegates,

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cess to the sea—that is, the future Polish Corridor. I doubt that Ludendorff had really studied the Fourteen Points closely. He just tossed them into the ring to make it difficult for the Americans to reject Germany's cease-fire and peace offer.

The next day, Sunday, September 29, something else happened that was bound to have crucial consequences. Ludendorff had asked two senior members of the civilian government, Chancellor Count Hertling and Foreign Minister Paul von Hintze, to meet with him at his headquarters. They arrived separately. Hintze, the younger of the two, traveled overnight and met with Ludendorff that Sunday morning; Hertling traveled by day and did not arrive at headquarters until late in the afternoon. Hintze took advantage of Hertling's absence to present Ludendorff with a new plan. He thought that the cease-fire would stand a better chance of acceptance by Wilson if a parliamentary-democratic government were formed in Germany to persuade the Americans that it was a new, democratic Germany that was suing for peace—and moreover a peace based on Wilson's own peace program. This meant that they would have to ask the Reichstag majority to form a government and to revise the constitution, making the Reich a constitutional monarchy in which the Reichstag would have the power to depose the government by a vote of no confidence. Moreover, it was necessary to create the impression that Germany was seeking peace not because of the threat

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is, the future Polish Corridor. Ludendorff had really studied the sely. He just tossed them into difficult for the Americans to cease-fire and peace offer.

Sunday, September 29, some- that was bound to have cru-

Ludendorff had asked two the civilian government, Chan- ag and Foreign Minister Paul with him at his headquarters.

ately. Hintze, the younger of

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peace not because of the threat

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of military collapse but because of this democratic reorganization.

Ludendorff liked Hintze's plan, not least be- cause he probably had his own agenda as well. I am convinced that he understood the psychological-diplomatic considerations underlying Hintze's proposal, but beyond that he also realized that if he went along with Hintze's plan he would be spared the onus of personally raising the white flag. He could put the burden on the shoulders of his domestic foes, the Reichstag majority.

Thus on September 29, in the presence of the kaiser—who had remained passive through all of this—the headquarters meeting decided to form a parliamentary government composed of ministers of the Reichstag majority and to instruct this gov- ernment to seek an immediate cease-fire. The Su- preme Command was not to play any official role in this, for according to Ludendorff the collapse of the western front appeared to be imminent. In re- turn for its help, the new government was to be allowed to revise the constitution and to trans- form the Reich into a parliamentary government.

On October 2, the leaders of the Reichstag in Berlin learned about this plan from an emissary of Ludendorff. They were bewildered. The news that the war in the West was lost and that the collapse of the military was imminent came as a shock to all of them, including the members of the Reichstag majority. And linked to this shock- ing news was the request that they take over the

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bankrupt store, announce the bankruptcy, and accept responsibility for something they had had no hand in.

In these dark hours it was the Social Democrats who jumped into the breach. They had been preparing for such an unlikely turn of events since before the war. Their decision was to prove crucial in the coming weeks and months. The Social Democrats, the majority wing at any rate, were ready to assume greater responsibility than any of the other parties. If we are now given responsibility, said their chairman, Friedrich Ebert, we have no choice but to jump in and salvage what can still be salvaged, particularly if we are asked to negotiate the cease-fire and are also granted something we have been advocating for decades: a parliamentary government and the power to dismiss the government by a vote of no confidence, and beyond that the abolition of the Prussian three-tier suffrage. These were the last important demands still open on the Social Democratic agenda. Now these demands were being met. Led by Ebert, the Social Democrats after some debate accepted the offer.

The significance of this move cannot be overestimated. Bismarck's enemies of the state, the outsiders, the still ostracized "unpatriotic band" of William II, were about to become the governing party of the Reich and of the empire (at the time there was still no talk of abdication); they even

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MICHAEL STÜRMER

THE GERMAN
EMPIRE

1870-1918



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Background
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the margins of history. Berlin, meanwhile, epitomized a more successful face of German history, becoming the capital of the German customs union in 1834 simply because Prussia was the proponent of free trade in Germany, while Austria was backward, protectionist and always close to bankruptcy. Prussia was by far the most potent economic player among the German states, enjoying healthy finances, a solid silver and gold currency, and a well-organized tax administration. People in the north German Free Cities, in Cologne or in the south German provinces may not have liked having Berlin as capital, but Bismarck certainly did not care to ask them. He may have treated the princes with exquisite politeness, but there was never any doubt where the real seat of power lay.

Berlin was not merely the new capital, but also the largest industrial center on the Continent. It had the advantage of being at the confluence of the Havel and the Spree rivers, within the vast, flat and sandy landscape that was dominated by the river Elbe. But it was also close to the Oder river farther east. Berlin was also the most important center on the international railway system between Paris and Moscow, Copenhagen and Milan. The Cologne-Minden railway, completed soon after 1848, linked western Germany to Berlin, crossing all the major rivers of northern Germany and continuing, once Berlin was left behind, for another 500 miles to the easternmost ports and garrison towns in East Prussia. Unlike in Munich to the south in Bavaria, where the royal administration had always tried to slow down industrial development in order to preserve peace and quiet, in Berlin industry had always been prominent, strongly supported by the Prussian state administration so as to create employment and generate tax revenue. There was a conscious effort, in a country

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where only sand was in ample supply, to make the *Technische* tenburg a source of advanced technological know-how from Lancashire a capital from London. The Protestants, expelled by French Huguenots fleeing the puritanism of Louis XIV, together with the puritanism, nurtured a spirit of enter-

After 1815 the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel took shape: apart from some Gothic features, it was neoclassical. Nearly all the Prussian builders, so Berlin, compared to Vienna, took on a *nouveau* air because it was forever redesigned. The city grew from a population of 200,000 in 1800 to nearly 4 million by 1900. Their villages in the east looking for work. West Germans did not feel attracted to the east; easterners it held great promise, especially living in the Russian-controlled part. A Jew from Luxemburg came from a rabbinical family, forming himself into a socialist firebrand, the most sought-after painter in the century, with a mansion by the Baltic. A villa on the Wannsee, also came from a family of industrial companies there offered by Borsig made railway engines, Siemens made electrical equipment and, later, AEG manufactures. When Bismarck became Prime Minister in 1862, he defiantly stated that the government would be settled not by speeches and through "blood and iron." The economist John Maynard Keynes corrected him when he ob-

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Berlin, meanwhile, epitomized a German history, becoming the customs union in 1834 simply a proponent of free trade in Germany. Prussia was by far the most among the German states, enjoyed silver and gold currency, and a constitution. People in the north or in the south German did not have Berlin as capital, but did care to ask them. He may have enjoyed its politeness, but there was no real seat of power lay.

Berlin was the new capital, but also the most important on the Continent. It had the confluence of the Havel and the vast, flat and sandy landscape of the river Elbe. But it was also close to the east. Berlin was also the most important international railway system in Europe, connecting Copenhagen and Milan. The railway was completed soon after 1848, and Berlin, crossing all the major lines and continuing, once Berlin was over 500 miles to the easternmost in East Prussia. Unlike in Munich where the royal administration had no industrial development in order to get it, in Berlin industry had always been supported by the Prussian state to create employment and generate a conscious effort, in a country

where only sand was in ample supply, to encourage the industrial arts, to make the *Technische Hochschule* in Charlottenburg a source of advanced technology, to import industrial know-how from Lancashire and Birmingham, and capital from London. The Protestant work ethic, established by French Huguenots fleeing the religious persecution of Louis XIV, together with home-grown pietism and puritanism, nurtured a spirit of enterprise in Berlin.

After 1815 the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel's Berlin took shape: apart from some Gothic fantasies, it was rigidly neoclassical. Nearly all the Prussian rulers were devoted builders, so Berlin, compared to Vienna, never lost a certain *nouveau* air because it was forever being torn down and redesigned. The city grew from a population of about 200,000 in 1800 to nearly 4 million by 1900, as people left their villages in the east looking for a better and freer life. West Germans did not feel attracted to Berlin, but for the easterners it held great promise, especially for the Jews living in the Russian-controlled parts of Poland. Rosa Luxemburg came from a rabbinical family of the east European Stetl to attend university in Berlin, before transforming herself into a socialist firebrand. Max Liebermann, the most sought-after painter in Berlin at the turn of the century, with a mansion by the Brandenburg Gate and a villa on the Wannsee, also came from the east. The huge industrial companies there offered great opportunities. Borsig made railway engines, Siemens produced telegraph equipment and, later, AEG manufactured electrical appliances. When Bismarck became Prime Minister of Prussia in 1862, he defiantly stated that the great issues of the day would be settled not by speeches and majority voting, but through "blood and iron." The economist John Maynard Keynes corrected him when he observed, seventy-five

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It was in Berlin that all this energy

ntury, Berlin was the unchallenged
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in of villages redolent with that
ers call their *Kiez*—a sense of

local community. It combined the arcadian beauty of the
Potsdam parks and palaces with the *gravitas* of Germany's
foremost university, and levels of enterprise more usually
associated with America. There was a willingness to give to
patriotic causes, whether the National Gallery sponsored
by Crown Prince Frederick William, the Kaiser Wilhelm
Gesellschaft for big science that Kaiser William II pro-
moted, or the vast museum complex under the great artis-
tic panjandrum Wilhelm von Bode. After one generation,
even the most skeptical had to admit that Berlin, while
representing the worst of modern Germany in its urban
squalor, exploitation and organized crime, also showed off
the best in the arts, industry, banking, architecture and
town planning, not to mention health care, transport and
infrastructure.

With the exception of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Germany's
Financial Times of the day, all the important newspapers
were published in Berlin, often bringing out two or three
editions daily, and reporting the Reichstag debates in great
detail. This was a lively, nervously aggressive and undefe-
rential media world, concentrated in Kochstrasse just to the
south of the political square mile represented by Friedrich-
strasse, Wilhelmstrasse and Unter den Linden, between
Schlossplatz and Pariser Platz, near the Brandenburg Gate.
All the major pressure groups and organized interests set up
headquarters in Berlin, channeling information, lobbying,
dispensing money, throwing parties and publishing pam-
phlets that few would ever care to read. They came into
their own when free trade gave way to protectionism as a
result of the great depression starting in 1873. The argu-
ment about state intervention, closely linked to the new
Reich's need for revenue, drew new lines not only across
the economy, but also across the party system. Bismarck

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in creating land-based and sea-based cable connections, introducing instant communications to facilitate commerce, strategy and politics. Later, Siemens concentrated on the supply side of the electrical industry. Emil Rathenau's AEG, having started as a licensee of the Edison patents, focused on the demand side—the transformation of daily life through washing machines, electrical stoves and kettles, refrigerators, irons, etc. Rathenau engaged Peter Behrens, the architect, in 1907. As well as building factories without any reference to former styles, Behrens applied a sober and functional style, owing nothing to the pre-industrial past, to the new equipment that replaced millions of household servants and profoundly changed everyday life.

At the turn of the century, the Germans were no longer taking the boat to the New World, but were trying to make a better living in the cities than their forefathers had on the land. Germany was not a land of unlimited opportunity, like the United States of legend, but by European standards it came very close: the collective biography would show not only an abstract rise in income, but also that people consumed more soap, more beef, more wine, more white bread, more shirts and more shoes than ever before. More books were read by a population in which illiteracy was waning, and more newspapers were consumed. The anger of the old, Bismarckian days was largely overcome; even the anger of socialists and Catholics, the one-time *Reichsfeinde*. When the twentieth century dawned, it was, by any standards, Germany's *belle époque*—an Edwardian age full of energy and optimism, with Cassandra muted and outside the city gates. This century could have been, French philosopher Raymond Aron once observed, the

German century. Many Germans entitled to hope so.

What mattered to the great majority of the German lands was not high the inexorable changes accompanying the painful question of whether yesterday was a guide to tomorrow's challenge. The answer was a clear no, which in turn the relationship of father and son, of husband and wife. Compared to the man who was in charge in Berlin, what failed to do, or what the Kaiser had a man battle fleet, perfidious Albion in faraway places like Kiao-Chau in southwest Africa, or Samoa in the Frau Müller or Schmidt had to get on make a living and get acquainted with the changes that were changing almost every business—in fact, all the aspects of people's lives. Tradition, in spite of the eagles and the lions still proudly displayed on public buildings and on official documents day by day. Of course, in rural Pomerania, West Prussia and in the mountains of Upper Bavaria, many hours by train to new industrial centers, daily life looked like many generations past. But that was progress, a career and freedom of choice in towns like Rothenburg ob der Tauber, from Würzburg to Augsburg bypassed in a time warp of medieval houses and the children insisted that there was no

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the quaint old place. Never were the Germans more enthusiastic about the promise of technology, progress and the future than at the turn of the century.

A traveller having traversed the thousand miles of Reichsstrasse I from Aachen via Potsdam and Berlin, all the way to Königsberg in East Prussia in 1870, and repeating that experience thirty-five or even forty years later, would have seen a country fundamentally changed: railways and telegraph lines almost everywhere, the trains carrying not only people, but huge quantities of industrial goods. From time to time, when an aircraft might be seen overhead, children would point it out to each other and vow one day to try and fly themselves. Perhaps there might be a motorcar on the road, driven by an enterprising young man with a lot of money. Most roads, sand or dirt in the old days, would now be paved. In the cities, electric tramcars would now link the center with faraway villages, which were rapidly turning into suburbs for an ever-increasing army of office clerks. The better suburbs would have villas in an extensive, parklike landscape, lit by electric light, where fifty years ago there had been, at best, some modest huts and a small church. Rivers would be crossed by elegant steel bridges, while canals linked the Rhine to the Weser, the Weser to the Elbe, and the Elbe to the Oder—the whole north German plain became an interconnected system of waterways, with its center in Berlin. Rivers had been made navigable during the last few decades; the Lorelei Rock celebrated by Heinrich Heine, and a danger to shipping on the Rhine, had finally been blown up. But the long-projected canal from the Main river across the hills of Franconia to the Danube had yet to be completed. The most conspicuous difference would have been people. The children of the poor were no longer barefoot, begging

for something to eat; instead they went to primary school, later into industrial schools, later still into the army or the university. A new middle-class way of life, possibly a new kind of education.

However, when those customs governed people's lives for centuries, it was not without anxiety and fear of the future. The future became any more reassuring as the old ways were dismissed and the boundaries of the old order were daily breached. This old order, both biological and human, was coupled with the *siècle* decadence, that there was a crisis everywhere, nowhere more so than in the writings of Nietzsche, who was dying a slow death. The Greek mythology, representing order and the future, but also the pain of the present, could have been the symbol of Germany's destiny at the turn of the century. In the visionary world of literature, the ambiguity found its foremost expression. Artists, architects, engineers and writers of the time could Thomas Mann's epic novels have been written, the saga of the patrician family from Lübeck. At the turn of the century, Walther Rathenau, an outsider among men, set out to write his visionary novel about the shape of things to come.

In 1889 Otto Brahm, Maximilian Wolff (publisher of the liberal *Bayerische Volkszeitung*) and the Hart brothers set up a new stage—literally, the "free popular stage"—literally, the "free popular stage" without censorship. Their model was the Th

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The repose of Europe, as British statesmen of the early decades of the nineteenth century used to describe the balance of power, had been rudely disturbed by the national and social revolutions of 1830 and 1848 all over Europe. Ever since, the foundations of power and legitimacy had been shaky.

Governments and regimes now had to prove, not their ancient lineage but their effectiveness in dynamic nation-states, providing jobs, raising incomes and harnessing modern industry to the needs of society. Rising populations and the quickening pace of industrialization made it imperative to secure raw materials and to open markets. The new mood from the Bristol Channel to the wetlands of the Vistula was a constant forward flight to produce consensus within societies driven by class conflict at home and competition abroad. Germany was no exception.

In 1871 the British government watched, with some unease, how the balance on the Continent was forcefully rearranged through the German triumph over France. While the war was being wound up, Benjamin Disraeli gave expression to deep-seated anxieties about the implications of what had happened on the European continent in the course of the last decade. He termed it "the German revolution," betraying through this term that the events defied traditional British statesmanship and balance of power politics.

Disraeli had looked far into the future but subsequent British governments, including his own, took a much more relaxed view of the new Germany. When, as Lord Bea-

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Cowes, next door to Portsmouth. He believed like many of his middle-class subjects that Germany's expanding global trade required for its protection a blue-water deep-sea navy. Sir Ernest Cassel—a close friend of the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII—and Albert Ballin, chief of the Hamburg Amerika Line and often the Kaiser's dinner guest, both knew more about shipping than anybody else and tried to persuade hotheads on both sides to moderate their views, but in vain. There was loose talk about British commercial envy, although Britain kept faith with free trade long after Germany had converted to protectionism. The fact that there were many advances in naval architecture and technology about this time whetted appetites: the torpedo, the steam turbine engine, better armor, better guns, better optics, the imminent prospect of submarines, of oil replacing coal as fuel. Did this not give the energetic newcomer all the chances in the world to outflank the established supremacy of the Royal Navy?

A youthful and energetic naval captain called Alfred Tirpitz, from a modest but ambitious middle-class family in the north, found his vocation in devising a battle fleet for the Kaiser capable of forcing the British into a strategic duel where their empire was most vulnerable, in the waters around the British Isles. Such a strategy was in blatant defiance of the time-honored instincts of the Junkers, with their great respect for the combined might of Russia and France. What fascinated the Kaiser, however, was the chance to impress not only British admirals but also German voters, and to capture their imagination and loyalty by opening up new prospects for Germany's *Grosse Politik*. He saw himself as a true successor of the "soldier king" Frederick William I and his son Frederick the Great, and wanted to go down as another hero in the annals of Prus-

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sian greatness. The army may have felt time to divert funds to a navy that no one really desire, but it did not understand distant colonies and naval displays for the Germany.

Naval fever among the Germans was a wave of imperialism gripping the world. In 1882 the scramble for Africa began with the British Empire, on top of controlling the Suez Canal, majority shareholding, formally occupying Egypt. Other European powers looked for acquisitions elsewhere. Germany, meanwhile, kept a cool head. No adventurer came to impress upon him the need to compete with France and Britain and to stake out German Africa. "Your map of Africa is very nice," he said. "But there is France, and here is Russia, in the middle, and that is my map of Africa." He was scorned from the press and the public mounted, demanding that vast riches waited to be grabbed by Germany and traders, and that, if emigration from Germany could not be stopped, at least it should be to German colonies.

Reluctantly, Bismarck accepted that a little of the Reich budget should be allocated for shipping lines, and that the German flag should fly in Tanganyika in east Africa, where tea and cotton were grown, and in southwest Africa where diamonds and other desirables were eventually discovered. How could Germany lose sight of the precarious position of the middle of the European system. He therefore tried everything possible to help the French to get enemies in the East and Asia so as to make French public opinion *bleue des Vosges*, and succumb instead to the lu-

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sian greatness. The army may have felt that this was no
time to divert funds to a navy that no sensible person could
really desire, but it did not understand the fascination of
distant colonies and naval displays for the middle classes of
Germany.

Naval fever among the Germans owed much to the
wave of imperialism gripping the world in the 1880s. In
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Empire, on top of controlling the Suez Canal through a
majority shareholding, formally occupied Egypt. Other
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with France and Britain and to stake out German claims in
Africa. "Your map of Africa is very nice," Bismarck said.
"But there is France, and here is Russia, and we are in the
middle, and that is my map of Africa." However, pressure
from the press and the public mounted, driven by the idea
that vast riches waited to be grabbed by German explorers
and traders, and that, if emigration from German lands
could not be stopped, at least it should be channeled into
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bleue des Vosges, and succumb instead to the lure of the Atlas

ce paddies of Cochinchine. With the
 g to swap Zanzibar for Heligoland in
 his successor Caprivi delivered. In his
 smarck, weary of colonial imbroglis
 ire, even tried to rid the Reich of the
 an, negotiating with a consortium of
 who would, for a symbolic rent of
 now on their own account. Alas, this
 onial lobby had grown too strong, the
 uth far-flung dependencies too great.
 r the Caprivi interlude of strategic
 o plant the black, white and red flag
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 t of colonial enthusiasts also began to
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 ixteenth century. In a thundering
 897, the chief of the Wilhelmstrasse,
 n Office came to be called, State Sec-
 ulow, demanded "a place in the sun."
 ind a picnic spot in the nearby Tier-
 e Park, but foreign possessions to
 a which to make money, to gain pres-
 ational cohesion. A German govern-
 colonial lure would have had to be
 Bismarck at the zenith of his power
 completely what he saw as danger-
 ventures. But the successive incum-

bents of the Wilhelmstrasse—from 1894 to 1900 the sep-
 tuagenarian Prince Hohenlohe, no longer capable of seri-
 ous work, and from 1900 to 1909 Baron, then Count and
 Prince von Bülow, called by his many detractors "the eel"
 because of his extremely flexible spine—were weak lead-
 ers. They were appointed by the Kaiser so he could have
 all the prestige and glory of *Weltpolitik*, imagining he could
 run the country with a combination of neo-absolutism and
 charismatic leadership, undisturbed by the complications
 of modern industrial society. For William II, the whole of
 Germany was nothing but a giant toy created by the
 Almighty to please His Imperial Majesty. Of course, this
 could never work in a political system with militant orga-
 nized interests and ambitious and jealous political parties,
 and it ended, after a series of gaffes on his part, in sad car-
 icature.

The battle fleet and all the vainglorious dreams coming
 with it in fact provided a powerful and suggestive means,
 not so much for foreign adventure as for domestic consen-
 sus. Up and down the country Admiral von Tirpitz, now in
 high administrative office as Secretary for the Navy, paid
 journalists to sing the praises of imperialism and profes-
 sors to give *Weltpolitik* their academic blessing. In 1896 Max
 Weber, one of the great sociologists of the early twentieth
 century and later a democrat by conviction, thundered in
 his inaugural lecture at the University of Freiburg that the
 founding of the German Empire in 1871 would have been
 nothing but a youthful whim if it were not followed, here
 and now, by a massive commitment to "a new *Grosse Poli-
 tik*." The Flottenverein—the Naval League—was one big
 propaganda machine, well oiled by the Reichsmarineamt
 and its secret funds. Even opposition members of the
 Reichstag were treated with great finesse when it came to

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voting ever more funds for a navy whose strategic failure was clear to see by the time the British began building a new fleet of all-big-gun Dreadnought battleships in 1900.

Never was there a political strategy more broadly based and more popularly accepted than the conversion of Germany to the battle fleet. It was founded in the borderlands of democracy and demagoguery, but it also recruited support across a wide array of organized interests. Even the landowning classes were somehow reconciled to the naval enterprise through the return to agricultural protectionism, embodied in the tariffs introduced by Johannes von Miquel, Prussian Minister of Finance. They had acquired a taste for the better things in life, but their estates were mortgaged to the hilt, while they observed with disdain how the rich *Commerzienrat*s in the city—a title conferred by the administration on the rich, public-minded industrialist or banker, conveying official recognition of merit, sound finances and respectability—could pick a son-in-law from the flower of the aristocracy. In this situation they enjoyed the return to protectionism, recognized the bargain and welcomed a respite in a long story of decline.

The blue 100-mark bill portrayed a well-armed Germania, holding the emblems of commerce and industry, sitting under a giant oak tree, her gaze fixed on a long line of battleships steaming at high speed. At the turn of the century, little boys and girls from the well-to-do families used to wear sailor suits as their Sunday best and there is not a family photo from those days where naval uniform is not to be seen. The naval building program gave employment to the large arms firms such as Krupp of Essen and displayed German workmanship at its most modern, especially in optics and electrical appliances. A special tax was intro-

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duced on champagne to help pay for it by the way, has survived to this day.

Germany was an industrial lion. Britain. But in the last decades of the 19th century German industry was catching up, it was beginning to overtake all of Europe except the United States of America. As a rule, harnessed the sciences, state-financed colleges of technology, *Hochschulen* supplying a steady stream of working experts. German companies spoiled by captive markets in colonies paid more attention to marketing, investment for the workforce and undercapitalized than their British competitors. Basic research and practical application of German strength, while the early 20th century had been overcome long ago, not least the giant, multifunctional banks operating.

Iron and steel output were an index of economic strength and military potential. Output ahead from 4.1 million tons in 1880 to 17.6 million in 1913, while Britain's only 8.0 million in 1880, 5.0 million in 1913. The figures of iron and steel output in the United States are no less instructive: 9.3 million in 1900, 31.8 million in 1913. Hungary and Japan were, by comparison, so was Italy. In energy consumption, Germany started behind the British level, but by 1913 the two were on a par. In terms of aggregate income

✱ when Hitler & Goebbels came to power

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for a navy whose strategic failure time the British began building a Dreadnought battleships in 1900. A political strategy more broadly based than the conversion of Germany. It was founded in the borderlands of industry, but it also recruited support of organized interests. Even the emperor somehow reconciled to the naval return to agricultural protection tariffs introduced by Johannes von Sotter of Finance. They had acquired wealth in life, but their estates were while they observed with disdain the aristocracy in the city—a title conferred on the rich, public-minded industrialists—official recognition of merit, respectability—could pick a son-in-law from the aristocracy. In this situation they recognized the baronage, despite in a long story of decline. The emperor portrayed a well-armed Germany of commerce and industry, siting her gaze fixed on a long line of high speed. At the turn of the century from the well-to-do families used their Sunday best and there is not a day where naval uniform is not to the program gave employment to the Krupp of Essen and displayed at its most modern, especially in armaments. A special tax was intro-

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and 1933
The German Empire - 87

duced on champagne to help pay for the navy—a tax that, by the way, has survived to this day.

Germany was an industrial latecomer compared to Britain. But in the last decades of the nineteenth century, German industry was catching up rapidly, and after 1900 it was beginning to overtake all of its earlier competitors except the United States of America. German big business, as a rule, harnessed the sciences to its wagon, with the state-financed colleges of technology and *Technische Hochschulen* supplying a steady stream of ambitious, hard-working experts. German companies large and small, not spoiled by captive markets in colonies and dominions, paid more attention to marketing, invested in permanent education for the workforce and understood the economies of scale better than their British competitors. The fusion of basic research and practical application became a specific German strength, while the early shortage of capital had been overcome long ago, not least through the formation of giant, multifunctional banks operating worldwide.

Iron and steel output were an indicator for both economic strength and military potential. Germany forged ahead from 4.1 million tons in 1880 to 6.3 million in 1900 and 17.6 million in 1913, while Britain fell behind significantly: 8.0 million in 1880, 5.0 million in 1900, 7.7 million in 1913. The figures of iron and steel output for the United States are no less instructive: 9.3 million in 1880, 10.3 million in 1900, 31.8 million in 1913. France, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Japan were, by comparison, insignificant, and so was Italy. In energy consumption, another indicator of industrial prowess, Germany started in 1880 at about half the British level, but by 1913 the two countries were almost on a par. In terms of aggregate industrial potential, mea-

* when Hitler arrives,
ersta Schacht. 1933.

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sured in numbers employed, investment and value of production, Germany had overtaken Britain by 1913, while the United States was a global power in the making. In comparative terms the index was: USA 298.1, Germany 137.7, Britain 127.2.

Military strength and manpower did not keep pace with these industrial figures. In 1880 Germany had 425,000 soldiers and sailors, compared to Russia's 791,000, France's 543,000 and Britain's 367,000. In 1910 the numbers were Germany 694,000, France, with a considerably smaller population, 769,000, Britain 571,000 and the United States 127,000. In warship tonnage, Britain remained the leader throughout, but the margin closed significantly: in 1880 Germany had 88,000 tonnes, Britain 650,000, France 27,000, Russia 200,000 and the United States 169,000. In 1910 the figure was 964,000 tonnes for Germany, while Britain registered 2,174,000, France 725,000, the United States 824,000 and Imperial Japan 496,000. In short, while Germany's steel production led Europe, the country remained far behind in terms of military personnel. Even the substantial increase in naval vessels, in spite of Admiral von Tirpitz's ambitious and long-term building program of 1897, left it with only about 40 per cent of the British overall tonnage.

At the time of the Boer War in southern Africa (1899–1902), the British Foreign Office was ready to contemplate an alliance with "our German cousins," but the Wilhelmstrasse, under pressure from an enraged public, could not oblige. Instead the Franco-British *Entente Cordiale* of 1904 ended Britain's diplomatic and strategic isolation. Originally meant simply to forestall colonial imbroglios between Britain and France, such as the recent one in Upper Egypt near Fashoda, the *Entente Cordiale* was soon

seen as a means to contain German power. British leaders had shown for many years to be no longer able and willing to manage the world, yet now they got involved in the system of alliances and, unwittingly, put at risk their own whose existence they wanted to preserve for both Britain and Germany.

The German leaders were far from satisfied to acquire global power, but in London they were perceived as pursuing a master plan. After the Moroccan crisis in 1905, when the French won over this north African territory, the German detachment to Tangier. He wanted to show that Germany was strong and that Russian victory in 1904, was weak, and think of compensations for German losses at the Algeiras Conference, Germany wanted another piece of Africa. But the price of the *Cordiale* was consolidated. In 1907, when Germany reached agreement over the Far East with Japan and Afghanistan, putting to rest the "Great Game" for the time being, Russia became a partner in the *Cordiale*. The resulting Triple Entente was a geostrategic pincer movement on Germany. Government and people were enraged by the move. And encirclement it was, unwise by the standards of modern arms control, let alone by the standards of diplomacy. But German diplomacy had been heavily: "Intoxicated by German power and the need of no allies and made conscious of the need of no allies and made conscious of the need of no allies. Whether this is, as A. J. P. Taylor claims, the meaning of "encirclement" for Germany. The European diplomat and historian

BG

forming a united Europe, analogous to the electricity grids constructed by AEG at the turn of the century. This ran counter to the nationalism and imperialism prevailing in Europe and, sensing what was to come in 1914, Rathenau worked on it desperately.

I see shadows fall wherever I look. I see them when I walk the streets of Berlin in the evening, when I observe the insolence of our maddening wealth; when I listen to the emptiness of vain-glorious phrases or hear talk about pseudogermanic exclusivity. An epoch is not in good health just because the lieutenant shines and the attaché is full of hope. Matters are more serious for Germany now than they have been for decades.

Though born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Rathenau studied electrochemistry, so he understood that the steam-driven machinery of the first industrial revolution was being overtaken by the electricity of the second. "Mechanization" was a stage to be overcome, not only to liberate human beings from boring work, but also to allow the processes of modern management and banking to optimize production and distribution. In 1899 he joined the board of AEG, where his responsibility was to finance and construct electrical power plants and to create a Europe-wide network, with AEG in the center. The overcapacity hitting the electrical markets in 1900 was for him nothing but an incentive to reorganize the industry. He believed less in industry than in some all-encompassing enterprise. In this he was a true son of Prussia—*Stockpreusse*—and a guide to Lenin. The future world, he insisted, would have to become "a single inseparable economic community." The nation-states did not fit into this eminently rational universe and Rathenau the patriot pronounced this cold

truth in only a subdued way: German hegemony, in over the European continent, make war if the logic of industry and conclusively. Rathenau narrowly determined by the monopoly and profit, but allocation and efficiency.

He sensed that the forces of industry, unless integrated through balances, would destroy each other. British Imperial General Staff had already decided where to strike offensive in northern France with its mass armies. Lord Haldane, without an agreement, arms procurement, limitations through an international conference of troop numbers according to 1913 he expanded on the plan needed to move towards lasting

Trade legislation has to be made to be compensated, customs losses have to be made up. There is possibly superior, to that of the world would no longer be backward parts. Concomitantly nation edge... If the European economy open sooner than we think, political not global peace, not universal the end of conflict. But it redempt makes for a civilization of com

e listened. Rathenau's message was about he making. Europe was being driven on optimism in economic terms, and on the pessimism in strategic terms. "Es ist nichts," Ferdinand repeated while he was bleeding. "Nothing." He had been shot by a Bosnian Serb, an ident terrorist group called Mlada Bosna assisted by a Pan-Serb secret society called "The Black Hand." It was sponsored in turn by the Serb secret service. They were fired at the heir to the crowns of Austria and his wife, at Sarajevo in Bosnia on June 28, 1914. In less than six weeks led to the Great War, "the catastrophe of our century," to quote the historian George F. Kennan, was to leave behind not the proud nation-states of Europe, but a tip of the sexes, not poetry, painting or a vision of the past or any vision of the future, not a hope.

To quote the title of the poet Robert Graves, the trenches, it was *Goodbye to All That*.

For decades but never materialized, the idea of Europe traditionally going to the beyond. Self-preservation among the old, as did the logic of industrial and finance, and also the recognition that what happened in war would be nothing compared to what was bound to lose the moment war

seemingly absurd, but it happened nevertheless. It showed logic and sequence—as well as violence and blindness. The Austrian general was a combination of arrogance and anxiety, a short victorious war against Serbia could be won, while it carried with it the risk of a

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crushing Russian attack in the east. The Tsar, when signing the mobilization order setting the giant Russian army in motion, said, "It is the wish of the people." He knew that, if he did not sign, tsardom would be at risk from Pan-Slavist hysteria, while if he signed, only a miracle could save the Caesaro-Papism of the Romanovs. Jules Cambon, the French minister, knew that France, in order to save its alliances, would have to go to war, although direct French interests were not at stake in the Balkans. Bethmann Hollweg, the German Chancellor, sensed that, after the first moves, what followed was bound to be "a leap in the dark." The Kaiser, in spite of his boyish bragging, wanted to stop the westward thrust against France when suddenly faced with the prospect of war on two fronts. But His Majesty was advised by the chief of staff that, if he did so, he would no longer have an army but only a chaotic rabble.

The chain of events from the murder of the Archduke to the guns of August does indeed recall the lines that Leopold von Ranke, Graves' great uncle, had written about the march of human folly almost a century before:

It is neither blindness nor ignorance that ruins nations and states. Not for long do they ignore where they are heading. But deep inside them is a force at work, favored by nature and reinforced through habit, that drives them forward irresistibly as long as there is still any energy in them. Divine is he who controls himself. Most humans recognize their ruin, but they carry on regardless.

Stefan Zweig, the distinguished Jewish Viennese writer, echoed Ranke when he described the start of war in his memoirs: "The issue was not the small border regions. I have no other explanation than this excess of power becoming the tragic consequence of that inner dynamism

accumulated during those 40 years of power, driving towards a violent explosion."

Surely Austria had enough archdukes to replace the unhappy victim of Serb terror, and so be enabled to stumble on? The vast and heterogeneous empire could ill afford a war, major or minor, for fear of all its nationalities making their claims and overthrowing the precarious balances between Austrians and Hungarians, Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox, Christians and Jews; national aspirations meeting head-on the supranational elites of the monarchy, the bureaucracy, the military and the aristocracy. In Berlin, Archduke Franz Ferdinand had not been seen as a friend of the Dual Alliance. His loss was deemed to be "somehow tolerable," as a high official of the Wilhelmstrasse stated. But the assassination was indeed more than a cold-blooded, senseless murder. It was an attack on the Habsburg monarchy, to demonstrate its weakness. So, the reaction would have to offer proof of Austrian strength. Whatever Austrian diplomats and generals might decide, the German national interest was at stake, for the Danube monarchy was its last ally to count for anything—Italy was unlikely to stand up against the naval powers controlling the Mediterranean.

If the Austrians could administer a political humiliation to the regime in Belgrade, that was fine; even a surgical strike leading to Serb surrender was acceptable. "Now or never," William II remarked approvingly on the margins of a report from Vienna, "the Serbs must be put in their place." But if such strategies ran out of control and Russia marched against the central powers, it was at least preferable that the resulting war began with an Austrian move rather than a German one, as in the latter case the Austrians were unlikely to meet their treaty obligations. The

possibilities for escalation were not only the first two steps were. The rest had a kind of fatalistic quality even made worse by the Schlieffen: the Austrians had only a faint idea of the possibility of Germany attacking Italy, let alone restricting France, let alone restricting Europe. The Austrians were unaware of the thrust of the plan, they would have to stand alone, without German support. And if Italy could not be bought off, they would face a desperate two-front war.

After the Sarajevo murder, the Russian government, had spread the word that the Austrians had to stand together and fight. At the Wilhelmstrasse issued to the Austrians the "blank check"—the promise to support whatever the Austrians come what may. This was a dramatic move, Bismarck's wisdom; now to encourage Austria to go ahead, and to do this in the knowledge that the diplomatic machinery, meant that the Austrians were being put at risk for international interests.

Meanwhile, the European diplomatic system, year before, helped to settle the Balkans into a state of limbo. In the first phase, the absence of recognition that this time was the last into the Great War. In the second phase, a strategic overview was obscured by the concern of how to preserve the cohesion of the powers facing each other, the central powers gave reassurance to their weakest ally, Russia. In the third phase, the Russian move was at high speed.

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possibilities for escalation were not ignored or excluded but only the first two steps were deliberately accepted. The rest had a kind of fatalistic quality. The situation was even made worse by the Schlieffen Plan, of whose details the Austrians had only a faint idea, which excluded the possibility of Germany attacking Russia first before turning to France, let alone restricting the war to eastern Europe. The Austrians were unaware that, given the westward thrust of the plan, they would have to face the Russian onslaught alone, without German reinforcements. And if Italy could not be bought off, the Austrian armies would face a desperate two-front war.

After the Sarajevo murder, the Russian secret police, the Ochrana, had spread the word that all Slavic brothers now had to stand together and fight. At the same time, the Wilhelmstrasse issued to the Austrians what became known as the "blank check"—the promise to stand behind the Austrians come what may. This was a dramatic departure from Bismarck's wisdom; now to encourage the Austrians to go ahead, and to do this in the knowledge of their sclerotic diplomatic machinery, meant that Germany's very existence was being put at risk for interests other than its own.

Meanwhile, the European diplomacy that had, only one year before, helped to settle the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 fell into a state of limbo. In the first phase, there was an absence of recognition that this time the crisis might escalate into the Great War. In the second phase, the vital strategic overview was obscured by the immediate tactical concern of how to preserve the cohesion of the two blocs facing each other, the central powers and the *Entente*, and to give reassurance to their weakest members, Austria and Russia. In the third phase, the Russian mobilization was moving at high speed.

The Germans were close to despair. They realized that Austrian diplomacy worked far too slowly to pre-empt Russian mobilization and effect a *fait accompli* against the despised Serb regime in Belgrade. But there was still hope, or so Bethmann Hollweg believed, that the Tsar might withdraw, that France would advise peace and that, as a consequence, the *Entente* would fall apart. Britain could have had a key role but, almost paralyzed at home by the prospect of civil war in Ireland, the Cabinet failed to act while there was still time. Ultimately, the war that followed was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because all the powers believed, more or less, that the Great War was inevitable sooner or later, their efforts were directed much more at finding the right moment to strike and at preserving their alliances than at securing the peace. Thus the alliances, instead of preventing war, made it almost inevitable. Every single country had, ultimately, defensive motives masquerading behind offensive ones. Charles de Gaulle, at the time a young army officer, soon to be thrown into the bloody chaos of Verdun, thirty years later summed up what began. He called it "La guerre de trente ans de notre siècle," the twentieth century's Thirty Years War.

DANCE OF

echoes in these concerns of Benjamin Disraeli's forebodings in 1871 about the "German revolution" and its effects on British interests. The same fears of a "German revolution" came quickly flooding back, in Germany as well as in Great Britain and the rest of Europe.

Berlin has a collection of buildings with resonances far beyond their immediate presence. The Reichstag on the edge of Berlin's old political square mile is an apt metaphor for the fusing of the past and the present. Some might consider it also to serve as a symbol of reassurance for Lady Thatcher, since it was a British architect, Sir Norman Foster, who gave the building its present shape. Leaving aside the bizarre fact that a new German political correctness would like to do away with its old name which supposedly smacks of empire and imperialism, the building with its powerful and massive Wilhelmine Renaissance structure and its transparent, ultramodern glass cupola, represents very well Germany's aspirations, past and present. During the last two decades of imperial Germany the Reichstag was the seat of an unruly parliament and the political focus of the ill-fated Weimar Republic. In early 1933 it was burnt down by a Communist arsonist who it is now believed was induced to do so by the Nazis, and in the years of Hitler's dictatorship it stood as an empty shell. In the last days of World War II it became the center of hand-to-hand fighting between the Red Army and desperate Wehrmacht troops. Some traces of machine-gun fire can still be seen today as well as the graffiti that Soviet soldiers left behind in the basement.

The neoclassical Brandenburg Gate, erected just before the French Revolution, has witnessed events from Napoleon's triumphant entry in 1806 to the victorious return of the Prussian guards from Paris in 1871; from the

bitterness of civil war in 1918–of Hitler's storm troopers on 1933; from the blockade of Berlin the building and dismantling of respectively. A few yards south of in 1938–9 Albert Speer, Hitler's in record time the vast New Führer. In 1945 a marble monument erected nearby, complete with tanks, to commemorate the violence between 1941 and 1945—there their collaboration with Hitler years previously. The same story Soviet embassy, the seat of State Europe which is today post-Soviet the west of the gate extend many centuries by traders and armies "siegestsäule," a column celebrating France in 1871. Crowned by a glory, the column is adorned with a trophy of military triumph. To the "Unter den Linden," which once baroque Town Palace, built for Demolished in 1952 by the East German an empty space where the proletariat to time to thank its leaders for their

In a landscape saturated with monuments to human folly, the marckian empire stand out, for the formative period of modern Germany which he created in 1871, notwithstanding and economic globalization political life. German corporatism

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bitterness of civil war in 1918-19 to the torchlight parade
 of Hitler's storm troopers on the evening of January 30,
 1933; from the blockade of Berlin by Stalin in 1948-49 to
 the building and dismantling of the wall in 1961 and 1989
 respectively. A few yards south of the gate is a space where
 in 1938-9 Albert Speer, Hitler's legendary architect, built
 in record time the vast Neue Reichskanzlei for the
 Führer. In 1945 a marble monument of the same stone was
 erected nearby, complete with vintage Soviet guns and
 tanks, to commemorate the victories of the Red Army
 between 1941 and 1945—there is no mention of course of
 their collaboration with Hitler and his henchmen two
 years previously. The same stone was used to build the
 Soviet embassy, the seat of Stalin's proconsul in central
 Europe which is today post-Soviet Russia's embassy. To
 the west of the gate extend many miles of a route used for
 centuries by traders and armies, interrupted only by the
 "siegestsäule," a column celebrating Prussia's victory over
 France in 1871. Crowned by a gilt bronze goddess of vic-
 tory, the column is adorned with gun barrels in a celebra-
 tion of military triumph. To the east is the old promenade,
 "Unter den Linden," which once led to the splendid
 baroque Town Palace, built for the first Prussian king.
 Demolished in 1952 by the East German regime, it became
 an empty space where the proletariat assembled from time
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In a landscape saturated with history and littered with
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The Hindenburg Era

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Weimar

THE PRECEDING CHAPTER dealt mainly with Versailles, not Weimar, or rather with Weimar's foreign policy and revisionism, not its domestic policy. Yet in the final analysis it was the domestic policy that led from Weimar to Hitler.

The Weimar Republic lasted a mere fourteen years, but in that brief span it went through three distinctive stages. In its early years, from its founding to 1924, it seemed destined to fail. Sur-

BG 1925-33

Rebel

prisingly enough, this stage was followed by a period of apparent consolidation, the "golden twenties," 1925 to 1929, and they in turn were followed by a period of disintegration, from 1930 to 1932, which paved the way for Hitler's takeover.

20-23

I will refrain from discussing the first period in detail. The years from 1920 to 1923, and in part also 1924, were an extraordinarily confused time replete with a succession of governments, putsch attempts by both the right and the left, and political assassinations largely by the right. And all this was played out against the backdrop of inflation, the first of the two great social catastrophes the republic created in the effort to rid itself of onerous reparations. Perhaps none of these events by itself was of world-shaking significance, yet two factors deserve closer scrutiny.

To begin with, the Weimar Republic was propped up by the three parties of the old Reichstag majority of 1917, the Social Democrats, the German Democratic Party, and the Center. They held a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly of 1919 and formed the Weimar Coalition.

They were the only ones to vote for the Weimar Constitution and for replacing the monarchy, a form of government Germans had come to accept, with a republic. And even within these groupings there were many who did not actively favor the new form of government. They merely tolerated it. As a popular saying had it, Germany was a

republic with hyperbole, obviously balanced were the odds. The different kind of fact was that the Nation wanted the

In the 1920s the position in the democrats lost other partners right regain quently the government. the non-Social at majority apart as soon from the end was a right minister, departments were the first fact fledgling republic

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this stage was followed by a period of consolidation, the "golden age" from 1920 to 1929, and they in turn were followed by a period of disintegration, from 1930 to 1933, which paved the way for Hitler's

from discussing the first period from 1920 to 1923, and in part an extraordinarily confused time of succession of governments, putsch by the right and the left, and politics largely by the right. And all this against the backdrop of inflation, and two great social catastrophes that made the effort to rid itself of onerous debts none of these events by itself of great significance, yet two factors of great importance.

h, the Weimar Republic was formed by three parties of the old Reichstag: the Social Democrats, the Catholic Party, and the Center. They formed the Weimar Coalition.

ones to vote for the Weimar Republic or replacing the monarchy, and even within these groupings there were those who did not actively favor the republic. They merely tolerated it. Germany was a

BC 1920-23

republic without republicans. This may have been hyperbole, but in fact the republic was precariously balanced on but one leg. The left Centrists were the only ones who actually liked the republic. The Communist left wanted an entirely different kind of republic. And the right, which in fact was far stronger than their representation in the National Assembly would indicate, simply wanted their kaiser back.

In the first Reichstag elections in the mid-1920s the Weimar coalition lost its majority position in the National Assembly. The Social Democrats lost almost half their seats, and the two other partners also suffered significant losses. The right regained its traditional strength. Consequently the German Reich never again had a stable government. There were minority governments of the non-Socialist parties and there were attempts at majority coalitions from left to right that fell apart as soon as they were formed. At one time, from the end of 1922 until August 1923, there even was a rightist government of so-called *Fachminister*, departmental ministers. All these governments were short-lived improvisations. That is the first factor that seemed to seal the fate of the fledgling republic.

The second is not so obvious. It has to do with the SPD, the major party in both the Weimar Coalition and the Weimar Republic, and the only one not free to change its course. Programmatically it had always been a republican party, but without

1925?

Golden

BSG 1919-1920

openly saying so it had adjusted to the monarchy under William II. In 1918, when everything was falling apart, the SPD had offered to jump into the breach. On November 9, 1918, Ebert still attempted to save the monarchy by appointing a regent. When that failed the Social Democrats were ready to administer the republic like the old monarchy. They were willing to preserve the infrastructure of the monarchy, to let the ruling classes rule, to continue, so to speak, the monarchy under Social Democratic management—a very generous offer on the part of President Ebert to a society and state that he had taken over and saved from revolution. But his offer was rejected, and that epitomizes the enormous problems that beset the republic from the outset. All the institutions of the monarchy—army, bureaucracy, judiciary, church, universities, agriculture, industry—rejected the republic even though it never interfered with them. Their traditions and personnel, their status and positions, were never touched.

The rejection by these groups differed in degree. The top bureaucracy, the ministerial bureaucracy, remained grudgingly loyal. The ministerial counsels and administrative heads carried on; they made themselves useful, even if not with their wonted enthusiasm. They did their job. As a matter of fact their passive resistance helped foil one of the early rightist coups, the Kapp Putsch of 1920.

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it had adjusted to the monarchy. In 1918, when everything was SPD had offered to jump into the emperor 9, 1918, Ebert still attacked the monarchy by appointing a minister who failed the Social Democrats to administer the republic like the old monarchy were willing to preserve the monarchy, to let the ruling continue, so to speak, the monarchical Democratic management—after on the part of President Ebert stated that he had taken over and administration. But his offer was rejected, and the enormous problems that came from the outset. All the institutions—monarchy—army, bureaucracy, universities, agriculture, in the republic even though it was with them. Their traditions and status and positions, were never

by these groups differed in the bureaucracy, the ministerial bureaucracy grudgingly loyal. The officials and administrative heads carried themselves useful, even if not with enthusiasm. They did their job. Their passive resistance helped with rightist coups, the Kapp Putsch

BE 1920

That was the most positive response to the republic on the part of the old elite. Unlike the upper bureaucracy, the Reichswehr during the Kapp Putsch maintained a position of icy neutrality toward both the legitimate and illegitimate governments. "Soldiers do not shoot at soldiers," proclaimed the commander in chief, General von Seeckt. At a later occasion, in another crisis, President Ebert, the army's nominal commander in chief, asked Seeckt a demeaning question: "I would really like to know where the Reichswehr stands on this," he said. "The Reichswehr stands behind me," was the arrogant reply.

At the secondary schools and universities the attitude toward the republic was extremely negative. Students and professors, teachers and pupils, as I know from personal experience, were antirepublicans, monarchists, nationalists, and revanchists. The situation in the churches was not quite that bad, but all in all the Protestant churches were as rightist then as they are leftist now. And the Catholic Church also distanced itself from the republic, even though the Catholic Center party was part of the government. In 1933 the Church changed course and signed a concordat with Hitler.

With regard to industry things were a little more complicated. Shortly after the revolution, in November, employers and unions signed an agreement, the so-called Stinnes-Legien Agreement, a sort of truce granting the unions a voice in wage

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negotiations. But inflation sharpened the class conflict between employers and workers. On the whole, Weimar was the republic of only one segment of the population, the workers [or at least of those who were not Communists]; before too long business did not want any part of that state.

The rejection by these assorted groups was probably the biggest single reason why the republic failed to consolidate itself as a stable form of government of the German Reich under Ebert's presidency, from 1919 to 1924. The fact that Ebert, contrary to the provisions of the Weimar Constitution, was not elected but only "provisionally" appointed by the National Assembly, is secondary.

Then, between 1925 and 1929, it suddenly seemed as though the republic might yet succeed in consolidating itself. Ebert died in February 1925, and now for the first time the German people cast their ballots in a constitutional presidential election. The first round, in which every party fielded a candidate, produced no clear-cut winner. In the second round the German National party, the monarchist right, made a brilliant move. They ran a war hero, Field Marshal Hindenburg, as their candidate. He won.

Hindenburg's victory was a blow to the republicans. The aged war hero was fronting for the arch-reactionary Ludendorff, a dyed-in-the-wool monarchist. How would the republic fare under him? Surprisingly enough, things went very well for a while. The first five years of Hindenburg's

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the British dominions and in part to England itself. England had achieved its war aims. France, on the other hand, had not. After a draining, devastating war, France, with its population of forty million, still faced a seventy-million-strong, undivided, cohesive Germany, a Germany that, once it recovered and threw off the burdens of Versailles, might again become superior. Consequently, France like Germany became a revisionist power after 1919. The Versailles Treaty did not satisfy France's needs, and self-interest dictated that it try to revise it at Germany's expense. Germany for its part was also determined to get the agreement revised, above all to get rid of those nagging burdens—disarmament and reparations—two obstacles in the path of a stronger Germany.

Although there was unanimous agreement in Germany that the treaty was unacceptable, that it had to be revised, there was no agreement over what should be stricken first. Was it more important to try and circumvent the disarmament clauses and to reassert a military presence or should the scuttling of reparations take priority, to reestablish Germany's position in the world by rebuilding the German economy?

The first approach was the preference of the Reichswehr, the Germany army, and in particular of its then commander in chief, General Hans von Seeckt. Initially his view prevailed. Seeckt made it clear that he could reach his goal only by working with Russia. And so, beginning in the twen-

ties, the Reichswehr cooperated with arms, soldiers, and military consuls. Köstritz, re Soviet perfect this. After a

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nions and in part to England itself. He believed its war aims. France, on the other hand, was not. After a draining, devastating war, with its population of forty million, Germany, twenty-million-strong, undivided, was left in ruins, a Germany that, once it relieved itself of the burdens of Versailles, would become superior. Consequently, Germany became a revisionist power. The Versailles Treaty did not satisfy Germany, and self-interest dictated that it was at Germany's expense. Germany also determined to get the agreement to give up all to get rid of those two things—disarmament and reparations—the path of a stronger Germany. There was no unanimous agreement in Germany; the treaty was unacceptable, that was clear. Indeed, there was no agreement over reparations from the first. Was it more important to circumvent the disarmament and reassert a military presence or to let reparations take priority, to maintain Germany's position in the world by a strong economy? The approach was the preference of the German army, and in particular its commander in chief, General Hans von Seeckt. His view prevailed. Seeckt made it clear that he could reach his goal only by working. And so, beginning in the twen-

ties, the Reichswehr and the Red Army began their secret cooperation. The Soviet Union provided the Reichswehr with terrain for military exercises, with arms, tanks, airplanes, and chemical weapons barred by the Versailles Treaty. In return, the Reichswehr helped the new Red Army train its soldiers, and advised it on strategy. A German military consultant in the Soviet Union, General Kötzing, reported in 1935, after an outstanding Soviet performance: "We can take satisfaction in this. After all, their commanders are our pupils."

Still another opportunity for military cooperation with Soviet Russia soon presented itself. In 1920, after Poland attacked Russia, war broke out between the two countries. Russia was expected to win. The Russians got as far as Warsaw. Even back then Seeckt already thought that in case of a Russian victory Germany ought to attack Poland and divide the spoils with Russia and at least regain what had been lost in 1919 at Versailles.

However, Poland won, so that plan fizzled. The Russians did not annex any Polish territories. On the contrary, Poland annexed large parts of Byelorussia and the Ukraine. That is how matters would stand until 1939. But this outcome also favored Germany. It exacerbated the hostility between Poland and Russia, and this in turn helped the Seeckt wing of the Reichswehr to work toward a German-Russian alliance and a German-Russian war against Poland. The Reichswehr even managed to win the temporary support of the German

1920's

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BC 1922

foreign-policy establishment, which generally pursued a different course. That temporary alliance produced the first sensational postwar agreement, the Rapallo Treaty of 1922 between Germany and the Soviet Union. It exploded like a bombshell in the midst of an international economic conference in Genoa and gave rise to profound and lasting misgivings over Germany's motives, to the so-called Rapallo Complex.

Looked at superficially, the Rapallo Treaty was an innocuous document, an overdue accord between Germany and the Soviet Union. Since Versailles had nullified the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the new Germany decided to enter into official diplomatic relations with the new Russia—the Western powers had not yet done so—to draw up trade agreements with reciprocal most-favored-nation clauses, and on the whole to resume normal relations. In itself there was nothing objectionable about any of this. But of course there was more to this treaty than meets the eye.

After Rapallo the unofficial German-Russian military cooperation became more formal, and it lasted until 1933. The possibility of a joint campaign against Poland was not abandoned by either of the two military commands. The cooperation between Germany and Russia may be said to have brought the Reichswehr closer to its primary objective: the circumvention of the military provisions of the Versailles Treaty.

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BC early 20's
inflation

and the government, however, were of an alto-
gether different order. Their primary goal was to
shed the reparations burden. That is why German
policymakers were willing to chart the cata-
strophic course that destroyed the country's social
fabric, the devastating, galloping inflation that be-
gan in 1919 and reached its climax in 1923.

Even before the bizarre situation of 1923, all
German monetary wealth had already been de-
stroyed between 1919 and 1922. At the end of the
war, the ratio of the German mark to the dollar
was 1 to 10, but by 1922 it was 1 to 20,000. In
other words, Germany's monetary assets had dis-
appeared. A sweeping redistribution of wealth
from thrifty savers to property owners was un-
derway, though this too had some transitory eco-
nomical advantages.

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From 1919 to 1923 Germany had full em-
ployment, even though real wages declined. At the
expense of those who had been thrifty and saved
their money, German industry was able to avoid
the mass unemployment that other countries ex-
perienced after demobilization. Germany's ex-
ports rose at an unprecedented rate, albeit at
constantly falling prices, and plants kept produc-
ing. Thus the first victims of the inflation were
not the workers but the thrifty burgers. They were
in effect expropriated, and that of course created
enormous bitterness. Stefan Zweig wrote that
nothing made the German middle class so re-
ceptive to Hitler's message as the inflation of

BC early 20s

1919-22. Their bitterness was not completely unfounded. Not only did the government watch inflation go into orbit, but it used it for its own purposes. If Germany no longer possessed an internationally accepted currency with which to pay its debt, they reasoned, then Germany might perhaps be able to shake off the burdensome reparations.

The reparations issue served the interests of both German and French revisionism. The Germans let inflation run on to avoid paying reparations. The French tried to use Germany's failure to meet its obligations to revise the territorial stipulations of the Versailles Treaty. In 1923, the revisionist efforts of the two adversaries culminated in the Ruhr conflict.

Prior to the Ruhr affair, France had taken action against Germany in retaliation for Germany's failure to meet its monetary obligations. France would make occasional forays across the Rhine and occupy cities on the right bank. Then in 1923 France decided on a major move—to occupy the Ruhr valley, Germany's most important industrial region and prime economic asset. France used military force to pry the Ruhr loose from Germany economically and, later, politically as well.

Germany responded by passive resistance. Production in the Ruhr ground to a halt. And since the population, workers and employers alike, had to be kept alive, the Treasury's printing presses came to the rescue, printing paper money by the

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bushel. The presses could not keep pace with the
demand. By 1923 the production of all that paper
money posed a real problem. Private printing
presses had to pitch in. The mass of paper created
transportation problems. Entire freight trains were
comandeered to help ship these piles of banknotes.

By 1923 the passive resistance in the Ruhr and
the methods used to finance it had brought Ger-
many's "money" economy to a virtual standstill.
Everyone in Germany was familiar with the daily
fluctuation of the dollar-mark exchange rate. It
was like a fever chart. In the beginning of 1923 a
dollar cost twenty thousand marks. By August it
had climbed to a million, and three months later
to a billion. At the end of 1923 a dollar cost 4.2
trillion marks. To all intents and purposes Ger-
many no longer had a currency.

Before 1923 the inflation had wiped out only
monetary *wealth*, but now monetary *income* also
lost its value. Workers and the thrifty middle class
alike had become the victims of inflation. In effect,
work was no longer compensated in money, or
only in money that lost its value within the hour.
It was an absurd situation, and in the fall of 1923
it led to a political crisis. At stake was Germany's
political survival. Regardless of its positive value,
the passive resistance in the Ruhr obviously had
to be stopped. Germany's other creditors, England
and the United States, had become convinced that
things could not go on this way. They put pressure
on France to end the Ruhr adventure. And Ger-

many finally had to do something that should have been done in 1919-20: revalue the currency.

The new stable currency made it possible for Germany to renegotiate the terms of the reparations agreement. Under the new terms Germany was to pay moderate annual installments of two billion marks on a yet-to-be-determined total amount. As security Germany had to pledge some of its revenues, primarily customs and railway revenues. Beyond that, the western borders were to be firmly fixed in an agreement between Germany, England, the United States, and France, in order to forestall future border violations by France and territorial revisions by Germany.

The upshot of all this was a new peace agreement in 1924-25. It consisted of two parts: the London Agreement of 1924 on the reparations question, and the Locarno Treaty of 1925, in which Germany unconditionally and voluntarily renounced all claims on Alsace-Lorraine and agreed to demilitarize the occupied left bank of the Rhine once the occupation ended. In exchange Germany won an extremely valuable concession, a British-Italian guarantee of the newly agreed-upon German-French western border.

Locarno meant that France in effect broke away from its East European alliance. If the German western border was guaranteed by Italy and England, then France would not be permitted to cross it if Germany were to get involved in a war with the Poles or the Czechs, France's allies in the

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East. The conclusion France drew from this im-
plicit result of Locarno was to switch to a purely
defensive strategy. In the wake of Locarno, France
built the Maginot Line and proclaimed to all the
world that it no longer considered itself a leading
European power and the guarantor of the new Cen-
tral and East European national states. Its sole con-
cern was with its own security and a desire to learn
to live with Germany.

France had tried to avert such a course by
pushing for an Eastern Locarno, that is, a guar-
antee of Germany's eastern border, particularly
the Polish-German border, by England, Italy, and
France itself. However, this was roundly rejected
not only by Germany but by England and Italy as
well. And for good reason. It was not at all certain
that the Western powers would be able to guar-
antee Poland's borders in the event of a German
war in the East. As we found out in World War II,
these doubts were well founded. An Eastern Lo-
carno would have required Soviet agreement, but
the Soviet Union was not part of the European
power structure. Moreover, the Soviet Union had
no intention of guaranteeing any of Poland's bor-
ders against Germany, particularly in view of its
own territorial designs on Poland.

The situation after Locarno thus looked like
this: The Germans were quietly but effectively
working with the Soviet Union in the East to un-
dermine the military provisions of the Versailles
Treaty. In the West they had something like a new

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1919-24

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olidate itself as a stable form of
the German Reich under Ebert's
1919 to 1924. The fact that Ebert,
provisions of the Weimar Consti-
lected but only "provisionally"
National Assembly, is secondary.
en 1925 and 1929, it suddenly
the republic might yet succeed
itself. Ebert died in February
the first time the German peo-
pts in a constitutional presiden-
first round, in which every party
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BC 1925-28

presidency turned out to be the best period of the
Weimar Republic. Finally everything seemed to
be coming together, and for a simple reason.

The old ruling classes of the monarchy who
continued to be the real rulers of the Republic
without ever accepting the new state now took a
fresh look. A republic presided over by Hinden-
burg, a highly respected figure of the monarchy, a
man who in World War I had already been a sort
of surrogate emperor, was something altogether
different from Ebert and the Social Democrats.
Consequently the biggest rightist party of the
Reichstag, the German National People's party,
which up to then had refused to participate in the
government, changed its mind.

Between 1925 and 1928, the Weimar Republic
was governed almost uninterruptedly by a rightist
majority coalition of the Center, the German Peo-
ple's party, and the German Nationalists. Now the
Republic was firmly planted on two legs. It no
longer depended on a center-left coalition. A co-
alition of the Center and the right took over and
stabilized the country.

Furthermore, as we have seen, the economic
situation improved palpably in those years. In the
last year of Ebert's life inflation had been halted,
currency reform, even a modest revaluation, had
finally come, and, thanks to the flow of American
loans, there even was a mini-prosperity. Foreign
policy was also able to chalk up some successes:
the evacuation of the Ruhr, followed by the Lo-

carno Treaty, a sort of belated Western peace accord which insured against any possible French attacks. In short, the future looked promising, and until 1928 it looked as though good times were here to stay.

Then two things happened even before the market crash of 1929 that destabilized the republic once again. The first was the mid-1928 electoral defeat of the ruling center-right coalition. The German Nationalists lost votes and the Social Democrats scored their greatest victory since 1919. This meant that no new government could be formed, neither on the basis of the old Weimar Coalition nor on the basis of what I call the Hindenburg Coalition. The Weimar Republic lacked something the present-day Federal Republic has had from the very beginning: a clear-cut party alignment of the right and the left. Weimar had to fall back on a so-called Great Coalition of the left and the right, from the SPD all the way to the right Liberals, and that was a very weak government because its two wings pulled it in different directions. The period from mid-1928 to early 1930, the time of the Great Coalition, lacked political stability despite the favorable economic situation.

That was one destabilizing factor. The other, which proved to be far more dangerous, had to do with the person of the president. In 1925, when he took office, Hindenburg was seventy-seven years old; by now he was more than eighty. He

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BG 1922-1929-32

would not be president forever. It was not to be
assumed that in 1932, after seven years in office
and at the age of eighty-four, he would be able to
run for office again, let alone serve out a full term.
What was to be done? There was no second Hin-
denburg in sight. The fate of that wonderful com-
promise worked out in the early Hindenburg years,
the near-monarchist republic that the monarchist
right was ready to accept, rested on aged shoulders.

How could this compromise be saved—or
should it be saved at all? The right grew restless.
The German Nationalists had a new, far more rad-
ical leadership and no longer were part of the gov-
ernment. They began to reassess their attitude
toward the Hindenburg era. Perhaps, they told
themselves, it should be seen not as the stabilizer
of the republic but as the transition to the resto-
ration of the monarchy. Could Hindenburg grad-
ually evolve from president of the Reich into
trustee, perhaps even regent, of a restored mon-
archy? Plans of this sort were seriously discussed
in the army and given substance by its leading
political figure, General von Schleicher.

In the spring of 1929, before the economic
crash, in a time of seeming calm and stability,
Schleicher invited the new rightist leader of the
Center party, Heinrich Brüning, to his house. The
general, as we have since learned from Brüning's
memoirs, made suggestions that seemed to invite
a coup.

The balance of the old chancellor's term,

BG 1924-29

peace with France, England, and Italy, an appendix to the Versailles Treaty designed to forestall a war between France and Germany. For the time being the Reich had to continue to pay reparations, moderate annual installments on an unspecified total sum. Furthermore, the United States had become involved in the European economy in a way that promised to be of greater help to Germany than to the others.

True, France and England were Germany's creditors, but they were also indebted to the United States. The war had been financed largely by the United States, and the Americans insisted on the repayment of these war loans. France and England paid, even if reluctantly. A sort of circular economic process was underway: Germany paid reparations to England and France, who in turn paid war debts to America, who, in order to keep it all moving along, pumped loans into Germany. The years 1924 to 1929 became a period of rebuilding in Germany, even of a mild prosperity, only because America's loans exceeded Germany's reparations payments. It has been established that in these years Germany paid out roughly ten billion marks in reparations and received about twenty-five billion in American credits. And its revitalized economy enabled Germany to become an exporter.

The man who presided over all these agreements and revisions of Versailles was Gustav Stresemann, Germany's foreign minister, although he

never expressed his ambition to win. He rarely at various times to guess what

His immediate left bank of the occupation force not live to see 1929, the year in 1930.

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never expressed satisfaction over what he had won. He rarely discussed his revisionist goals, but at various times he hinted at them, so it is possible to guess what he had in mind.

His immediate goal was the evacuation of the left bank of the Rhine by the British and French occupation forces. He won that, although he did not live to see it. The evacuation, agreed to in 1929, the year of Stresemann's death, took place in 1930.

Stresemann's second goal was to mobilize the so-called ethnic Germans, primarily those in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Balkans. He hoped that they would form German outposts in their countries, push them toward a pro-German political and economic course, and perhaps encourage their incorporation into Germany. There too he was successful, much more so than Hitler later on. After World War II, however, that policy was to spell disaster for these "ethnic Germans."

Stresemann's third goal, more long-range, was a territorial revision in the East, primarily the elimination of the so-called Polish Corridor. He also hoped one day to regain—through pressure, not necessarily through war—the Upper Silesian region that had become part of Poland. That did not seem a completely vain hope, considering that the Locarno Treaty tied France's hands in East Europe.

The fourth and most far-ranging of Strese- mann's goals was the unification of Germany and

BC 1929-1931

Austria. At the time Austria also favored *Anschluss*. Stresemann was willing to put off this part of his scheme until the diplomatic climate became more favorable.

Germany remained revisionist, but for the time being the only goal it pursued was the early evacuation of the Rhineland and a settlement of the reparations problem. The Young Plan, which made reparations a financial rather than a purely political matter, paved the way for such an agreement in 1929. It further reduced Germany's reparations debt and extended the repayment period to the 1980s. Since the German economy was flourishing, these obligations were easily met out of its trade surplus.

The worldwide economic crisis set off by the American stock market crash of 1929 shattered Germany's interval of comparative calm and prosperity. The consequences were very serious: American loan payments were suspended and short-term loans were rescinded altogether. German employment immediately declined; a wave of bankruptcies swept the country.

For the second time the German government was able to slough off the reparations burden, including the provisions of the Young Plan. This time, however, it was not going to be done via the kind of mass inflation of the twenties but via deflation. This ploy so impoverished the country that it simply was unable to make any further

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BC 1821-1931

payments. Even its creditors ultimately had to face
up to this stark fact.

This calculated deflation was the second great
social catastrophe of the Weimar period, and this
time the policy succeeded. In view of the world-
wide economic crisis, all the countries involved,
and the United States in particular, agreed that,
given the existing situation, so-called political
debts—loan repayments of its West European al-
lies as well as Germany's reparations payments to
the West European allies—must not be allowed to
put any additional burden on the fragile world
economy. In 1931 President Hoover proposed a
moratorium on all such political payments, ini-
tially for one year. At the end of that year, France,
England, and the other creditors signed an agree-
ment in Lausanne permanently renouncing all fur-
ther German reparations payments. They agreed
upon one final lump payment of 3 billion marks,
and even that was not a serious demand. In other
words, Chancellor Heinrich Brüning's policy of
impoverishing Germany to get out of paying rep-
arations was successful, even though he himself
was deposed shortly before it went into effect.

It is widely thought that the impoverishment
of the years 1930 to 1933 was the inevitable by-
product of the world economic crisis. That, how-
ever, is only partially true, just as the inflation of
1919 to 1923 was only in part a consequence of a
lost war financed by loans. A timely currency re-

1932 rearmament ^{B.B. early} ^{Thurley}

form after the end of World War I would have spared Germany the expropriation of all savings, and a different economic policy could have substantially ameliorated the impact of the world economic crisis in Germany. Instead, the government exacerbated it. A policy of public expenditures through deficit spending to stimulate the economy, even at the risk of increasing the national debt, was advocated not only by Keynes but also by a number of German economists. Brüning's policy was the exact opposite. He exacerbated the consequences of the worldwide economic crisis by allowing the German economy to collapse in order to avoid paying reparations. As I said earlier, that part of his plan was successful. However, as we shall see, he helped drive the impoverished Germans into Hitler's arms.

That same year, German revisionism scored still another success. An international disarmament conference was held in Geneva in 1932. The Versailles Treaty had made the disarming of Germany a precondition for world disarmament. Germany now used this provision as a lever. It argued that the Western powers should either disarm to the same extent to which they had forced the Reich to disarm, or allow Germany to rearm. The argument succeeded. World opinion had changed, partly because of the economic crisis and partly because memories of World War I were beginning to fade. The mood had changed. In December 1932—Brüning had been replaced by

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General Kurt von Schleicher—the Western powers
at Geneva granted the Germans the right to rearm.

Thus, by the end of 1932, Germany, via var-
ious routes had managed to shake off the two ma-
jor obstacles to its resurgence—reparations and
arms limitations. Now it once more stood as a
major power among other major powers. As a mat-
ter of fact, as it turned out and as Locarno had
underscored, in eastern and southeastern Europe
Germany already was looked upon as a major
power.

These were the great victories of German re-
visionism under the Weimar Republic, though ul-
timately they were to benefit an altogether
different Germany.

By 1932 the Weimar Republic was internally
exhausted, spent. The real political question no
longer was whether it could be saved, but what
would follow. In January 1933, soon after winning
its last great victory, the republic fell to Hitler.
And the Germany that regained its position as a
major power, as a more-or-less hegemonic power
at least in Eastern and Central Europe, was the
Germany of Hitler.

EG 1929-1932

Schleicher told Brüning, must be utilized to revise the constitution, to clip the wings of the Reichstag and bring back the "stable conditions" of the unreformed monarchy of the pre-October 1918 days. Not only should the head of state—a monarch was not yet mentioned—have the power to appoint the chancellor, but he must also have the power to keep him in office, against the will of the Reichstag if need be. This would keep the parliament in its place and prevent it from interfering with policymaking, like in the good old days of the monarchy. This scheme might necessitate periodic dissolutions of the Reichstag, until the parties grew so tired and financially so depleted that they stopped holding elections. And then, in one of those periods without a Reichstag, the constitution could be changed into a purely presidential document in which the president would be given the role of the former emperor.

Brüning was interested. He asked Schleicher how long he thought all this would take. Schleicher believed one ought to be able to do it in half a year. He also confided to Brüning that the president had taken a liking to him, the loyal frontline officer whose machine-gun company had fought with distinction until the very end, and that he was considering entrusting him, Brüning, with the task of carrying out such a coup. The time was not yet ripe for this plan, but it came quickly.

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Brüning, must be utilized to revise to clip the wings of the Reichstag the "stable conditions" of the unity of the pre-October 1918 days. The head of state—a monarch was to have the power to appoint the president. He must also have the power to act against the will of the Reichstag. Brüning would keep the parliament in its place by interfering with politics. In the good old days of the monarchy might necessitate periodic dissolution of the Reichstag, until the parties were financially so depleted that they would call for new elections. And then, in one of the moments without a Reichstag, the constitution would be changed into a purely presidential system, and the president would be given the powers of a former emperor.

Brüning was interested. He asked Schleicher what he thought all this would take. Schleicher told one ought to be able to do it. He also confided to Brüning that if he had taken a liking to him, the loyal machine-gun company had remained in action until the very end, and Brüning, entrusting him, Brüning, carrying out such a coup. The time was ripe for this plan, but it came.

The economic crisis began in Oc-

March 1930

tober 1929, the month of Stresemann's untimely death. The government of the Great Coalition he had headed could not cope with the deteriorating situation. It collapsed, and in March 1930 Hindenburg on Schleicher's recommendation made Brüning chancellor. Brüning invoked Article 48 of the constitution, which empowered a head of state to circumvent the law-making functions of the Reichstag and govern by emergency decree if he deemed it necessary. The president himself had the right to dissolve the Reichstag, so in the event that the parliament rescinded any of the emergency decrees, the president could simply dissolve it. Brüning was now to exercise all of these powers on behalf of the president, the interim step in the restoration of the monarchy plotted by the people behind Hindenburg.

It is not clear what role Hindenburg himself played in all this. The old man was no politician and never had been. In many respects he was still the same figurehead he had been when he was the wartime chief of the Supreme Command. But he had his own agenda, always had had, and with age, he grew even more stubborn. He had kept his oath of office to uphold the constitution, and he enjoyed the honors that had come to him. However, once he was in office, his monarchist feelings probably resurfaced, and he may have persuaded himself that it was his mission to retransform the republic into the monarchy—if possible without directly violating his oath of office. The first step was the

86 1930 on

transition from the parliamentary government of the twenties to the presidential governments of the early thirties, of which Brüning's was the first and most durable. Formally it still moved within the framework of the constitution, which explains the paradox of Brüning's reputation as the last defender of the Weimar Constitution. He was not.

He was called in to stage a coup, as he himself wrote in his memoirs, and he was more than willing to carry out his assignment. He put it off in favor of another plan, however, and that ultimately led to his downfall.

When the world economic crisis broke out, Brüning saw it as his big chance to realize one of his foreign-policy goals; he saw the chance to exploit the situation to get rid of Germany's burdensome reparations by exacerbating the crisis. He felt that this took precedence over the planned coup. Be that as it may, in July 1930 he dissolved the Reichstag and scheduled new elections for September. However, something unexpected happened. Hitler's National Socialists, which in the good old Hindenburg days had been nothing but a splinter party, suddenly emerged as the second-strongest party, winning six million votes, or 18 percent of the total, giving them 107 parliamentary seats. With that a new force emerged on the domestic political scene, one to be reckoned with. What accounted for the sudden strength of the National Socialists?

Three factors combined to turn the National

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the parliamentary government of the presidential governments of 1930, of which Brüning's was the first. Formally it still moved within the constitution, which explains Brüning's reputation as the last defender of the Weimar Constitution. He was not willing to stage a coup, as he himself wrote in his memoirs, and he was more than willing to accept his assignment. He put it off in his own plan, however, and that ultimately led to his downfall.

When the world economic crisis broke out, Brüning saw his big chance to realize one of his policy goals; he saw the chance to exert his influence to get rid of Germany's burdens by exacerbating the crisis. He took precedence over the planned election of May 1930, in July 1930 he dissolved the Reichstag and scheduled new elections for September 1930, something unexpected happened. The National Socialists, which in the Weimar days had been nothing but a fringe party, suddenly emerged as the second-largest party, winning six million votes, or 18 percent of the total, giving them 107 parliamentary seats. That a new force emerged on the political scene, one to be reckoned with, was not for the sudden strength of the Nazis?

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Nazis. BG 1932

Socialists into a mass party in 1930 and into the strongest party in 1932.

The first is the economic crisis and the consequent precipitous decline in the standard of living of workers and employers alike. In 1932, a year that saw unemployment climb to six million, a poster was plastered all over Germany showing a mass of huddled miserable figures, with the simple caption, HITLER, OUR LAST HOPE. It sent a clear message. Poverty had become a fact of life. And it was also a fact that Hitler was the only one who held out hope for a change, whereas Brüning seemed intent on making things even worse—for reasons of patriotism and foreign-policy goals he could not make public and which even today are not generally understood.

Widespread misery is the explanation most frequently given for Hitler's mass support, the one overriding reason for the sudden mass appeal of the Nazis. It was indeed a reason, a very persuasive one, but not the only one.

A second reason, neither as obvious nor as easy to understand, was the resurgence of nationalism. One might ask why this should have happened in a time of economic crisis, but it did happen, and all who lived through that period know it only too well. The national feelings and resentments of the post-1918 years, catchwords like "stab-in-the-back" and "November criminals," had never been completely forgotten, except that from 1919 to 1924 they had been the exclusive

• BG '33

property of the old rightists, the voters of the German Nationalist People's Party, and after 1925, when the party joined the government, they were muted. Now suddenly they became part of everyday political discourse. Even the Communists began to speak in nationalistic tones; the secret and overt monarchists supporting Brüning's presidential cabinet had never stopped. But in joining in the chorus the Communists became involved in something of which the National Socialists were the masters. Nobody could match the fervor and intensity of their appeal to nationalism, to national pride and national resentments. No one else dared claim, as they did, that Germany could have won the war, or had in fact won it, only to have victory snatched away by cunning and betrayal. No one dared say as openly as they did that this loss would have to be avenged one day. The Germans in 1939—I am now anticipating—were not nearly as enthusiastic about that war as about the war of 1914. They had spent their passion in 1933. Their jubilation over the "national reawakening" in 1933 rivaled their enthusiasm of 1914. A sort of war frenzy had been stirred up in the preceding years, and the National Socialists cashed in on it.

The third reason for the electoral success of the Nazis is the persona of Hitler himself. That must be said even if today people would rather not hear it. The Germans of that time were not repelled by Hitler. On the contrary, they found him charismatic. He was a figure of much greater po-

litical appeal on the scene of the Republic, after

Hitler was taken to his end, to his doom, to his ruin, to his often evil. A attributes, w over and ove and the cunning magic touch, compete with

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litical appeal than any of the others who appeared on the scene in the closing days of the Weimar Republic, after Stresemann's death.

Hitler was underestimated. The biggest mistake his enemies made was to treat him with disdain, to ridicule him. Hitler was a truly evil man, not an insignificant, ridiculous one. Great men are often evil. And Hitler, despite all his horrifying attributes, was a great man, as he demonstrated over and over again by the boldness of his vision and the cunning of his instincts. Hitler had a magic touch, and none of his adversaries could compete with him.

In 1918 and 1919 many Germans were dreaming of a man like Hitler, a tough and cunning leader able to bring order to the country, discipline the people, put an end to party rule, take hold of the reins, and know what to do, particularly in the area of foreign policy and, yes, war. It was a dream that had never really died, and in 1930 it suddenly flared up again. Hitler seemed the one to make it all come true. For many Germans Hitler represented an ideal: his eloquence, his brutality, his toughness, his steadfastness, his talent for the unexpected, his ability to get out of tight spots. His anti-Semitism? Well, many were willing to go along with it.

Three factors—misery, a resurgent nationalism, and Hitler himself—made the National Socialists into a mass movement that appropriated and nurtured and transformed the party into a po-

BC 1932-7

litical power. The German rightist establishment, the elitist right which had again come to power under Hindenburg, could not ignore it.

Schleicher, the guiding spirit of the restoration movement, was well aware of this. He tried to push Brüning to preempt Hitler and carry out the monarchist coup before Hitler could overwhelm them. But Brüning hesitated; Schleicher called him "Brüning Cunctator." Brüning's priority was his big foreign-policy coup: getting rid of the reparations. And that needed time. The reparations were not written off until July 1932, but by then Brüning was already gone.

Before that Brüning had found a way of continuing to govern in a semiparliamentary fashion. At the end of 1930 he had suddenly managed to put together a parliamentary majority. The Social Democrats, stunned by Hitler's rise, had decided to tolerate Brüning as the lesser of two evils—that is, to get him a majority in the Reichstag without themselves becoming part of the government. Brüning, even had he wanted to, would not have been allowed to take any Social Democrats into his government. He was, after all, the head of a presidential government; he did not want a parliamentary government. But he accepted the Social Democrats' support and governed fairly uneventfully, with his quasiparliamentary majority and his emergency decrees, until 1932, always in the hope that once he had chalked up his great foreign-policy victory he could attack the domes-

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Brüning had found a way of continuing in a semiparliamentary fashion. In 1930 he had suddenly managed to win a parliamentary majority. The Social Democrats ruined by Hitler's rise, had decided on him as the lesser of two evils—that majority in the Reichstag without becoming part of the government. If he wanted to, would not have taken any Social Democrats into his cabinet. He was, after all, the head of a government; he did not want a parliament. But he accepted the Social Democrats' support and governed fairly through his quasiparliamentary majority. Emergency decrees, until 1932, always since he had chalked up his great victory he could attack the domes-

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tic changes that had been his real assignment. But Schleicher had lost patience. He persuaded Hindenburg to get rid of Brüning and replace him with someone who would do what Brüning was supposed to have done: clear the way for a new, authoritarian constitution. The man Schleicher more or less invented to fill that role was Franz von Papen, a practically unknown Center party deputy in the Prussian legislature. Moreover, Papen, unlike the middle-class Brüning, was a typical representative of the old Wilhelmine ruling class.

In June 1932 the new chancellor appointed his cabinet, the "Cabinet of the Barons," as it soon came to be called, and promised "an entirely new type of governmental and national leadership." Unlike Brüning, Papen immediately started on the road to the coup d'état. He began by dissolving the Reichstag. At the end of July elections were held, and with 37 percent of the vote the Nazis became the strongest party in Germany. The Communists also scored substantial gains. The Reichstag of July 1932 was the first one unable to put together a working majority of middle-of-the-road parties and Social Democrats. Now the two revolutionary antigovernment parties, the National Socialists on the right and the Communists on the left, together were the majority, but of course they could not put this to practical use. So Papen found himself in a very favorable position as far as the planned coup was concerned, since the Reichstag obviously and clearly was not capable of governing.

88 1932

Papen promptly dissolved the Reichstag, although not before an overwhelming majority had expressed its lack of confidence in him. The dissolution of the Reichstag was a clear violation of the constitution, because according to the constitution a chancellor who had received a vote of no confidence automatically had to resign. Papen, of course, had no such intention.

This was not Papen's first violation of the constitution. He had violated it once before, soon after his appointment, when he dismissed the legitimate Prussian government, which was still a part of the Weimar Coalition, had the ministers forcibly ejected from their offices by the army, and named himself Reich commissar of Prussia. That had been a minor coup (and from the perspective of history it was also the real end of Prussia's independence). In the absence of the Reichstag, Papen planned to go ahead with the coup by invoking Article 48 and change the democratic constitution into a monarchist one. That was what Papen intended to do, and Hindenburg stood ready to support him. Now it was Schleicher who left Papen in the lurch.

Papen's, Hindenburg's, and Schleicher's original idea of a monarchist revolution had one major flaw: No candidate for the throne was in sight. It was not possible to bring back Emperor William II from his exile in Holland. His ignominious flight had cost him the respect of all the people, including the monarchists. He could not possibly be put

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back on the throne, even though that was Hin-
denburg's personal preference.

The crown prince had withdrawn into private
life after his return to Germany, and so he too was
not a feasible candidate. His sons were young and
unknown. In all of Germany there was only one
man who could possibly be considered a serious
contender: Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria.
His fellow Bavarians would undoubtedly have
liked to see him crowned king of Bavaria. But mak-
ing him the new German emperor would involve
the restored monarchy in a dynastic change, That
posed a grave problem. Papen, Hindenburg, and
Schleicher ultimately came up with the idea of
making the reelected president regent on behalf of
a son of the crown prince. But in view of Hinden-
burg's age, that solution too was rejected. The Ger-
man people would not have accepted it. That left
only a coup supported by the aged Hindenburg,
and no one knew what would happen once he was
gone. Moreover, such a coup was likely to en-
counter a sizable group of opponents: the power-
ful, popular Nazi movement, the remnants of
republicans, and the still-powerful Communists.
Military force would probably have been needed,
and that might have brought on a general strike
and public unrest. Schleicher got cold feet. He did
not want to govern against all those other groups,
and he had learned, as would Papen, that the Na-
tional Socialists were not at all inclined to accede
to or tolerate the restoration of the monarchy.

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Hitler wanted all power for himself, nor were his thirteen million voters waiting for a return to the monarchy and the old Wilhelmine system. They wanted something new and dynamic. It is probably fair to say that they wanted what they finally got: Hitler's autocratic rule. In the electoral battles of 1932, first in the presidential election in which Hitler opposed Hindenburg, then in the Reichstag elections of July 31, and finally in the second Reichstag election of November, the National Socialists no longer ran only against the "November criminals" but essentially against the old-new ruling class, against the "barons," against Papen. The National Socialists were always oscillating between right and left. In 1932 they stressed their "left," populist side. In November 1932 they even joined forces with the Communists in the Berlin transport workers' strike. A picture taken at the time shows Joseph Goebbels and Walter Ulbricht sharing a platform.

Schleicher decided that the Reichswehr was no match for such an alliance. He had had a change of heart after acquiring a brain trust of brilliant young journalists, the publishers of a popular monthly, *Die Tat*. They persuaded him to revise his simple restorative notions of 1929 and try to
• forge an alliance of the army, the trade unions, and the youth organizations as the base on which to build a future government. Furthermore, he decided to try and split the National Socialists, to

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invite Gregor Strasser, the Nazi organizational ex-
 pert, into the government and bring a portion of
 the party with him. What Schleicher had in mind
was a sort of corporate state, something like a
German fascism, to undermine Hitler. The res-
toration of the monarchy played only a minor role
in these new Schleicher plans. Perhaps he had
 even decided to discard them. But whatever his
 reason, Schleicher no longer went along with Pa-
pen's coup plans of late November, and he toppled
him. A very reluctant Hindenburg was forced to
 go along and appoint Schleicher chancellor.

During Schleicher's brief chancellorship all
his plans collapsed. Once exposed to the light of
 day, this political general, the most powerful fig-
 ure in Germany as long as he was operating behind
 the scenes, turned out to be the most luckless
 German chancellor ever. Nothing worked for him.
 The trade unions refused to cooperate, Gregor
 Strasser failed him, and the support of the youth
 alone was not enough. An anti-Schleicher faction
 formed even in the Reichswehr. The National So-
 cialists, who had lost two million votes in the
 November election, bounced back, and the Com-
 munist also gained.

At the end of January, Schleicher had to do
 something he might possibly still have been able,
 to avoid in November: ask Hindenburg to dissolve
 the Reichstag and allow him to form a government
 without parliamentary consent—in other words,

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to stage a coup. But that which Hindenburg had given to Papen two months earlier he now refused to Schleicher.

Hindenburg had kept in touch with Papen, who now had his ear, and Papen for his part had not been inactive. He had always toyed with the idea of somehow using Hitler. Back in August 1932 he had even thought of making him his vice chancellor—which only showed that not only did he underestimate Hitler, he had no inkling of what made him tick.

Papen saw Hitler from the vantage point of the elite. He considered him a gifted plebeian, a climber who would be happy to be a valet in the Cabinet of the Barons. He had no idea of Hitler's far grander, far more ambitious plans.

Hitler turned down Papen's magnanimous offer. He insisted on the chancellorship and complete presidential powers. Hitler wanted his own coup. Papen revised his mistaken notion of what Hitler wanted and decided that if need be he could even live with those conditions. Papen felt confident that even if Hitler were to become the nominal chancellor and he himself Hitler's vice chancellor, the real power would still rest with the president. If Hitler could be co-opted, as Papen put it, if he did not insist on moving in on the government lock, stock, and barrel, if he showed himself willing to form a coalition with the German Nationalists and perhaps even with the Center, then why not?

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When the coalition of the National Socialists and German Nationalists was formed at the end of January 1933, Papen smugly told an appalled, astonished critic who accused him of having brought Hitler to power, "You'll be surprised. We hired him." How wrong he was!

INSIDE HITLER'S HEADQUARTERS

1939-45

Chronology

WALTER WARLIMONT

Translated from the German by R. H. Barry



PRESIDIO

APPENDIX C

Chronology

1933

30 January

President von Hindenburg appoints General von Blomberg Defence Minister in Hitler's Government and nominates him (though not publicly) Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.

1934

2 August

Death of Hindenburg; Hitler becomes Führer and Chancellor of the Reich - and as such *de jure* Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.

1935

16 March

Announcement that Germany had 'regained her liberty of action in defence matters'; universal military service, open pursuit of rearmament; Blomberg publicly appointed Reich War Minister and Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.

1938

4 February

Hitler's seizure of military power; dismisses Field Marshal von Blomberg without appointing a successor; takes over *de facto* Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht; nominates General Keitel, in his capacity as Chief of his military staff, Chief of Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW); Commander-in-Chief of the Army changed (Colonel-General von Brauchitsch replaces Colonel-General Freiherr von Fritsch).

12 March

29 September

Invasion of Austria - the Anschluss.
The Sudeten crisis ended by the Munich agreement; the Wehrmacht moves into the Sudetenland.

1939

15-16 March

22 May

23 August

25 August

31 August

3 September

17 September

27 September

6 October

26 October

7 November

30 November

12 December

1940

16 January

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(though not publicly) Supreme
Wehrmacht.

Hitler becomes Führer and
and as such *de jure*
the Wehrmacht.

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matters'; universal
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Reich War Minister
Wehrmacht.

dismisses Field
appointing a
Command of
Keitel, in his
Chief of
(G.W.); Com-
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General

agreement;

Appendix C

1939

15-16 March Military occupation of the 'remainder of Czechoslovakia'. The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia set up.

22 May The *Pact of Steel* between the Reich and Italy.

23 August German-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression, including a secret supplementary agreement concerning Poland and the Baltic States.

25 August Cancellation of the initial order for attack on Poland.

31 August Renewed order for attack on Poland on 1 September.

3 September England and France declare war on the Reich.

17 September The Red Army moves into Eastern Poland.

27 September Hitler announces his decision to act offensively in the West.

6 October Hitler's offer of peace made before the Reichstag; rejected by England on 12 October.

26 October Military Government in Poland replaced by the 'Government General'; Eastern Poland incorporated in the USSR.

7 November Offer of mediation to the belligerents by the Belgian and Netherlands Sovereigns - rejected by England and France on 12 November and as a result considered null and void by Hitler.

30 November Beginning of the Russo-Finnish 'Winter War'.

12 December First German consideration of occupation of Norway.

1940

16 January Start of Allied preparations for military action in Scandinavia.

16 February The German supply ship *Altmark* captured by British destroyers in Norwegian territorial waters.

12 March End of the Russo-Finnish Winter War.

28 March Decision by Supreme Allied War Council to mine Norwegian waters on 5 April and occupy bases in Norway.

7 April Allied Expeditionary force embarks.

9 April Start of German occupation of Denmark and Norway.

Appendices

10 May Start of German attack in the West.
 15 May Dutch forces capitulate.
 British aircraft attack the Ruhr area.
 28 May Belgian forces capitulate.
 10 June Last Norwegian forces capitulate.
 22 June Franco-German armistice agreement.
 19 July Hitler's peace speech in the Reichstag. Rejected by England on 22 July.
 31 July Hitler's order for preparations for attack on Russia.
 13 August Beginning of air battle (the Blitz) over England.
 27 September Three-Power Pact - Germany, Italy, Japan.
 23 October Meeting between Hitler and General Franco in Hendaye.
 24 October Meeting between Hitler and Marshal Pétain in Montoire.
 28 October Italian attack on Greece.
 11-12 November Italian fleet suffers heavy loss from British carrier attack on Taranto.
 12-13 November Molotov, Soviet Foreign Minister, in Berlin.
 7 December General Franco refuses to agree to a German attack on Gibraltar.
 9 December Severe defeat of the Italians in North Africa, withdrawal to Tripoli (Wavell's offensive).
 18 December Issue of *Barbarossa* Directive for attack on Russia.
 1941
 12 February General Rommel arrives in Tripoli as Commander of a German 'back-up formation'.
 27 March Military putsch in Belgrade. Hitler decides to extend to Yugoslavia the Balkan campaign already planned (for the support of Italy).
 5 April Yugoslav-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact.
 6 April Start of German campaign in the Balkans.
 13 April Russo-Japanese Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression.
 17 April Yugoslav forces capitulate.
 21-23 April German-Italian armistice agreement with Greece.
 28 April Rommel on the Libyan-Egyptian frontier.
 2 May Start of British military measures to suppress the rising in Iraq (which had broken out 3 April).

10 May Clandestine Deputy', R
 20 May Start of Ge
 24 May Start of ope
 forces; dest
 the *Bismarck*
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 8 June Opening of
 22 June Occupation
 25 August End of the 1
 24 September Resumption
 2 October British offen
 18 November First major
 29 November South, inclu
 Early
 December Start of Sovi
 7 December Japanese sur
 8 December USA declar
 11 December Hitler declar
 19 December Hitler takes
 Army.
 1942
 21 January Renewed offi
 12-13 February Passage of 'J
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 April-May Air offensive
 7 June-4 July Occupation c
 of Sebastopol
 20-21 June Capture of th
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 28 June Start of secur
 7-8 August Beginning of
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Appendix C

10 May Clandestine flight to England of the 'Führer's Deputy', Rudolf Hess.
 20 May Start of German attack on Crete.
 24 May Start of operations in the Atlantic by German surface forces; destruction of the *Hood* (24 May), sinking of the *Bismarck* (27 May).
 8 June British and Free French forces march into Syria.
 22 June Opening of attack on Soviet Russia.
 25 August Occupation of Iran by Soviet and British forces.
 24 September End of the Kiev series of battles.
 2 October Resumption of the offensive towards Moscow.
 18 November British offensive in North Africa.
 29 November First major withdrawal in the east by Army Group South, including evacuation of Rostov.
 Early
 December Start of Soviet counter-offensive.
 7 December Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbour.
 8 December USA declares war on Japan.
 11 December Hitler declares war on USA.
 19 December Hitler takes over as Commander-in-Chief of the Army.
 1942
 21 January Renewed offensive by Rommel in North Africa.
 12-13 February Passage of *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen* through the Channel.
 April-May Air offensive against Malta.
 7 June-4 July Occupation of the whole of the Crimea and capture of Sebastopol.
 20-21 June Capture of the fortress of Tobruk, breakthrough into Egypt.
 28 June Start of second summer offensive in the East.
 7-8 August Beginning of the change in the war situation in the Pacific with American landing on Guadalcanal.
 19 August British-Canadian raid on Dieppe repulsed.
 30 August-2 September German-Italian front immobilized at El Alamein after failure of an attempt to advance further.
 August-September Battles of the approaches to Stalingrad, penetration into the Caucasus.
 23 October Opening of British offensive at El Alamein.

Appendices

2-3 November	Start of Rommel's withdrawal from El Alamein.	22 June	Collapse of Front.
7-8 November	Anglo-American landings in French North Africa.	13 July	Soviet offensive Northern Italy
19-21 November	Soviet counter-offensive at Stalingrad leading to the encirclement of the city and of the German Sixth Army.	20 July	Bomb attacks
1943		31 July	Allied breakthrough
14-25 January	Casablanca Conference; demand for 'unconditional surrender' of the Axis Powers.	2 August	Turkey breaks
31 January	Grand Admiral Dönitz succeeds Raeder as Commander-in-Chief Navy.	15 August	Allied land
31 January-1 February	Surrender of Stalingrad.	19 August	Encirclement forces
16-20 March	The greatest convoy battle of the war; 42 German U-boats sink 21 ships of a total of nearly 142,000 GRT losing only one U-boat.	20 August	Start of Second Group Soviet Revolution
13 May	Collapse in Tunisia; end of the war in North Africa.	23 August	on 25 August
24 May	German U-boat offensive against convoys in the North Atlantic called off as a result of heavy losses.	25 August	Defection of 8 September
5 July	Last German offensive in the east (Citadel) - called off on 15 July after achieving nothing.	4 September	Allies march Finland to Union.
9-10 July	Allied landing in Sicily.	11 September	The American Trier.
24-25 July	Revolution in Italy; Mussolini made prisoner.	25 September	Hitler's de Guard).
8 September	Surrender of Italy.	3 October	Order for encirclement
9 September	Allied landing at Salerno.	5 October	Soviet breakthrough
12 September	Mussolini liberated by German troops in the Gran Sasso.	11 October	First break Prussia.
13 October	Italy declares war on Germany.	2 November	Completion
23 October	Red Army breakthrough on the lower Dnieper; as a result the Crimea cut off (1 November).	16 December	Opening of
3 November	Preparatory directive from OKW against invasion in the West.	24 December	Encirclement
1944		1945	
22 January	Allied landing at Anzio-Nettuno in rear of the German front in Central Italy.	12 January	Opening of many from Baranov.
19 March	German occupation of Hungary.	17 January	Evacuation
4 June	Defeat of Kesselring's Army Group in Central Italy culminates in the evacuation of Rome.	4-12 February	Yalta Conference
6 June	Start of invasion in Normandy.	1 April	Encirclement

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in French North Africa.
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Appendix C

- 22 June Collapse of Army Group Centre on the Eastern Front.
- 13 July Soviet offensive against Army Groups North and Northern Ukraine.
- 30 July Bomb attack on Hitler in the headquarters.
- 31 July Allied breakthrough at Avranches.
- 2 August Turkey breaks off relations with Germany.
- 15 August Allied landing on the French Mediterranean coast.
- 19 August Encirclement of considerable portions of the German forces in Normandy at Falaise.
- 20 August Start of Soviet breakthrough on the front of Army Group South Ukraine.
- 23 August Revolution in Rumania; declares war on Germany on 25 August; loss of the Rumanian oil area.
- 25 August Defection of Bulgaria; declares war on Germany on 8 September.
- 4 September Allies march into Paris.
- 11 September Finland gives up the struggle against the Soviet Union.
- 25 September The Americans reach the German frontier north of Trier.
- 3 October Hitler's decree setting up the *Volkssturm* (Home Guard).
- 3 October Order for evacuation of Greece.
- 5 October Soviet breakthrough to the Baltic south of Riga; encirclement of Army Group North (later called Army Group Courland).
- 11 October First breakthrough by the Red Army into East Prussia.
- 2 November Completion of the evacuation of Greece.
- 16 December Opening of the Ardennes offensive.
- 24 December Encirclement of Budapest.
- 1945
- 12 January Opening of general Soviet offensive against Germany from the bridgehead across the Vistula at Baranov.
- 17 January Evacuation of Warsaw.
- 4-12 February Yalta Conference.
- 1 April Encirclement of the Ruhr area complete.

Appendices

12 April	Death of Roosevelt.
14 April	Fall of Vienna.
21 April	Collapse of the German front in Italy.
25 April	Junction of American and Soviet forces at Torgau on the Elbe.
30 April	Suicide of Hitler.
7-8 May	Signature of the unconditional surrender of the Wehrmacht on instructions from the newly-formed Government of Dönitz.
23 May	Dönitz's Government arrested and taken into captivity by the Allies.

1. DOCUMENTS

These include: 'Directives', 'Orders of the Day', 'Wehrmacht as were drafts', 'Orders by the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht', 'Orders, some as teleprint messages; military correspondence; Wehrmacht HQ's, in the 'Situation', reports, temporary records (personal and by others); shorthand and the majority from photos.

The directives and other documents cover the entire war period. Limited periods have not been found and authors concerned left records were either not complete. At some periods all these basic information.

The following is a more detailed list of documents employed:

1937-38

(Up to 29 September 1938)	The person who was (Section Chief of)
	not yet known

Chronology

1837-1945

(includes additional
Warlman's letters
1939-1945)

1837	June 7	Birth of Alois Schicklgruber, later Hitler
1885	January 7	Alois Hitler marries Klara Pölzl
1889	April 20	Birth of Adolf Hitler
1895	May 1	Adolf enters elementary school at Fischlham
	June 25	Alois Hitler retires on pension
1899	February 23	Hitler family settles in Leonding
1900	September 17	Adolf enters Linz <i>Realschule</i>
1903	January	Alois Hitler dies
	September 14	Angela Hitler marries Leo Raubal
1904	May 22	Adolf confirmed at Linz Cathedral
	September	Adolf enters Steyr <i>Realschule</i>
1905	Summer	Adolf leaves Steyr <i>Realschule</i> and falls ill; convalescence at Spital; in June Leonding garden house is sold
	Autumn	Adolf meets August Kubizek at the opera
1906	Spring	Adolf falls in love with Stefanie
	Early summer	Adolf in Vienna
1907	October	Adolf takes examination at Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, and fails
	December 21	Klara Hitler dies
1908	February	Adolf settles in Vienna at 29 Stumpergasse
	October	Adolf takes examination and fails for second time; breaks with Kubizek
	November	Adolf lives in lodgings on the Felberstrasse
1909	August	Moves to lodgings on the Sechshausenstrasse
	December	Appears at the Asylum for the Shelterless, sick and penniless; meets Reinhold Hanisch
1910	February 9	Settles in the Männerheim
	August 5	Testifies in lawsuit against Hanisch
1911	March 21	Johanna Pölzl dies, having previously given Adolf a small inheritance
	May 4	Ordered by the Linz court to surrender his orphan's pension

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1913	May 24
1914	January
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1918	August 4
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1919	End of
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	September
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1920	February
	March 13
	March 17
	August 8
1921	Summer
	July 11
	September

- 1912 November Arrives in Liverpool, where he stays until following April
- 1913 May 24 Lives in Munich on the Schleissheimerstrasse
- 1914 January 12 Summoned to present himself for Austrian military service
- January 19 Hitler writes to Austrian Consulate in Munich, pleading for leniency
- February 5 Rejected by Austrian military authorities at Salzburg as unfit for service
- August 3 Petitions King Ludwig III of Bavaria for permission to join army
- August 16 Enrolled in 1st Company of 16th Bavarian Reserve Infantry
- October 21 Sent to the front
- December 2 Hitler is awarded the Iron Cross, second class
- 1915 February Writes a long diary-letter to Ernst Hepp
- 1916 October 7 Wounded and taken to army hospital at Beelitz
- 1917 September Receives Cross of Military Merit, third class
- 1918 August 4 Receives Iron Cross, first class
- October 13 Hitler is gassed and taken to army hospital at Pasewalk
- November 7 Kurt Eisner proclaims Bavarian People's Republic
- November 11 World War I ends
- End of November Hitler returns to Munich
- December 18 Sent to Traunstein for guard duty
- 1919 End of January Returns to Munich and lives in List Regiment barracks
- February 21 Kurt Eisner shot dead by Count Arco-Valley
- April 13 Right-wing uprising in Munich crushed by Communists; Red Terror begins
- May 1 The Freikorps enter Munich; White Terror begins
- August Hitler conducts indoctrination classes at Lechfeld
- September 12 Attends meeting of German Workers' Party
- September 16 Hitler's letter to Adolf Gemlich on the "Jewish problem"
- October 16 Speech at Hofbräuhauskeller, marking beginning of Hitler's political career
- 1920 February 24 First public reading of "Twenty-five Points"
- March 13 Kahr assumes dictatorial power in Munich at same time that Wolfgang Kapp assumes power in Berlin
- March 17 Kapp putsch fails; Hitler and Eckart arrive in Berlin
- August 8 Hitler changes name of his party to National Socialist German Workers' Party
- 1921 Summer Party claims 3,000 dues-paying members
- July 11 Hitler threatens to resign from party unless given dictatorial powers, which are granted to him
- September 14 Physically attacks Otto Ballerstedt, is arrested, and spends month in jail

Chronology

	November 4	Violence erupts at Hofbrauhaus during Hitler's speech
	November 21	Hitler writes autobiographical letter to unknown doctor
1922	August 16	Addresses mass meeting at Königsplatz in Munich
1923	January 11	French and Belgian troops occupy the Ruhr
	August 13	Stresemann becomes Chancellor
	September 25	Meeting of right-wing leaders in Munich
	September 30	Hitler in Bayreuth receives accolade from Wagner family
	November 8-9	Hitler putsch
	November 11	Hitler arrested
	November 23	NSDAP banned
1924	February 26-April 1	Trial of Hitler, Ludendorff, and others; Hitler sentenced to five years' imprisonment
	December 20	Released from Landsberg prison
1925	February 27	Revives NSDAP
	July 18	First volume of <i>Mein Kampf</i> published
1926	January 26	Gregor Strasser calls meeting of party leaders in Hanover
	February 14	Hitler calls meeting at Bamberg
1927	February 11	Hitler and Goebbels speak at Pharus Hall in Berlin
	July	Goebbels's newspaper <i>Der Angriff</i> first appears
1928	April 13	Hitler "clarifies" NSDAP program
1929	June 7	Young Plan signed in Paris
	September	Hitler moves into Prinzregentenplatz apartment
	October 3	Death of Stresemann
1930	February 23	Horst Wessel dies
	September 14	General election: 107 National Socialist deputies in Reichstag
1931	January 1	Brown House in Munich opened
	September 18	Suicide of Geli Raubal
	December	Unemployment reaches 5,000,000
1932	March 13	Hindenburg fails to win clear majority in election for Presidency
	April 10	Hindenburg elected President with clear majority
	April 13	SA and SS are banned
	May 31	Papen nominated as Chancellor
	June 3	Hindenburg dissolves Reichstag
	July 31	General election: 230 National Socialist deputies in Reichstag
	August 13	Hindenburg rejects Hitler's claim to be appointed Chancellor
	November 6	Reichstag elections: 196 National Socialist deputies, loss of 34 seats
	November 17	Papen Cabinet resigns
	December 3	General von Schleicher appointed Chancellor and Minister of Defense
	December 8	Gregor Strasser resigns from all his offices

1933	January 4	Hitler
	January 30	Becomes
	February 27	Reich
	February 28	Deen
	March 5	Reich
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	July 14	Labo
	October 14	Bümi
	November 12	Law i
	December 23	Germ
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1934	January 1	Hitler
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	July 13	Hitler
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1935	March 16	Hitler
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1936	March 29	Procl
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1939	April 15	Roose
	April 28	Hitler
	March 14	Germ

- 1933 January 4 Hitler has secret meeting with Papen
 January 30 Becomes Chancellor
 February 27 Reichstag Fire
 February 28 Decree for the Protection of the People and the State
 March 5 Reichstag elections: NSDAP gets 44 per cent of votes and 288 seats
 March 21 Ceremony at Garrison Church in Potsdam attended by Hindenburg and Hitler
 May 2 Labor unions are dissolved
 May 20 Burning of the Books
 July 14 Law against creation of new parties
 October 14 Germany withdraws from League of Nations
 November 12 Hitler receives 92 per cent of votes at elections
 December 23 Judgment delivered at Reichstag Fire trial: van der Lubbe sentenced to death
- 1934 January 1 Hitler writes letter of gratitude to Roehm
 April 1 Boycott of Jewish shops
 June 14 First meeting of Hitler and Mussolini
 June 21 Hitler flies to Neudeck to see dying Hindenburg
 June 30 The Night of the Long Knives
 July 13 Hitler defends blood purge in speech at Kroll Opera House in Berlin
 July 25 Murder of Engelbert Dollfuss
 August 1 Death of Hindenburg: Hitler becomes Fuehrer and Chancellor
 August 2 Armed forces take oath to Hitler
 August 15 Hitler receives political testament of Hindenburg
- 1935 March 16 Announces reintroduction of compulsory military service
 June 18 German-British Naval Treaty
 September 15 Proclamation of anti-Semitic "Nuremberg Laws"
- 1936 March 7 Hitler occupies Rhineland
 March 29 Receives 99 per cent of votes in referendum
 August 1 Olympic Games begin in Berlin
 October 25 Rome-Berlin Axis established
- 1937 November 5 In Hossbach memorandum, Hitler outlines plans for future wars
- 1938 January 24 Blomberg resigns as Minister of Defense; Fritsch, accused of homosexuality, sent on leave
 February 12 Hitler meets Kurt von Schuschnigg at Obersalzberg
 March 12 Germany invades Austria
 March 28 Hitler gives General Keitel secret directives for "Operation Green" against Czechoslovakia
 September 15 Chamberlain confers with Hitler at Obersalzberg
 September 30 Munich agreement signed
 October 1 German troops enter Sudetenland
 November 7 Attempt on life of Ernst vom Rath at German Embassy in Paris; vom Rath dies two days later
- 1939 April 15 Roosevelt appeals to Hitler for peace
 April 28 Hitler rejects Roosevelt's offers
 March 14 German troops enter Prague

*See chrono
 from 1939-1945*

Chronology

1939	March 23	German troops enter Memel
(cont.)	May 22	Hitler and Mussolini sign "Pact of Steel"
	May 23	Hitler orders high command to prepare for war with Poland
	August 23	German-Soviet Pact signed in Moscow
	August 25	British sign pact with Poles
	September 1	Germany invades Poland; Hitler delivers a speech at Kroll Opera House; Euthanasia Decree, actually written in October, predicated to this day
	September 3	Britain and France declare war on Germany
	September 17	Red Army invades Poland
	September 27	Warsaw surrenders
	November 8	Bomb explosion at Bürgerbräukeller
	December 17	<i>Graf Spee</i> blown up outside Montevideo
1940	March 1-6	Sumner Welles visits Hitler in Berlin
	March 18	Hitler meets Mussolini at Brenner Pass
	April 9	German invasion of Denmark and Norway
	May 10	German invasion of Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and France
	May 15	Holland capitulates
	May 17	Brussels occupied by Germans
	May 25	King Leopold of the Belgians surrenders
	May 28	British and French forces evacuated at Dunkirk
	June 10	Italy enters war
	June 22	France signs armistice at Compiègne
	June 23	Hitler spends few hours in Paris
	July 19	Hitler creates twelve new field marshals
	July 23	Attends performance of <i>Götterdämmerung</i>
	October 12	Abandons Operation Sea Lion
	October 23	Meets Franco at Hendaye
	October 24	Meets Pétain at Montoire
	October 28	Italy attacks Greece
	November 11-12	Italian fleet suffers heavy losses at Taranto
	November 12	Molotov arrives in Berlin
	November 19	King Leopold visits Hitler
	December 18	Hitler issues Barbarossa directive to his high command
1941	March 17	Military putsch in Belgrade
	March 30	Hitler tells his generals to employ "merciless harshness"
	April 6	Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece
	May 10	Rudolf Hess flies to England
	May 20-	
	June 1	German conquest of Crete
	June 6	Hitler issues Commissar Decree
	June 22	Germany invades Russia
	July 28	Hitler remains at Wolf's Lair until March 20, 1943
	August 14	Germans occupy Smolensk
	August 23	<i>Aktion 14</i> dissolved
	September 19	Germans occupy Kiev

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- 1941 November 18 British offensive in North Africa
(cont.) December 7 Japanese attack Singapore and Pearl Harbor; Hitler issues *Nacht und Nebel* Decree
- December 11 Hitler declares war on United States
December 19 Brauchitsch dismissed, Hitler assumes supreme command
- 1942 January 20 Wannsee Conference on "Final Solution of the Jewish Question"
- February 15 Fall of Singapore
April 5 Hitler issues directive for summer offensive
April 26 Demands and receives powers of *Oberster Gerichtsherr*, or Supreme Law Lord
June 5 Death of Reinhard Heydrich
June 7- German Army occupies Crimea
July 4 Tobruk captured by Germans: breakthrough into Egypt
June 20
July 16-
October 30 Hitler at Vinnitsa
August 23 Swastika flag planted on Mount Elbruz
September 16 Germans enter Stalingrad
November 7 Allies land in North Africa
November 23 Goering offers to fly vast supplies to Stalingrad
- 1943 January 14-26 Conference at Casablanca; Allies demand "unconditional surrender"
- January 18 German siege of Leningrad lifted by Russians
February 3 Battle of Stalingrad ends
February 19 Hans and Sophie Scholl, leaders of "White Rose," arrested
March 20 At doctor's orders Hitler leaves Wolf's Lair for holiday at Obersalzberg
- April 7-
June 16 Annihilation of Warsaw Ghetto
May 13 German collapse in Tunisia; end of war in Africa
about June 1 Kirovograd Conference
June 5-15 Battle of Kursk
July 10 Allies land in Sicily
July 19 Hitler and Mussolini meet at Feltre
July 25 Mussolini arrested
September 8 Italy surrenders to Allies
September 12 Mussolini rescued by Germans at Gran Sasso
October 13 Italy declares war on Germany
November 28-
December 1 Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin meet at Teheran
- 1944 January 3 Red Army reaches former Polish frontier
January 22 Allies land at Anzio
June 4 Allies enter Rome
June 6 Allies land in Normandy
July 9 Rommel's request to withdraw his troops is rejected; Hitler returns to Wolf's Lair from Obersalzberg
Count von Stauffenberg attempts to assassinate Hitler
July 20

Chronology

1944
(cont.)

July 31
August 18
August 25
September 3
September 11
October 14
November 20

ler; attempt fails, and Hitler thwarts conspiracy of generals to seize power
Allies break through at Avranches
Kluge commits suicide
Allies enter Paris
British take Brussels
British enter Holland
Rommel forced to commit suicide
Hitler leaves Wolf's Lair and goes to new headquarters near Bad Nauheim

December 16-

January 16
1945 January 15
January 16
February 4-11
March 5
March 7
March 23
April 12
April 14
April 21
April 25
April 26
April 30

Ardennes offensive
Red Army invades East Prussia
Hitler arrives in Berlin

Yalta Conference
U.S. troops enter Cologne
U.S. troops cross Rhine at Remagen
British troops cross Rhine at Wesel
Death of President Roosevelt
Russian troops enter Vienna
Russian troops reach outskirts of Berlin
U.S. and Russian troops meet at Torgau on Elbe
Mussolini executed
Hitler and his wife commit suicide in Chancellery bunker

References are given in a short
Jetzinger's book *Hitlers Jugend*
which appears in the Bibliography
German edition.

Page

- 7 "The undersigned witnesses"
8 "As the son of a poor cottage"
10 "Don't let him think: Smith"
12 "Most Reverend Episcopate"
18 "It was the most normal thing"
19 "Much romping: Mein Kampf"
20 "Again and again: Ibid., p. 4"
25 "But when it was explained;
26 "I well remember: Jetzinger,
27 "I owe to Karl May: Hitler,"
29 "Leonding, January 5: Jetzinger,
31 "Bowed in deepest grief: Hg
32 "When I was thirteen: Mein
34 "You poor, unhappy boy: Hg
36 "A bright youngster: Ibid., p.
36 "And there I was: Ibid., p. 1"
37 List of marks received at school
39 "Your wife has forbidden me
39 List of marks received at school
41 Hitler's troubles with carillon
46 "What the devil: Kubizak, p.
46 "I couldn't bear it: Ibid., p. 1"
49 "He kept saying: Ibid., p. 1"
53 "Now he aspired: Ibid., p. 14"
54 "In sending you: Ibid., p. 1"
54 "I cannot enthuse: Ibid., p. 1"
55 "I am longing: Ibid., p. 224"

class beer-hall gossip and the impassioned prophesyings of a non conformist preacher."³

Himmler was only 29 and was on his first inspection trip to the SS; Krebs wrote him off as a loud-mouthed, dubious and somewhat provincial henchman of Adolf Hitler; many National-Socialists who had tried to preserve some freedom of judgment thought the same way. Later, instead of this picture of the preacher and beer-hall gossip, the man was painted as a sinister diabolical figure. As Himmler's power increased, the figure of the Reichsführer-SS appeared more unreal, ghostly and inhuman to the Germans. Himmler soon became a depersonalised abstraction, the inanimate embodiment of the National-Socialist police state, a monster divorced from all humanity, waiting only to annihilate any dissentients. No detail of his private life revealed what sort of a man the Reichsführer-SS was—we still do not really know today.

Those who knew him in the flesh were incapable of giving an intelligible description of Himmler as a man. Any coherent picture contained so many discordant features that his contemporaries and biographers have presented him in a number of different lights. There is Himmler the hangman, Himmler the good companion, Himmler the fanatical racial ideologist, Himmler the incorruptible apostle of rectitude, Himmler the willing tool of his Führer; finally there is a pensive Himmler deliberating with the German resistance.

General Friedrich Hossbach, Hitler's ex-Military Assistant, said: "This man, Hitler's evil spirit, cold, calculating and ambitious, was undoubtedly the most purposeful and most unscrupulous figure in the Third Reich."⁴ General Guderian says: "He seemed like a man from another planet."⁵ Burckhardt, the Swiss, League of Nations High Commissioner in Danzig, wrote: "What made him sinister was his capacity to concentrate upon little things, his pettifogging conscientiousness and his inhuman methodology; he had a touch of the robot."⁶ Looking at a photograph of Himmler, Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi ideologist, was struck by the fact that "I had never been able to look Heinrich Himmler straight in the eye. His eyes were always hooded, blinking behind his pince-nez. Now, however, I could see them gazing at me from the photograph and I thought I could detect one thing in them—malice."⁷

General Walter Dornberger, on the other hand, who was in charge of the V2 programme, thought him "like an intelligent schoolmaster, certainly not a man of violence"; Himmler, he said, had "the rare gift of listening attentively" and his manner was "quiet and unemotional—a man without nerves."⁸

Count Bernadotte, who negotiated with Himmler in 1945, found him surprising: "Certainly there was nothing diabolical in his appearance." According to Bernadotte he had been extremely affable and was always ready with a joke when conversation threatened to flag.⁹ Many diplomats described him as a man of sober judgment; both German and foreign resistance movements at one time thought that Himmler was the only National-Socialist leader who could be used to bring Hitler down. Trevor-Roper says: "In this monster there were many curious qualities which have made him, to some, an incredible, enigmatical figure."¹⁰

Himmler's biographers eventually contrived a theory to give some sort of explanation to the existence of so many differing characters in one man. The key to the Himmler riddle, they said, lay in his boyhood and youth; he was the lonely son of a middle-class family, overshadowed by a pedantic father and an unsympathetic mother; in the post-war period he had wandered about, unrecognised by society, until the National-Socialist Movement gave him the security which his home had failed to provide.¹¹

This makes a plausible theory and is typical of the present-day tendency to invent some psychoanalytical explanation for the inexplicable. Unfortunately it is not true. Himmler came from the most normal of Bavarian middle-class families; he had two brothers, Gebhard, born in 1898, two years before Heinrich, and Ernst, born in 1905;¹² there was nothing particular to upset the family relationship. As Himmler rose in the ranks of the SS and became increasingly imbued with a sense of mission, family harmony did suffer to a degree; his wife Margarete, a nervous and plaintive individual, did not fit into the family—"I always have to take a deep breath when I think of your parents," she once said.¹³ Nevertheless, the Reichsführer never broke with his family. When his mother died, although unwell himself, Himmler kept watch at her bedside for a whole night; at her funeral he linked

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hands across the coffin with his two brothers,¹⁴ saying in his somewhat pompous manner; "We will always stay together."¹⁵

Himmler was the self-appointed family mentor. In 1921, when still a student, he wrote to: "Dearest Mummy"¹⁶— "Daddy should not work so hard; during the week he should go for a walk more often to ensure that he does not overwork." To his brothers he adopted the attitude of a pedantic schoolmaster. "Little Ernst," although only five years his junior, was told on 14 November 1920: "I am very pleased with your good report. But do not rest on your laurels. Moreover, I expect you to do well in history. Do not become unbalanced. Be a good, brave boy and do not vex Daddy and Mummy."¹⁷

Himmler's brother Gebhard had an even worse time. He had the misfortune to become engaged to Paula Stölzle, the daughter of a Weilheim banker, and Heinrich did not approve. He was quick to put his objections on paper, writing to Paula on 18 April 1923: "If your union is to be a happy one for the two of you and salutary for our people, the very foundation of which must be healthy, clean-living families, you will have to be ridden on a tight rein and with the utmost severity. Since your own code of behaviour is not a strict one and your future husband is too kind-hearted, someone else must perform this function. I feel it my duty to do so."¹⁸ Determination to ensure that twentieth-century women adopted the same code of morals as the heroines of the old German sagas was one of Himmler's obsessions; he regarded any extra-marital relations as an offence against his code of purity; accordingly he instructed Max Blüml, a Munich detective agency, to investigate Paula's past.¹⁹ Blüml reported on 14 March 1924.²⁰ But Himmler had already instituted other enquiries; on 12 March he wrote to an official named Rössner; "May I request you to inform me by return of all you know about Fräulein Stölzle and particularly about her relationship with your colleague, Daffner?"²¹ Brother Gebhard capitulated and broke off the engagement.²²

The incident shows that Himmler, unlike most other Nazi leaders, had been brought up in the security of a true middle-class civil servant milieu. Hitler had his nightmare memories of a Vienna workhouse; Joseph Goebbels was the son of a works foreman; Alfred Rosenberg was an

embittered émigré Balt; but Himmler was a true offspring of middle-class officialdom, simply the second son of Gebhard Himmler, a private tutor.

Heinrich was born on 7 October 1900, on the second floor of 2 Hildegardstrasse, Munich.²³ His social position was already assured, for one of the great figures of the Bavarian Kingdom, Prince Heinrich of Wittelsbach, who had been old Himmler's pupil, was godfather to the baby.²⁴ On being informed in an obsequious letter that it weighed 7 lb 3 oz, the Prince gave permission for it to be named after him.²⁵ With such a name and such a godfather, Heinrich was clearly destined for the ranks of the loyal citizenry.

While at school it never crossed Heinrich's mind to question the authority of his parents or the order of society of his time.²⁶ From his father he learnt that the ancient Germans had been good people, and the foundation was laid for that romantic interpretation of history characteristic of the late Wagnerian era when the world was peopled by Germanic heroes and glorious women—so easily transformable into the Nordic German master race to meet the requirements of the Nazi regime. Himmler quickly learned to treat those around him with proper respect. While at school he kept an impeccable diary in which anyone he met was invariably given his correct title.²⁷

For anyone who had a prince of the Royal House as his godfather, the natural career was that of an officer, and here lies a key to Himmler's character; he was always dreaming of leading his troops to victory, but could never quite make the picture come true. First he wanted to join the Navy,²⁸ but he had weak eyes and the Navy would not accept men who wore glasses. He then decided on the Army. On 26 June 1917 his father wrote: "My son Heinrich earnestly desires to become a career infantry officer."²⁹ Himmler could hardly wait to get into the war. When his brother Gebhard entered the Landsturm in 1915, Heinrich wrote: "Oh how I wish to be as old as that and so able to go to the front."³⁰ He transcribed the news bulletins from general headquarters word for word and reproached the people of Landshut, where his family had moved, with lack of enthusiasm for the war.³¹

Heinrich was so persistent that his father asked some

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1923
1915

friends at court to allow the young man to enter the army early,³² and the friends pulled the necessary strings. About the same time Heinrich had his last present from his royal godfather, who had meanwhile been killed in action. Himmler's father received a letter from the court informing him that: "The J.N. Oberndörffer Bank, 18 Salvatorstrasse, Munich, has been instructed to send you 1,000 5% German War Loan. Please accept this sum as a gift for your son Heinrich from his late godfather, Weiland, his Royal Highness Prince Heinrich."³³

In late 1917 Himmler joined 11 Bavarian Infantry Regiment, the "Von der Tann."³⁴ But his military career ended before it had really begun. Shortly before his death Himmler told Count Bernadotte that he had "gone to war" with his men³⁵ and other sources refer to his participation in a battle on the Western Front;³⁶ but in fact Himmler was never more than a cadet and never reached the front. The war went too quickly for him; he spent six months in Regensburg doing basic infantry training; from 15 June to 15 September 1918 he attended a cadets' course in Freising; from 15 September to 1 October 1918 he did a machine-gun course with No. 17 Machine Gun Company in Bayreuth.³⁷ Two months later he was demobilised from No. 4 Company of the Reserve Battalion of 11 Infantry Regiment.³⁸

In the turbulent post-war period it seemed for a while that Himmler would be able to continue his military career. In February 1919 Kurt Eisner, Bavaria's left-wing socialist Minister-President, was murdered by an officer,³⁹ whereupon the Communists and their revolutionary supporters set up a red republic.⁴⁰ The constitutional Social Democratic Government of Bavaria fled to Bamberg and was compelled, much against its will, to raise troops; they consisted primarily of ex-soldiers and volunteers and called themselves Free Corps.⁴¹

Berlin set the Reichswehr on the move, and in April 1919 the Free Corps prepared to march on Munich.⁴² Himmler joined a small Free Corps commanded by Lieutenant Lautenbacher⁴³ but once more he missed the battle. The unit never entered Munich⁴⁴ and Himmler remained a barrack-square soldier. But he did not give up. On 17 June 1919 he wrote to the depot of II Infantry Regiment

asking for his military papers, "since I am transferring to the Reichswehr in a few days' time."⁴⁵

Nothing came of this, however, for his father had meanwhile decided that, being no longer protected by the King and in view of the rising inflation it was high time that Heinrich qualified in some more secure profession than that of war; he wanted him to become a farmer.⁴⁶ Heinrich agreed: next to soldiering farming had always interested him. As a boy he had kept a large collection of plants,⁴⁷ and he developed a strange addiction to gardens of herbs. (Later this was to provide an added burden for the inmates of the concentration camps; each camp had to produce a collection of every conceivable type of herb, since Himmler considered them far more efficacious than medicines in curing diseases.⁴⁸)

But with farming also ill luck continued to dog him. He went to a farm near Ingolstadt to learn the business but had hardly begun when he was laid low by a typhus epidemic.⁴⁹ A certain Dr Grünstadt decided: "Must interrupt for a year and study."⁵⁰ So on 18 October 1919 Himmler enrolled as a student of agriculture at the Technical High School, Munich University.⁵¹ It would hardly have been surprising had he emerged from these misfortunes in a state of depression and become a "lone wolf," the unwanted outsider on the fringe of society, as the Himmler legend would have it, but not at all—in Munich he entered upon a gay period of his career which presents many problems to the biographers.

He was friendly, helpful, studious and something of a bore. He appeared at fancy-dress parties as "Abdul Hamid, the Sultan of Trukey." He had an unfortunate love affair with a girl named Maja Loritz; he developed a passion for sweetmeats.⁵² No one would have suspected that here was the later mass murderer.

Nevertheless he was still fascinated by politics and soldiering. A receipt of 16 May 1920 shows that he enrolled in the Munich Home Guard [Einwohnerwehr] receiving from No. 21 Rifle Brigade "1 rifle and 50 rounds, 1 steel helmet, 2 ammunition pouches, 1 haversack (old type)."⁵³ 1 December 1921 was a great day in his life—the Reichswehr informed him that he could henceforth call himself "Fähnrich" [Ensign].⁵⁴ Together with other nationalist students and officers he was preparing a plot to

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liberate Eisner's murderer, Count Arco-Valley. When the Count's sentence of death was commuted to life imprisonment the conspirators abandoned their plan, but Himmler was not downcast, simply noting in his diary: "Well then, some other time."⁵⁵

He had far more serious worries. In November 1919 he had joined a students' association named "Apollo"⁵⁶ and was now cudgelling his brains over the problem of reconciling his new existence with his strict Catholic family upbringing and the weakness of his stomach—the Church forbade duelling and his doctor prohibited the customary drinking in the beer cellars. The beer problem was quickly solved; he managed to obtain special dispensation from the fraternity, excusing him from beer-drinking.⁵⁷ The members of "Apollo," however, did not take Himmler very seriously and at the next elections for membership he was dropped.⁵⁸ He also had difficulty in finding a duelling partner—most of his fellow students evidently considered him unworthy. Not until his last term, in June 1922, was an opponent found to give Himmler the facial scars which the future Reichsführer-SS considered any true teutonic student must be able to display.⁵⁹

The church's ban on duelling was a much more agonising problem than the beer. The Himmlers had always been Catholics; a cousin, August Wilhelm Patin, was even a Canon of Munich Cathedral.⁶⁰ Himmler was a practising Catholic and Sunday Mass was more than an outward ritual for him; it was a spiritual experience. He always noted in his diary when he went to Church, frequently saying: "I like being in this Church."⁶¹ When he learnt that a girl whom he was shyly courting went to Communion daily, he commented: "This was the greatest joy which I have experienced these past eight days."⁶²

His entry into the students' fraternity cast a shadow over Himmler's relationship with the Church. There was no sudden break but his separation from the Church gradually became more definite. Personally averse to duelling, Himmler initially tried to follow the Church's dictates but eventually the urge to conform to his social environment (a heritage from his parents) overcame his religious scruples. On 15 December 1919 he noted "I believe that I have come into conflict with my religion,"⁶³ but he continued: "Come what may, I shall always love God,

shall pray to him and shall remain faithful to the Catholic Church and shall defend it even if I should be expelled from it."⁶⁴ (Yet this was the man who later compelled tens of thousands of SS men to leave the Church and advocated a public execution of the Pope.)⁶⁵

His relationship to the Church left him worried but unshaken. He was more interested in worldly matters, more concerned with the gay society of Munich, meals in Frau Loritz's house and a student's sexual problems than with religion and politics.

Anna Loritz, widow of a professional singer, was a distant relative of the Himmlers. She kept a boarding-house at 9 Jägerstrasse, Munich. Himmler fell in love with her daughter, Maria, known as Maja, but found that his rival, Hans Knipp, who later became a leather merchant in Stuttgart, stood higher in her affections.⁶⁶ The whole Himmler family would sometimes meet in the Loritz house. Knipp recalled that "there were always great greetings in the Loritz house when the five Himmlers arrived. The Himmler family knew that the food was always good at Auntie Loritz's."⁶⁷ Himmler enjoyed the parties in the Loritz home. While he was still in Landshut, Robert Kistler, a regimental friend, had written to him: "Are you taking dancing lessons?"⁶⁸ and in Munich he immediately took lessons in the hope of improving his standing with Maja. By January 1920 he had already learnt "the Boston."⁶⁹ With his friend Ludwig, nicknamed "Lu," he was a regular attendant at Munich Festivities.⁷⁰ Every detail went down in his diary; he describes one of the Loritz parties: "The room decked out as a harem, lanterns, a tent near the oven in the corner for Lu and myself . . . Frau Loritz served enormously much food, first cocoa, which I spilled over my pants."⁷¹ So occupied was he with his social life that the National-Socialist Party Rally, held in Munich at about this time, passed him by.⁷² The American historians, Werner Angress and Bradley Smith, describe him as: "a young man who thought in conventional terms, cherished Bavarian middle-class values and who seems to have been eminently good-natured, colourless and normal."⁷³

He was full of good works. During the Christmas vacation he read to a blind man, fetched a cake for an old pauper woman and took part in a charity play for

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the poor children of Vienna; he rushed from one meeting to another,⁷⁴ for he was a member of numerous societies—cultural, farming, humanist, rifle-shooting, ex-servicemen, mountain-climbing, touring, gymnastics, regimental old comrades.⁷⁵ A member of so many societies had little difficulty in adapting himself to his environment. His political ideas were mere reflections of the views and prejudices of the society in which he moved—normal middle-class nationalist ideas with no trace of National-Socialist ideological fanaticism or of its spectral creed.

In fact at this period Himmler was a typical Bavarian conservative. He borrowed a top hat and frock coat to attend the funeral of ex-King Ludwig III; he was proud of being a Bavarian. At the elections for Asta, the student government at the University, he voted for the Nationalists.⁷⁶ Even his comments on the Jews at this stage were moderate. When he heard of the murder of Rathenau, the Foreign Minister, he noted: "I am glad" but nevertheless considered him "an able man."⁷⁷ He referred good-humouredly to Wolfgang Hallgarten, with whom he had been at school, as "a Jewish louse";⁷⁸ when he met the Jewish cabaret artist, Inge Barco, in the Reichsadler Bar, he found her "a girl who deserves respect," although she had been turned out of home for having an affair with a student.⁷⁹

Only on one point do his diaries show the aggressive spirit characteristic of the later Himmler: he could not accept the fact that his military career was over. When Maja Loritz refused her gauche suitor, soldiering and war seemed to him the surest way to escape from the pangs of love. On 28 November 1919 he noted: "If I only could face dangers now, could risk my life, could fight, it would be a relief to me."⁸⁰ On 22 November 1921 the style of the latter-day Himmler showed through for the first time; he wrote: "If there is another campaign in the East I will go along. The East is most important for us. The West will die easily. In the East we must fight and colonise."⁸¹ From time to time his longing for war and a military career would get the better of him; on 19 February 1922 he wrote: "If only there would be fighting again, war, departing troops!"⁸² And on 11 June: "Perhaps I will join up in one way or another. For basically I am a soldier. But first I am going to take my exams."⁸³

In July 1922 Himmler told his parents: "So far I think all is going reasonably well with my exams."⁸⁴ But then there entered Heinrich Himmler's life the man with whom his association was to end in such bloody and dramatic circumstances—Captain Ernst Röhm—and he offered the unrequited lover some prospect of satisfying his military ambitions.

It is impossible to establish with any accuracy when the two men first met. Their paths had crossed on several occasions: in late 1918 Röhm was serving on the staff of 12 Bavarian Infantry Division located in Landshut, Himmler's home town;⁸⁵ then he had been Armaments and Equipment Officer of 21 Rifle Brigade in Munich,⁸⁶ the unit from which Himmler had received his weapons in May 1920; now in 1922 Röhm was acting as secret quartermaster to the quasi-legal defence organisations accepted by the Reichswehr as a type of militia. Himmler met Röhm in January 1922, in the Arzberger Keller, Munich, at a meeting of one of these formations; he noted: "Captain Röhm and Major Angerer [Himmler's late Company Commander] were also there; very friendly. Röhm pessimistic as to Bolshevism."⁸⁷ Himmler was impressed by Röhm; he became the barrack-square cadet once more, unable to forget that Röhm stood several rungs higher on the military ladder; whenever Himmler met Röhm, he instinctively tended to click his heels. They were an ill-assorted pair—the much-decorated First World War Company Commander and the frustrated warrior, the homosexual freebooter and the prim son of a middle-class family. Yet Röhm knew how to rouse the young man's enthusiasm—Himmler was prepared to stake his all for Röhm.

Himmler passed his examination on 5 August 1922⁸⁸ and took a job as agricultural assistant at a chemical factory in Schleissheim;⁸⁹ immediately thereafter, on Röhm's advice, he joined a nationalist organisation called "Reichsflagge."⁹⁰ He was glad to be entitled at last to wear uniform again, even if only the gaiters and light grey wind-cheater of the "Reichsflagge." He was only too ready to shoulder his rifle on Saturday evenings and train with others of his ilk for the street fighting which the imminent civil war would bring.

He soon had a chance to give practical expression to

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his admiration for Röhm. At the end of August 1923 he gave up his job in Schleissheim and returned to Munich;⁹¹ shortly thereafter Hitler's November putsch gave him his first opportunity of appearing in the forefront of the nationalist movement. After considerable internal intrigue Reichsflagge had been rechristened "Reichskriegsflagge" and placed itself under the leadership of Röhm and Hitler.⁹² Röhm had long been a member of Hitler's Party and he knew how to persuade his friends to join the NSDAP; Himmler did so.⁹³ But this did not mean that he was a Nazi; he saw Röhm, not Hitler, as the coming man; for him the flag of the monarchy, not the swastika, was the standard of the future.

On the evening of 8 November 1923 Himmler appeared at a meeting of the Reichskriegsflagge in the Löwenbräukeller, Munich, carrying the Imperial war flag; during the meeting the news arrived that Hitler, brandishing his revolver, had at last persuaded Bavaria's leading politicians and military personalities assembled in the Bürgerbräukeller to strike against the Berlin "November Criminals."⁹⁴ Röhm has described the scene, saying that in their enthusiasm "people leapt on to chairs and embraced each other, many were weeping from joy and emotion. The Reichswehr soldiers tore the yellow cockades from their caps. At last! Those were the words of relief which burst from every throat."⁹⁵ Röhm handed Himmler the old Reich war flag to which the unit had just sworn its oath, and called his men out on to the streets. A few minutes later they were formed up in column and moved off in step towards the Bürgerbräukeller where Hitler was discussing the "National Revolution" with the great men of Bavaria, Ritter von Kahr the Bavarian Nationalist Commissar-General, and General von Lossow, the Reichswehr Commander in Bavaria. When it reached the Briennerstrasse, Röhm's column was stopped by a messenger from the Bürgerbräukeller with an order to occupy the War Ministry in the Schönfeld strasse, which contained the headquarters of Wehrkreis [Military District] VII (Bavaria).⁹⁶ Röhm did as he was told and barely an hour later he was in possession of the War Ministry.⁹⁷ He had 400 men; the muzzles of their machine guns poked menacingly out of the windows,⁹⁸ for even Röhm was gradually beginning to realise

that something had gone wrong—after their initial surprise Bavaria's politicians and generals were striking back.

Early on the morning of 9 November the intruders in the War Ministry were left in no doubt that things had indeed gone wrong; the noise of approaching tanks was heard; Reichswehr and police units moved forward and cordoned off each house, brought machine guns and artillery into position and waited for the order to fire.⁹⁹ An ominous silence ensued. On the Ludwigstrasse, where friend and foe were separated by a barbed-wire entanglement, Himmler still clutched the Reich war flag. Hitler's lunatic miscalculation had brought together a curious concourse of men—future friends and enemies, future murderers and victims; next to Himmler stood Röhm, the future head of the SA, who eleven years later was to be struck down by the SS myrmidons of the man now carrying his standard; next to Röhm was Count du Moulin-Eckardt, the future SA Intelligence Chief, who was to end in one of Himmler's concentration camps.¹⁰⁰ Opposite them, on the other side of the barbed wire, was Reichswehr Lieutenant Hermann Höfle, Röhm's ex-aide and a secret member of Reichskriegsflagge, who in the summer of 1934 was to warn his old chief of impending danger and later be a thorn in Himmler's flesh as a Waffen-SS general.¹⁰¹

Today's enemies are tomorrow's friends, today's comrades tomorrow's murderers; von Kahr and Röhm, the enemies of 1923, met a similar fate at the hands of the SS thugs on 30 June 1934.¹⁰² The only actors on the 1923 stage whom the SS allowed to survive were those who tried to mediate between Kahr and the putschists—Röhm's form commander, Ritter von Epp and Hörauf, later an SA Commander.¹⁰³ But their attempt at mediation failed. Röhm had to capitulate to the Reichswehr and the police, handing over his weapons; the men of Reichskriegsflagge were only allowed through the cordon when disarmed.¹⁰⁴ Hitler's and Röhm's movement had apparently collapsed. Röhm was imprisoned in Stadelheim.¹⁰⁵

So Himmler was alone again—no uniform, no idol, no creed. He was facing a crisis; he had lost his job and in spite of numerous applications could not find another. Maja Loritz had definitely turned him down and politics had proved a disappointment. His only consolation was the worship of his female admirers, who seriously

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1934

you do," one of his Berlin female admirers told him at the end of 1927: "You ask too much of yourself and your stomach pays you back. Not surprising, since your stomach's right."¹³¹ His future wife wrote to him in desperation: "So you're on the road again; I was only thinking today that your life is one long rush."¹³²

Hitler gave him his deserts and Himmler rose in the Party hierarchy. In 1925 he became Deputy Gauleiter of Upper Bavaria-Swabia, in the same year Deputy Reich Propaganda Chief, in 1927 Deputy Reichsführer-SS.¹³³ In the course of a few years the diffident, aimless student developed into a fanatical disciple of Hitler, appreciated by his Führer for his outstanding organising ability. But good organisation alone did not satisfy Himmler; he wished to be the trainer and teacher of those around him; he saw himself leading Party and people back to the true springs of life.

His long stay in the Lower Bavarian farm country had left him strangely obsessed with the philosophy of "blood and soil." From his earliest days his romantic historical notions had led him to regard the peasantry as the main-spring of the nation. "The yeoman on his own acre," he opined, "is the backbone of the German people's strength and character."¹³⁴ Later he maintained that by "origin, blood and character" he was a peasant himself.¹³⁵ He imagined all great men to be sons of peasants, and he referred to his favourite hero, Heinrich I, "The Fowler" (876-936), King of Saxony and conqueror of the Slavs, as a "noble peasant of his people."¹³⁶ In his post-student period, he was already under the spell of popular propaganda and he drew a picture for himself of a society built around the peasantry. An undated memorandum by Himmler envisages the farmers' school as the core of the "back-to-the-land" State; its teachers and pupils were to present the "true picture of the German character" and be the forerunners of the new society.¹³⁷

The teachers in this school, and for the peasant population of which he dreamed, were to be "masters" and "companions," both male and female. The men must have qualities of leadership and be conscious of this world's "lies and frauds"; the schoolmistresses must be "lively, clean-living women, with true maternal instincts, free from the diseases of today's degenerate city women, strong and

gracious, leaving the last word to the man in the everyday things of life." This spring of life for Himmler's peasantry was to be "decorated with homely taste" and be open at all times to "German citizens, poets and artists," thus forming a "spiritual and cultural centre" where the intellectual workers could "create, free from the intellectual currents of delusion." Here was clearly the origin of the National-Socialist and SS sociological Utopia. "But value will be placed upon character, rather than knowledge." Himmler went on; the products of his school were to be "men of healthy bodies, strong nerves and strong wills" who "in permanent and close contact with their school would rise to be leaders of the people."

Himmler even found friends prepared to take steps to put this nonsense into practice. They bought a farm in Lower Bavaria and made it available to Himmler. He hoped that there might be "a further set of generous people with the means and the will to set up a foundation." But he was disappointed;¹³⁸ the peasant school remained a figment of the imagination. Nevertheless Himmler did not abandon his idea of the peasants' Utopia; his father, after all, had been a tutor, and he thought he had discovered in himself a genius for teaching; he thought he had been born to be the great educator, ever ready to draw the useful lesson from events and circumstances.

Those around him were continually subjected to lectures on the doings of their ancestors in this case or that; he could always quote some historical example to illustrate the present and enlighten his contemporaries. Even during the war he longed for peace "when people could be educated again." Kersten, his masseur and perhaps most intimate friend, seriously thought that in his heart of hearts Himmler would have preferred to educate rather than exterminate the subject peoples of the East.¹³⁹ Himmler drew a conclusion even from the failure of his peasant school project but it was an unrealistic partisan conclusion. For the first time he had first-hand knowledge of the economic straits in which the farming population was placed—but his resultant reasoning was crazy.

Himmler, the peasant mystic, was oblivious to the fact that German agriculture was passing through a structural crisis dating from the abolition of Bismarck's protectionist policy, if not earlier; he was equally oblivious to the

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the peasantry had "always formed the only reliable basis for our people from the point of view of blood";¹⁴⁷ it was therefore the duty of the state to expand this peasant basis, and this must be done by settlement schemes, raising the birthrate and curbing the drift to the towns. It was imperative, so Darré said, "to bind the best blood among our people irrevocably and as quickly as possible to the soil."¹⁴⁸ The best source of blood, according to Darré, was that mythical concept with which the Völkisch Youth Movement was already wrestling—The Nordic Race. Darré claimed to have discovered that historically the world had been fashioned by "men with nordic blood in their veins." "We know," he went on, "that almost all great empires in the history of the world and all the greatest cultures have been founded and maintained by men of nordic blood. We know also that these great empires and cultures have fallen into ruins because the men of nordic blood who had constructed them, did not keep their blood pure."¹⁴⁹

The practical present-day consequences of this theory were that all influences inimical to the nordic blood myth must be held at bay, all international humanist organisations must be suppressed—and these ranged from freemasonry, endowed by National-Socialist propagandists with the attributes of a dominant world power, to Christianity, which preached reconciliation between peoples and among men. Fascinated, Himmler saw opening up before him a world whose existence he had dimly suspected but which he had never been able to visualise clearly. Darré, with his doctrine of blood and soil, opened Himmler's eyes, and what he saw was wonderful—the Völkisch elite of the future, the lords of the new Germanic tribes, the men of his SS Order.

The Artamans disappeared into the quicksands of history; the idealism of the Youth Movement yielded to the egoism of the great eastern landowners who were quick to turn the townie dreamers to good use.¹⁵⁰ But for a long time Himmler did not forget his debt to Darré and the Artamans. Later he recruited Darré into the SS, and put him in charge of his new "Rasse-und Siedlungsamt" [Race and Re-Settlement Office],¹⁵¹ which Darré used as a stepping stone to the Reich Ministry of Agriculture. Himmler himself now began to teach this "blood and

soil" mythology to his own organisation, the Lower Bavarian SS. The peasant theorist in SS uniform caught the eye of the senior Party members and Himmler saw before him the possibility of becoming head of the entire SS. Even so, he was still uncertain whether his future lay on the land or with the SS. He thought he had found someone with whom to share his life as a peasant settler.

In 1926, to escape a sudden shower, he dashed into the foyer of a hotel in Bad Reichenhall and almost ran into a lady to whom he swept off his dripping hat with such gallantry that she was soaked.¹⁵² When Himmler looked up in embarrassment, he saw before him the Germanic goddess of his dreams—blonde and blue-eyed, like one of the Valkyries. She was Margarete Boden, daughter of a German landowner in Goncerzewo, West Prussia.¹⁵³ She had worked as a nurse during the First World War, and then moved to Berlin where, after a short-lived marriage, she had used her father's money to found a private clinic.¹⁵⁴

Himmler fell in love at first sight, but his parents were less than pleased with their son's choice. Marga, as she was called, was eight years older than Heinrich and, to make matters worse, a Protestant and divorced.¹⁵⁵ Himmler hesitated for a long time before producing Marga to his parents. He said to his brother Gebhard, "I would rather clear a hall of a thousand Communists single-handed,"¹⁵⁶ but the parents eventually gave way and abandoned the two to their illusions. Heinrich and Marga were married on 3 July 1928¹⁵⁷ and planned to set up on a farm together. Marga sold her private clinic, and with the proceeds the two bought a piece of land at Waldrudering near Munich, on which they built a small wooden house—three up and two down. Heinrich insisted upon putting up a chicken-house himself, for they planned to run a large chicken farm.¹⁵⁸

Months before they were married Marga wrote: "Darling I think so often of that little bit of land which we shall eventually own," and then continued in the bantering style she initially used to Himmler: "Darling, I believe the wicked husband always has to worry about the savings, for you know that the bad wife always spends all the money she's got."¹⁵⁹ They collected 50 laying hens¹⁶⁰ but the farming project failed owing to lack of money and the

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calls of Heinrich's Party career. As an NSDAP employee Himmler earned 200 marks a month¹⁶¹ but this proved inadequate to run a chicken farm. On 6 May 1929 Marga wrote to her husband: "The hens are laying frightfully badly—two eggs a day. I worry so much about what we're going to live on and how we're going to save for Whitsun. Something's always going wrong. I save so hard, but the money's like everything else."¹⁶² Money was a continual worry; another letter said: "You have not written; that's naughty. Now the money won't come tomorrow morning and so Berta [the maid] won't be able to get your shoes."¹⁶³

In addition to their financial troubles the marriage now began to break up—far more rapidly than either of them had thought possible. Marga was cold, nervous and anything but cheerful; she irked her sensitive husband so much that he began to stay away from home more often. After the birth of their only child, a daughter named Gudrun,¹⁶⁴ the Himmlers lived apart.

Vainly Marga hoped that one day National-Socialist politics would allow her husband to return to her: "When the elections are over, then we could at least have a few years of peace. And you, you will be with me all the time."¹⁶⁵ In another letter: "You naughty soldier of fortune; you must come to this part of the world sometimes."¹⁶⁶ And again: "Even if you're only coming for two days, at least you're coming."¹⁶⁷ Gradually, however, Marga realised that she had lost him. "Sometimes it makes me sad that I just have to sit at home here all the time. Only today I was thinking how we could celebrate your birthday. My dear, let's go to some exhibition together. We've never done that."¹⁶⁸ And in another letter: "Things are not good with me. What is going to become of me. One is continually wondering that. Oh my dear, what is going to become of me?"¹⁶⁹

Heinrich Himmler did not know what was going to become of her. He was under the spell of the Führer, who on 6 January 1929 had called him to be head of the SS in which he was member No. 168.¹⁷⁰ Now he could show what he had learned from Strasser and Walther Darré. The SS was waiting, Himmler thought, only for the master's hand to turn it into an order of chivalry, the elite of National-Socialism. In fact, the new Reichsführer-

SS soon found out that ideological purism was not what his Führer demanded of him. Hitler wanted no order of faithful Germanic knights, but a blindly obedient bodyguard as an instrument of his personal power. The National-Socialist Party had reached a crossroads. The economic crisis of the late 1920s was driving an increasing number of embittered Germans into the Nazi camp, both reinforcing and endangering Hitler's position as Party Leader. That position had to be safeguarded in face of all opposition: the most murderous chapter in the history of German party politics was about to open.

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stripe, two inches above the left cuff, carried an Arabic numeral indicating the number of the SS Sturm [an SS formation equivalent to a company].³⁴

The SS had won its first war of independence. More important still, Hitler permitted it to adopt a new organisation. It had originally been formed on a "ten-man" system—the SS unit in any one locality was limited to a commander and ten men. This was now abolished and instead a new structure appeared with ranks and units exactly modelled upon those of the SA. The smallest SS unit was now to be the "Schar" of eight men under a "Scharführer" [Corporal]. Three "Scharen" formed a "Trupp" of twenty to sixty men under a "Truppführer" [Sergeant], equivalent to a military platoon. Three "Trupps" formed a "Sturm," the most important SS unit; it consisted of 70–120 men, was commanded by a "Sturmführer" [Captain] and corresponded to a company. Three "Stürme" made up a "Sturmabteilung" of 250–600 men, commanded by a "Sturmabteilungsführer" [Major] and corresponding to a battalion. Three or four "Sturmabteilungen" formed a "standarte" of 1,000–3,000 men under a "standartenführer" [Colonel] corresponding to a regiment. Several "Standarten" formed an "Untergruppe" (later "Abschnitt"—Region) similar to a brigade and commanded by an "Oberführer" [Brigadier]. Later several "Untergruppen" or "Abschnitte" formed a "Gruppe" or "Oberabschnitt" [Major Region], a unit corresponding to a division and commanded by a "Gruppenführer" [Lieutenant-General].³⁵

This new SS army, of course, existed only on paper; Himmler still lacked the men to give real body to his organisation, but here Hitler gave the SS an opportunity of showing their self-assurance. He forbade the SS to canvass the SA for recruits in future but, on the other hand, he ordered the SA to make men available for newly formed SS units—up to 50% of the proposed SS unit in any one locality. The provision that they should send only "selected personnel" to the SS was particularly distasteful to the SA; moreover the SS Sturmabteilungsführer concerned was authorised to reject unsuitable SA men.³⁶

The SA leaders tried to convince themselves that at least any further SS interference in their affairs would now be stopped. August Schneidhuber, Pfeffer's Deputy,

stated hopefully that: "The SA is now entitled to forbid SS commanders and men to canvass within our ranks, even when off duty."³⁷ But Schneidhuber was wrong. He had clearly missed the vital sentence in Hitler's order of 7 November 1930, the real reason for the sudden agreement to so striking an increase in the SS. This sentence ran: "The task of the SS is primarily to carry out police duties within the Party."³⁸ Haase's dream had come true—a secret Order now stood sentinel within the Party.

Just at this moment Adolf Hitler had good reason to call upon his bodyguard to be the maid of all work. According to the Party grapevine his position was shakier than ever. The National-Socialist Movement was degenerating into an arena for intrigue and dissimulation, murder and political long knives. The SS was intended by Hitler to hold the Party firmly together and to beat down any insubordination, and there was a great deal of insubordination in the NSDAP—it had never been a homogeneous party.

The Party, after all, had started as a lower-middle-class German society; it had then been given a doctrinal top-dressing of nationalistic socialism originating in the Sudetenland; shortly thereafter it had been debased into a political appendage of the Bavarian defence formations and a nest of warring politicians from the Völkisch camp; later it had become the proving-ground for a Völkisch socialism with a proletarian twist, a refuge for the SA rabble and an inviting field for reactionary party leaders and captains of industry. So heterogeneous a party could have no real unity; it lived on activism, noise and agitation for agitation's sake. It was held together only by its hatred of progress and democracy and its determination to capture the State at all costs. Hardly an article of the NSDAP creed was undisputed by its members, hardly one of its senior functionaries was approved of by any other.

Hermann Esser, one of Hitler's closest associates, thought the North German Völkisch party "an association of visionaries, worshippers of Wotan";³⁹ Goebbels, who was a Rhinelander, proposed that "the petty bourgeois Adolf Hitler" should be expelled from the Party;⁴⁰ at almost every Party rally someone demanded that Julius Streicher, the Jew-baiter, should have his membership card withdrawn.⁴¹ Goebbels stated that "The future belongs to the dictator-

but "an entirely private matter." He used the SA for ends other than the purely political. SA contact men kept their Chief of Staff supplied with suitable partners and at the first sign of infidelity on the part of a Röhm favourite, he would be bludgeoned down by one of the SA mobile squads.¹²⁹ The head pimp was a shop assistant named Peter Granninger, who had been one of Röhm's partners since 1928 and was now given cover in the SA Intelligence Section.¹³⁰ For a monthly salary of 200 marks he kept Röhm supplied with new friends, his main hunting ground being Gisela High School Munich; from this school he recruited no fewer than eleven boys, whom he first tried out and then took to Röhm.¹³¹ Meanwhile some of Röhm's more dubious friends had occupied senior SA positions left vacant as a result of the Stennes revolt.

The general meeting-point for the Granninger circle and the SA homosexuals was Röhm's reserved table in the Bratwurstglöckl, Munich. The proprietor, Karl Zehnter, was a homosexual himself whom Granninger had "assisted" at his home.¹³² Another homosexual and long-standing habituë of Röhm's table was the new Berlin Commander, Edmund Heines;¹³³ he had even been expelled from the SA in 1927 for homosexual practices. Karl Ernst, the new SA Chief of Staff, Berlin, had been a partner of Captain Rohrbein, ex-Frontbann, who had also frequently been seen with Röhm in Berlin homosexual dives such as the Kleist-Kasino and Silhouette.¹³⁴ This ring of perverted SA commanders seemed unbreakable. When asked about the goings-on in Röhm's circle, Hitler took refuge in the excuse that the Chief of Staff was not a proven homosexual; if anyone could give him cast-iron proof, he would draw the necessary conclusions.

Röhm and his highly organised squad of informers generally succeeded in covering their tracks. In March 1932, however, Röhm's letters began to leak, several being published in the Social-Democrat *Münchener Post*.¹³⁵ Röhm's friends panicked. Any more-or-less normal SA commander was suspected of having filched the letters and passed them to some anti-Hitler National-Socialist like Dr Helmut Klötz, an ex-Reichstag Deputy.¹³⁶ Röhm was so agitated that he dispatched his confidant, the adventurer journalist Georg Bell, on a curious expedition for a National-Socialist. Bell was being paid 300 marks by the

Social Democrats for information about the Nazis;¹³⁷ he was now sent to ex-Major Karl Mayr, the man who, together with Röhm, had "discovered" Hitler in 1919, and had since gone over to the Social Democrats.¹³⁸ Mayr was now one of the leaders of the Reichsbanner which was loyal to the Republic and determined, even at this late hour, to prevent the Nazis' rise to power. Bell met Mayr in the Reichsbanner offices in Magdeburg and transmitted to him Röhm's demand for a guarantee that no more of his letters would be published in the Social-Democrat newspapers.¹³⁹ "Mayr knew all about it," Bell said later, adding that Röhm "told me that it was true that these swine wished to bring us down."¹⁴⁰ Whoever the "swine" may have been who had leaked Röhm's letters to the press, his National-Socialist enemies now determined to solve the problem after their own fashion. When Hitler once more refused to dismiss Röhm, Buch, the Senior Nazi Judge and apostle of National-Socialist rectitude, formed a plan to murder the SA Chief of Staff together with four of his principal associates.

Buch proceeded with caution. His mind turned to an old friend from the early Party days with whom he had built up the NSDAP in Baden—Emil Traugott Danzeisen, an ex-SA-Standartenführer, now running a bandage factory.¹⁴¹ Buch told Danzeisen that there was treachery abroad in the Party: Standartenführer Uhl had given the police full information about the SA informer network; moreover a "German Nationalist" clique was forming around Röhm's cronies, the Counts du Moulin-Eckart and Spreiti; this gang was determined to seize power and, in addition, was ruining the Party by their homosexual practices.¹⁴² Danzeisen got the message and had little difficulty in thinking of one or two toughs whose line was murder. He formed a murder squad headed by Karl Horn, a bankrupt architect.¹⁴³ To secure his alibi Danzeisen moved to Austria, whence he issued orders in writing, using the pseudonym "Wieland II." On 16 March 1932, Horn received his detailed orders as follows: "Facts; Count du M who works in Room 50 is a para 175 man [paragraph 175 of the criminal code dealt with homosexual offences]. As such he has great influence with his superior R. An old story. Both are being blackmailed by a Herr Bell from Grottenmühl am Chiemsee. Stabsführer

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its unruly complement of SS men, to be "ruthlessly shot to pieces" by army artillery.⁹¹

Diels was particularly irritated by the undeniable fact that SS members had a foot in both Göring's and Himmler's camps. How long, he wondered, would they remain loyal to Göring's Prussia? SS-Gruppenführer Daluge, the Chief of the Prussian Police, might have personal reasons for keeping aloof from Himmler's circus, but behind him stood men who were finding their way blocked by Göring-nominated officials. Diels was particularly suspicious of the sallow-faced Arthur Nebe, one of the few Nazis in the Gestapo, and of his *éminence grise*, an official named Hans-Bernd Gisevius.⁹²

Nebe's ambition was well known; he was Executive Head of the Gestapo and Liebermann von Sonnenberg, a Criminal Police Commissioner, prophesied: "He will either become a really great man one day or be hanged."⁹³ Nebe's favourite story was that which attributed to him the remark: "There are no such things as principles, only circumstances."⁹⁴ A literary friend objected: "Herr Nebe, what sort of a quotation is that! That was said by Balzac's Vautrin, the prisoner from the Bagno," to which Nebe is said to have retorted: "But you will remember that that prisoner later became Police Chief of Paris."⁹⁵

Nebe now found Diels blocking his way to promotion and Gisevius, a deserter from the German nationalist camp,⁹⁶ added fuel to the fire; Nebe was State-educated and Diels had everything he had not—education, upper-middle-class background, self-assurance in society and a nonchalance which occasionally took even Göring aback. Göring once said to him: "I warn you, Diels, you're trying to sit on both sides of the fence"; Diels merely chuckled: "Herr Minister President, the Head of the Secret Police has to sit on all sides of the fence at once."⁹⁷

Nebe took this "lack of character," as he described it, as an indication that Diels was in reality a disguised Communist, a suspicion which Gisevius took care to foster. "I could very well venture combat with Diels, the unstable playboy," he wrote.⁹⁸ Nebe and Gisevius collected incriminating evidence against Diels and even persuaded the gullible Daluge to believe in their Communist story.⁹⁹ Nevertheless Daluge, Himmler's rival, with a flash of perspicacity said to Nebe and Gisevius: "You're jumping

out of the frying pan into the fire."¹⁰⁰ Little did he know that Nebe, and presumably also Gisevius, had been playing with fire for a long time. Himmler was informed of every move made by his adversary Göring. In early October he considered Göring's position so weak that he advanced to the assault of the Prussian fortress.

SS Headquarters requested Hitler's permission to move the SD and SS offices from Munich to Berlin;¹⁰¹ at the same time, led by Herbert Packebusch, Daluge's old crony, SS men entered Diels' apartment. His wife was locked into the bedroom and Packebusch then broke open Diels' desk.¹⁰² Frau Diels, however, managed to get her husband on the telephone in time, and in a few minutes Diels, with a squad of police from the Tiergarten Division, arrived at his home in the Potsdamer Strasse. Packebusch looked up as if he had seen a ghost, but before he could grab his revolver, the police had seized him and led him off.¹⁰³

Diels' triumph, however, was short-lived. Daluge appeared in order to explain Packebusch's "indiscipline" to Göring; there had been considerable suspicion, he said, that Diels was intriguing against the Berlin SS.¹⁰⁴ Göring began to wonder about his Chief of Police, who seemed to him altogether too inscrutable and he released Packebusch from arrest.¹⁰⁵ Diels saw the drift; Göring was unwilling to act too forcibly against the SS. When, a fortnight later, he learnt that on Göring's instructions police and SS had searched his office, he panicked. He fled to Karlsbad in Bohemia and awaited his moment.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, however, Göring had survived the SS assault. Hitler refused to sanction transfer of the SS offices from Munich to Berlin, though as a small crumb of comfort the Reichsführer was allowed to instal an SD outpost in the capital.¹⁰⁷

Accordingly a certain Dr Hermann Behrends set up an office in the Eichenallee, Berlin; he was an old friend of Heydrich, son of an innkeeper in Kiel where Heydrich had often stayed as a naval lieutenant.¹⁰⁸ Behrends formed SD Oberabschnitt [Region] East, while another of Heydrich's confidants, SS-Hauptsturmführer Heinz Jost, was appointed Himmler's representative with the Gestapo.

Himmler could make no further inroads into Göring's empire, however. Göring recalled Diels saying: "Himmler

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and Heydrich shall never come to Berlin."¹⁰⁹ So Himmler had to stage a reconciliation with Göring and placate his enemy Diels. From 9 November 1933 Diels was accorded the honour of appearing in the uniform of an SS-Standartenführer. In his personal file, however, his SS masters noted what they really thought of this remarkable recruit to the SS—he was slippery as an eel, insincere and self-seeking.¹¹⁰

So Himmler's second assault on Göring's police empire had failed. Now, however, he found an unexpected ally in the shape of Dr Wilhelm Frick's Ministry of the Interior. After the Reichstag elections of 12 November 1933 Frick had decided to abolish the last remnants of the German Länder's sovereign rights. The Länder were to be left merely as administrative units under a Government centrally directed from Berlin.¹¹¹ Nicolai, an ex-Regierungspräsident and Medicus, a civil servant, the leading centralisers in the Ministry of the Interior, drew up a constitution under which the centre would have authority to issue instructions to the Länder Governments.¹¹² And the thorniest problem in this reform was that of authority over the police. Hitherto police authority had rested with the Governments of the sixteen German Länder; they alone were in charge of the police and they controlled police organisation, duties and administrative law. The Reich Minister of the Interior was allowed to exercise only general supervision, although he could bring some influence to bear through the allocation of grants to the Länder police.¹¹³

The main feature of the draft submitted by Frick's centralisers was the transfer to the Reich Government of the sovereign rights of the Länder, including, of course, police authority. In other words the Reich Minister was claiming control over all German police forces. Henceforth no police regulations were to be issued, no changes of location planned, no promotions or appointments (to Major and upwards) made, without prior agreement from the Reich Minister of the Interior.¹¹⁴ Frick's reformers were in fact trying to put into practice the programme Himmler had outlined to Dr Best—to remove command of the police from the local barons. But there was one local baron who had no intention of yielding to the Ministry of the Interior.

Though no one outside the Ministry knew of the Nicolai/Medicus plan, Göring was too quick for the centralisers. On 30 November 1933 he issued a law raising the Prussian Secret Police to the status of an independent branch in the internal administration; matters hitherto dealt with by the Prussian Ministry of the Interior were transferred to the Gestapo, and it was placed directly under the Minister-President. Göring nominated an inspector to supervise the Gestapo on his behalf and to be responsible for appointing the head of the Gestapo.¹¹⁵ At one stroke, before it had even been put in legal form, Göring had dealt a deadly blow to the Reich reform. As far as the police were concerned, the largest German Land had escaped Frick's clutches.

In face of Göring, Frick was powerless; he had no private army and as he had once been a follower of Gregor Strasser his standing with Hitler was low. So the Ministry of the Interior centralisers turned to the man who had already announced that he was going to remove control of the police from the local barons. Heinrich Himmler looked to them like a saviour; he was in control of the internal Party police; his Politische Bereitschaften already existed in many German Länder, and he had long been preaching the formation of a centralised police force.

Frick's officials were now in league with Himmler's police centralisers against Prussian separatism—undoubtedly not without Hitler's agreement.¹¹⁶ With the connivance of the Ministry of the Interior, Himmler took over command of the political police in one Land after another—November 1933: Hamburg, Lübeck and Mecklenburg-Schwerin; December 1933: Anhalt, Baden, Bremen, Hesse, Thuringia and Württemberg; January 1934: Brunswick, Oldenburg and Saxony.¹¹⁷ When, in January 1934, Frick submitted to the Reichstag yes-men his "Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich,"¹¹⁸ Himmler was already in control of the political police in all German Länder except Prussia and Schaumburg-Lippe. Göring, of course, did not submit. On the contrary he prepared to strike back.

On 19 February 1934, Frick issued a decree to all Reichsstatthalter stating that he had "direct command authority over all Land police forces in the German Reich."¹¹⁹ On 9 March Göring countered with a decree

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luncheon was then held in Röhm's headquarters in the Standartenstrasse when the SA and Reichswehr leaders ostentatiously shook hands.²⁸

Hardly had the officers left the room, however, than Röhm bellowed: "What that ridiculous Corporal says means nothing to us . . . I have not the slightest intention of keeping this agreement. Hitler is a traitor and at the very least must go on leave . . . If we can't get there with him, we'll get there without him."²⁹ At Röhm's table sat an SA-Obergruppenführer who listened transfixed to this tipsy tirade against his revered Führer: Viktor Lutze, Lieutenant (Retired) and Commander of SA Obergruppe [Region] Hannover, felt that high treason was in the air.³⁰ He hurried off to do what he could to stop it.

Early in March 1934 he presented himself to Rudolf Hess, the "Führer's Deputy," and accused Röhm of making monstrous anti-Hitler speeches; but Hess did not know what to do,³¹ so Lutze went further. He travelled to Berchtesgaden where he had an interview with Hitler, telling him of the discontent with the leadership of the Third Reich now rife in the SA. But Hitler gave him short shrift, merely saying: "We must let the matter develop."³² Since Hitler was evidently unwilling to take action against his friend Röhm, Lutze confided in yet a third person; during an exercise in Braunfels he showed General von Reichenau a letter which he had written to Röhm, warning him against his anti-Reichswehr campaign.³³ Reichenau thanked him for this valuable information and, as soon as he was out of earshot, remarked sarcastically: "That Lutze is harmless. He'll be the Chief of Staff."³⁴

Lutze did not know that for some days von Reichenau had been negotiating with an SS-Brigadeführer [Major-General] who had very precise ideas on a radical solution of the Röhm problem. Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Gestapo and SD, was determined to liquidate the entire Röhm clique. It had taken time to win Himmler over to his plan. The Reichsführer-SS was hesitant, perhaps due to a gloomy presentiment that the decision to liquidate Röhm would open a Pandora's Box, whose deadly contents would never again leave the SS and SA in peace.

As if oppressed by some presentiment of forthcoming developments, Himmler had held himself aloof from

Röhm's enemies.³⁵ He could not forget the years when, as a mere cadet, he had been thrown together with Captain Röhm. In the early months of the National-Socialist era, Himmler had been a constant member of Röhm's immediate retinue. Together they had made inflammatory speeches; together they had dined in Röhm's Berlin apartment.³⁶ They had planned crime together—Heydrich and SA-Standartenführer Uhl had both been responsible for dispatching the SA flying squad which had slipped across to Austria on 3 April 1933 and murdered Georg Bell, Röhm's renegade confidant, in an inn near Durchholzen.³⁷ On Röhm's last birthday (28 November 1933) Himmler had wished him "all that true loyalty as a soldier and a friend can offer. It was and is our greatest pride still to be one of your most faithful followers."³⁸ Himmler and Röhm together were godfathers to Heydrich's first child.³⁹ Even after the 28 February explosion and Röhm's anti-Hitler tirade in the Standartenstrasse, Himmler had tried to protect Röhm from over-hasty action on the part of Hitler and the Reichswehr.⁴⁰

In spring 1934, however, Himmler's sense of opportunism proved stronger than his much-vaunted loyalty to Röhm; the new alliance with Göring seemed more important than his relations with his former master. Upon that alliance, after all, depended the capture by the SS of the Prussian Gestapo—whence the train of thought led direct to Heydrich's assassination plan: without Göring he would not get the Gestapo; unless he broke with Röhm he would get no co-operation from Göring. And of all the National-Socialist potentates Göring had most to fear from Röhm's SA. With his network of SA police presidents and SA advisers to the Regierungspräsidenten, Röhm was a threat to Göring's authority in Prussia; moreover he was also a threat to Göring's ultimate aim—to be Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht.⁴¹

Himmler therefore changed course. This came all the easier in that the imprudent Röhm had now fallen out with practically every power group in the regime. Everyone had some interest in seeing the Röhm gang go under; everyone could draw some profit from the break-up of the SA. The Reichswehr and Göring would be rid of a tiresome rival; the Party organisation men and the guardians of morality would be rid of a vicious, depraved

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of: the ultra-conservative "League for the Protection of Culture." In the pre-1933 days he had arranged the contacts between Schleicher and Hitler and he had a photograph of Hitler with the inscription: "To my most faithful friend."⁸³ After 30 June 1934 he was to learn from the *Völkischer Beobachter* that he was "an obscure Berlin personality to whom Adolf Hitler had the greatest aversion."⁸⁴

Von Alvensleben told everybody, whether he wished to hear it or not, that: "Auwi would be the next Kaiser." One day in May 1934 Martin Sommerfeldt, Head of Göring's Press Department, was dining with a conservative politician, von Gleichen-Russwurm, when Alvensleben came up looking important and conspiratorial. Gleichen remarked sarcastically that Alvensleben presumably had the new Cabinet list in his pocket. Alvensleben nodded and, bending over the table, whispered: "Reich Chancellor—Adolf Hitler; Vice Chancellor—Kurt von Schleicher; Reichswehr—Ernst Röhm; Reich Regent—Prince August Wilhelm of Prussia." When he was gone, Sommerfeldt asked what truth there was in this gossip. Gleichen replied: "Fifty-fifty."⁸⁵

Hitler undoubtedly knew that this sort of talk was going round. He realised that the showdown with the opposition must come at the latest when Hindenburg died. His bourgeois opponents all had their eyes on the presidency which, in their view, must be occupied by a Hohenzollern Prince as figurehead for a monarchist restoration; with the support of the Reichswehr he would be able to bring National-Socialist dynamism under control. Hitler clearly had to strike first. So he took a sudden decision to visit Hindenburg on his estate Neudeck, East Prussia. He wished personally to check the old man's state of health, so that he could judge how much elbow-room he had; he too had an ambitious plan which was dependent upon Hindenburg's death. From the outset Hitler had been determined to make himself Dictator of Germany. As long as Hindenburg was alive, however, that goal was out of reach; both the Field-Marshal's prestige and the fact that the Reichswehr Generals were sworn to him by oath blocked Hitler's way to total power. Once Hindenburg was dead, however, the road would lie open; Hitler could then combine the offices of Chancellor and President into a new

dictatorial office, "Führer and Reich Chancellor"—provided, and only provided, that the Reichswehr would go along. The Reichswehr must say yes; Hitler's plan stood or fell by the Reichswehr.

As if to remind him of the key role played by the Generals, when the Chancellor arrived at Neudeck on 21 June 1934 in sweltering heat, the first person who met him on the steps was the Reichswehr Minister, Colonel-General Werner von Blomberg.⁸⁶ As soon as he heard of the uproar caused by Papen's speech, Hindenburg had summoned Blomberg and, at the meeting which now followed, he left most of the talking to him.⁸⁷ Blomberg's theme was that re-establishment of peace at home was an urgent necessity; radical revolutionaries were out of place in the new Germany.⁸⁸ Hitler grasped the point. If he wished to have the Reichswehr on his side for his post-Hindenburg regime, he must sacrifice the Reichswehr's rival, Röhm's SA. According to Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, during the flight back to Berlin Hitler decided upon the action which, by the irony of history, is known as the Röhm Putsch—but was in fact the Hitler regime's putsch against Röhm.⁸⁹

The next day Viktor Lutze in Hanover was called to the telephone to find Hitler on the line.⁹⁰ He was ordered to report to the Reich Chancellery forthwith. Lutze noted in his diary that on arrival "the Führer received me at once. He led me into his study and, taking me by the hand, swore me to secrecy until the whole matter was settled." Hitler then explained what "the whole matter" was; Röhm must be removed, since numerous SA Commanders' Conferences had been held under his chairmanship at which the decision had been taken to arm the SA and let it loose against the Reichswehr in order to liberate him, the Führer, from the military whose prisoner he was supposed to be. Lutze's diary continues: "The Führer said that he had always known that I would be no party to such matters. Henceforth I was to accept no orders from Munich and take instructions only from him."⁹¹

By 25 June at the latest, von Blomberg knew that Hitler was determined to relieve the army of the SA threat. Hitler told him that he intended to call all SA commanders to a meeting at Bad Wiessee where Röhm was taking his cure, that he would arrest them himself and

fate awaiting Röhm. He had told Blomberg that he would arrest Röhm and "square accounts with him"; he had told Lutze that Röhm would be dismissed; to von Krausser he had forecast reconciliation. Such vacillation on the part of the Führer did not suit Himmler, Göring and Heydrich at all. Before the opening of the final scene, Hitler's hand had to be removed from the levers of power.

Here chance came to the conspirators' assistance. Early on 28 June Hitler, accompanied by Göring, left by air to attend the wedding of Josef Terboven, the Gauleiter of Westphalia.¹¹⁴ The *National-Sozialistische Korrespondenz* later reported that Hitler had gone to Western Germany "to give an outward impression of complete calm and avoid warning the traitors."¹¹⁵ The majority of historians have accepted this story, believing that Hitler made this journey to allow Röhm's enemies to get to work less obtrusively.¹¹⁶

It does not, so far, seem to have occurred to anybody that this supposed deception manoeuvre on Hitler's part ran completely counter to the tactics of the anti-Röhm campaign. He had no interest in covering up the quarrel with Röhm. On the contrary—Röhm was to be challenged in a spectacular campaign using maximum publicity, in order to prepare the public for the forthcoming blood-bath. On 25 June in a speech over all German radio networks Rudolf Hess threatened: "Woe to him who breaks faith in the belief that he can serve the revolution by revolt! Adolf Hitler is the revolution's great strategist. Woe to him who plants his flat feet among the fine threads of the Führer's strategic plans, thinking to force the pace. He is an enemy of the revolution."¹¹⁷ On 25 June Reichenau had Captain Ernst Röhm expelled from the German Officers Association for unbecoming behaviour¹¹⁸—in Wheeler-Bennett's words "a measure which smacked of the handing over of a victim by the Holy Office to the civil arm for execution."¹¹⁹ On the same day Göring thundered: "Anyone who erodes this confidence [in Hitler] is guilty of high treason. Anyone who wishes to destroy this confidence is a destroyer of Germany. Anyone who offends against this confidence will pay with his head."¹²⁰

The challenge to Röhm could not have been clearer. So what could be the point of this deception manoeuvre

which Hitler's journey to West Germany was supposed to be? In fact the stage managers of the Röhm drama were only too glad to see the vacillating Chancellor leave Berlin—dependent henceforth on their messages, their suppositions and their rumours. Röhm's rival, Lutze, who was present at Terboven's wedding, said with a sudden flash of perspicacity: "I had a feeling that it suited certain circles to aggravate and accelerate 'the affair' just at this moment when the Führer was absent from Berlin and could therefore neither see nor hear things for himself, but was dependent upon the telephone."¹²¹

Hitler had hardly reached the wedding reception in Essen when he was called urgently to the telephone; Himmler was on the line from Berlin.¹²² The cast was well distributed. Himmler had remained in Berlin and was now reading to Hitler increasingly ominous reports of SA machinations; meanwhile, at Hitler's side, the faithful Göring stood ready to confirm the least detail of Himmler's reports. Hitler was so incensed that he left the wedding breakfast and returned to his suite in the Kaiserhof Hotel, Essen. Shortly thereafter he summoned his closest collaborators, among them Göring and Lutze.¹²³ Lutze's diary continues: "Here in the hotel room the telephone was going almost uninterruptedly. The Führer was deep in thought but was apparently clear that he would now have to take action."¹²⁴ Another confidant of the conspirators now took a hand in Hitler's discussion; Paul (nicknamed Pilli) Körner, Göring's factotum and a Secretary in the Prussian State Ministry, had just arrived by air from Berlin with further news from Himmler.¹²⁵ Throughout Germany, apparently, the SA was arming for revolt.

Suddenly Hitler got up and proclaimed: "I've had enough. I shall make an example of them."¹²⁶ The final ultimate decision had been taken. Hitler ordered Göring and Körner to return to Berlin and be ready to act on receipt of a code word which Hitler would issue—and to act not only against the SA but also against the bourgeois opposition. Göring lost no time; early on 29 June, back in Berlin, he alerted the Leibstandarte "Adolf Hitler" and the Prussian Police unit "General Göring."¹²⁷

Göring now drafted a letter, which was handed under seal to Heydrich. Heydrich passed it to SS-Untersturm-

dressed since he was under arrest. The detectives remained behind."¹⁶³

Hitler hurried on. He banged on the opposite door from which, shortly afterwards, appeared Oberguppenführer Edmund Heines; a male sleeping partner could be seen behind him. In a sudden access of rage against National Socialist homosexuals, Goebbels later described the scene as "revolting—almost nauseating."¹⁶⁴ Hitler rushed off to the next room while Lutze went into Heines' room and searched the wardrobe for weapons. Heines shouted "Lutze, I've done nothing. Can't you help me?" In some embarrassment Hitler's man turned to him saying: "I can do nothing . . . I can do nothing."¹⁶⁵ The entire "nest of conspirators" had soon been cleared. The arrested SA men were marched down and locked in the cellar of the Pension, guarded by two detectives; they were soon on the way to Stadelheim.¹⁶⁶ Before Hitler could leave, however, a lorry arrived from which emerged, fully armed, Röhm's "Headquarters Guard" summoned from Munich.¹⁶⁷ The situation was critical; Standartenführer Julius Uhl, the Headquarters Guard Commander, was languishing in the Pension cellar and his men were in an ugly mood.

Hitler went forward, barked out an order and then turned on his usual charm. The SA men did as they were told and allowed their Führer to order them back to Munich. They drove off northwards.¹⁶⁸ But on leaving Bad Wiessee they had second thoughts. The lorry stopped and Röhm's Headquarters Guard took up what Bruckner, Hitler's aide, described as an "ambiguous position."¹⁶⁹ They looked so menacing that Hitler thought it better to leave Bad Wiessee in a southerly direction and return to Munich by a wide detour via Rottach-Egern and Tegernsee.¹⁷⁰ At about this time Dr Robert Koch, the Governor of Stadelheim Prison, strolled in through the main entrance.¹⁷¹ He found on his desk a report to the effect that senior SA Commanders had been arriving uninterruptedly since 7 a.m.¹⁷² The SS had surrounded the main station and Political Police officials held up every SA leader as he arrived; some they let go and some they arrested—more often the latter.¹⁷³

When SA Brigadeführer Max Jüttner arrived at the station to meet his Chief, Ritter von Krausser, off the over-

night train from Berlin, he found him being escorted by two plain-clothes men, clearly police officials. Krausser told Jüttner that he had just been arrested. Krausser's chauffeur, Vollmer, tried to get his master away and was also arrested.¹⁷⁴ One after another the SA leaders were taken off to Stadelheim—Manfred von Killinger, Hans Peter von Heydebreck, Hans Hayn, Georg von Detten, Hans Joachim von Falkenhausen¹⁷⁵—the list included practically every well-known SA name.

Anyone who escaped the political police, however, and dutifully took the road to Bad Wiessee, was stopped on the way by a wildly gesticulating figure. Hitler told each SA leader that he had a new Chief, Viktor Lutze.¹⁷⁶ He shouted: "I have just come from Wiessee, where I have arrested Röhm. He and Schleicher had planned a putsch against me and the leaders of the State. All SA leaders involved will be shot." He ordered those he met to follow his car and hold themselves ready for a conference in the Brown House.¹⁷⁷

At 10 a.m. Hitler reached Party Headquarters in the Briennerstrasse; it had meanwhile been cordoned off by the Reichswehr. He gave Goebbels the go-ahead; the Propaganda Minister rushed to the telephone and put through to Göring the agreed code word: "Kolibri."¹⁷⁸ Now, at last, Heydrich and Himmler really could let the SS loose, and terror stormed through the Reich. SD-Oberabschnitt Commanders opened the sealed envelopes containing their secret orders and then sent the murder squads on their way.

Bavaria provided the first SS victims. Ritter von Kahr, who had checkmated Hitler's 1923 putsch, was carried off by SS men¹⁷⁹ and his mutilated body was found later on Dachau Heath; he had apparently been killed with a pickaxe. Father Bernhard Stempfle, who knew too many of Hitler's secrets, ended with three bullets through his heart and a broken spine.¹⁸⁰

SS men searched for the Munich doctor, Ludwig Schmitt, who had worked with Otto Strasser, one of Hitler's main enemies. They failed to find him because, unknown to them, one of the Stadelheim warders had hidden him in a woodshed.¹⁸¹ Failing to find the right man, they laid hands on the wrong one, a music critic named Dr Wilhelm Eduard Schmid; he lived in a different street,

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he spelt his name differently, and he was a doctor of philosophy, not medicine—all the same the SS carted him away. His family knew no more until Dachau Concentration Camp delivered them a coffin which they were forbidden to open.¹⁸²

From this point on, the most fanatical apostle of political terror was Adolf Hitler. The Reichsstathalter, Ritter von Epp, presented himself to demand court-martial procedure for his former subordinate, Röhm; Hitler stormed at him saying that Röhm's treachery was proven and that he had forfeited his life. Von Epp was so taken aback by Hitler's bloodthirsty outburst that, as he left, he gazed tongue-tied at his aide, Prince zu Ysenburg and murmured: "Crazy!"¹⁸³ The SA Commanders who had not been arrested were equally taken aback, when at 11.30 Hitler swung open the door of the Brown House Council Chamber and approached them.¹⁸⁴

Describing the scene, Gruppenführer Schreyer recalled that as he opened his mouth to speak "a gob of foam shot out of his mouth such as I have never seen before or since."

In a voice frequently choked with emotion, he described what had happened: Röhm and his followers had been guilty of the greatest act of disloyalty in world history. Röhm, to whom he had always been faithful through every difficulty, possible or impossible, had committed high treason against him; Röhm had planned to arrest and kill him in order to hand Germany over to her enemies. The principal figure on the other side had been François-Poncet [the French Ambassador]; he had given Röhm, who was always in financial difficulties, a bribe of 12,000,000 marks." Then came the decisive piece of news: "Exemplary punishment would be meted out to Röhm and his conspirators; he would have them all shot; the first group—Röhm, Schneidhuber, Schmid, Heines, Hayn, Heydebreck and Count Spreti—would be shot that very evening. He had already given the order."¹⁸⁵ This information was in fact somewhat premature. Röhm was not shot "that very evening" and Hitler had not given the order to execute the others on the list. He was waiting for his executioner, Sepp Dietrich. The Leibstandarte Commander did not appear until 12.30 a.m.¹⁸⁶

Hitler received him in a bad temper, and wanted to know where he had been all this time. Dietrich had his

excuses. The roads to Bad Wiessee were wet and the tyres of the Reichswehr lorries carrying his men were worn; in addition he had had to take on petrol at the artillery barracks in Landsberg. The Führer's order to turn back to Munich had therefore only reached him between Bad Tölz and Bad Wiessee.¹⁸⁷ Where were the troops now, Hitler asked. Dietrich replied that they were on the Munich Karolinerplatz. Hitler thereupon ordered him to install his two companies in the Pioneer Barracks and report back again as soon as possible.¹⁸⁸

Dietrich returned at 2.30 p.m. He was kept waiting for three hours in the Brown House outer office while loud, but unintelligible, discussion was audible through the double doors of the meeting room.¹⁸⁹ Hitler and his immediate associates were debating the fate of the SA leaders. This was the great moment for Buch, the Party Judge, who clearly wished to make good his failure to murder the Röhm gang in 1932. Rudolf Hess and Max Amann, the Party publisher, competed for the pleasure of carrying out the murders, Hess shouting: "My Führer, the duty to shoot Röhm is mine."¹⁹⁰ The new SA Chief of Staff, Lutze, sat there dumbfounded, listening to the others' murderous talk. He had never imagined that a clean-up of the SA would be like this. When Hitler asked him who should be shot, Lutze was evasive, saying that he did not know who was to blame or who were Röhm's accomplices and could not quote any names. He then silently left the room.¹⁹¹ About 5 p.m. the door opened and Buch's son-in-law, Martin Bormann, came out. He took Dietrich in to Hitler who said: "Go back to the barracks; select an officer and six men and have the SA leaders shot for high treason."¹⁹² Bormann then handed Dietrich a list of prisoners sent over to the Brown House that morning by Koch, the Prison Governor; it gave the names of all the SA leaders incarcerated in Stadelheim.¹⁹³ Hitler had ticked six names in green pencil; August Schneidhuber, SA-Obergruppenführer and Police President of Munich (Cell 504); Wilhelm Schmid, SA-Gruppenführer Munich (Cell 497); Hans Peter von Heydebreck, SA-Gruppenführer Stettin (Cell 502); Hans Hayn, SA-Gruppenführer Dresden (Cell 503); Hans Joachim Graf von Sperti-Weilbuch, SA-Standartenführer Munich (Cell 501) and Ed-

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opponents during the "struggle period" but now they did not fit into the Praetorian Guard picture. In addition Himmler would no longer tolerate the professional unemployed, saying: "A man who, without valid reason, changes his job for the third time, we shall expel. We have no use for loafers."⁶⁴

Himmler dealt particularly severely with homosexuality, which he regarded as a personal insult. In his eyes it was a crime worthy of death and no SS homosexual escaped his wrath—not even "old fighters" like Gruppenführer Kurt Wittje, the first head of the SS-Hauptamt [SS Head Department].⁶⁵ On 22 May 1935 the *Schwarze Korps* reported that Wittje had been relieved of his post "because of illness"; Himmler said in a speech that he had released Wittje "to his regret" and "with a heavy heart" and that he hoped Wittje "would be fully available again in the foreseeable future."⁶⁶ The SA Commanders, with the SS homilies about Röhm's homosexuality still ringing in their ears, knew what Wittje's real disease was. Lutze, the Head of the SA, remarked sneeringly: "It has taken time enough and pressure from all sides to get rid of Wittje."⁶⁷ In 1937 Himmler insisted that every SS homosexual be expelled and handed over to the courts; after serving his prison sentence "he will be sent on my instructions to a concentration camp and shot while attempting to escape."⁶⁸

The discovery of any drop of non-Aryan blood in SS veins invariably excited Himmler. From 1 June 1935, every SS Commander from the rank of Sturmführer upwards had to show proof that neither he nor his wife had Jewish ancestors; from 1 October 1935 the requirement was extended to include Oberscharführer and Haupt-scharführer [Warrant Officers] and shortly thereafter every SS man.⁶⁹ Everyone had to be able to produce an "Aryan" family tree going back, in the case of other ranks to 1800 and in the case of officers or officer cadets to 1750;⁷⁰ the SS men, including even old war-time comrades of Himmler, spread far and wide searching, often for years, through Church registers and other old documents. If Himmler detected any trace of Jewish origin in a man's family tree, he acted ruthlessly—at least in so far as the lower ranks were concerned. Anyone who found that he had a drop of Jewish blood in his

veins had to report to his superior officer forthwith and request release from the SS; if he did not, the SS Court took action and decreed expulsion.⁷¹

Himmler was much more lenient, however, in the case of the senior ranks. The wife of a certain Obersturmführer M (as he is referred to in the SS files) had a Jewish grand-parent; M was allowed to remain in the SS provided his wife agreed to have no more children and he undertook not to send his sons into the SS.⁷² As time went on Himmler's caution increased with the rank of the evil-doer. Gruppenführer Walter Krüger was treated even better than Obersturmführer M. During the war Krüger's daughter became engaged to SS-Sturm-bannführer Klingenberg; it was then suddenly discovered that on Frau Krüger's side there was, in Himmler's words, "a full-Jewish ancestor in 1711." Klingenberg was forbidden to marry the daughter but Krüger's son was allowed to join the Leibstandarte.⁷³

Nevertheless the expulsion of 60,000 men could not in itself guarantee the SS the necessary internal solidarity. Himmler realised that what the SS lacked was a corps spirit to hold it together; it must also have rigid organisation, stricter conditions of entry and a code of honour to which every SS man would feel himself bound. Hitherto the SS had been no more than an organisation; now it was to become an Order. Himmler had discovered from history an example on which he proposed to model his Order—the Jesuits. It was no accident that Karl Ernst, the murdered SA leader, had frequently ridiculed him as the "Black Jesuit"; even Hitler referred to the Head of the SS as "my Ignatius Loyola."⁷⁴ In the Jesuits Himmler had found what he regarded as the central feature of any Order's mentality—the doctrine of obedience and the cult of organisation. Schellenberg confirms that Himmler had built up the SS organisation "on the principles of the Order of Jesuits."⁷⁵

The similarity between the two was in fact astounding; each was an Order conferring enormous privileges on its members, subject to no temporal jurisdiction, protected by the strictest conditions of entry and held together by an oath of absolute blind obedience to its lord and master—Pope or Führer. The history of the two organisations showed equally remarkable parallels; in the seven-

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So Reitlinger promptly discovered in Heydrich a "pathological Jewish self-hate" as the key to an understanding of this supposed fanatic;⁸ H. G. Adler in his *Theresienstadt 1941-1945* considered that the Third Reich offered Heydrich "unlimited power enabling him, by murdering every Jew within reach, to exorcise the hated Jewish spot within him."

Even Himmler secretly believed the theory, saying that Heydrich was "an unhappy man, completely divided against himself, as often happened with those of mixed race."¹⁰ Carl Burckhardt, the League of Nations Commissioner, found the same thing, saying that he could detect a dual personality in Heydrich's face: "I said to myself: two people are looking at me simultaneously."¹¹

Burckhardt tells a story of Heydrich regaled to him by SS men. One day, when under the influence of drink, Heydrich staggered into his brilliantly lit bathroom and came up against his reflection in the great wall mirror. He snatched his revolver from the holster and fired twice at the mirror shouting: "At last I've got you, scum!" Burckhardt's comment is: "The man with the split personality had shot at his reflection because at last he had met his other half—but he had met him only in the mirror and could never get rid of him; that other half was to accompany him to the end."¹²

But however detailed the biographers' picture of the "blond beast" as Heydrich was sometimes called even by the SS, the ultimate conclusion must be that it is perfectly possible to have a great deal to do with a man and yet not know him. For Reinhard Heydrich was not the Saint-Just of the National-Socialist revolution; he was no racial fanatic; he was not even what Freund called: "A professional criminal of Lucifer stature."¹³

It is, of course, attractive to compare Himmler and Heydrich with their terrorist counterparts of the French Revolution, Robespierre and Saint-Just. As far as crime is concerned, the head of the SD was far ahead of his French predecessor, but he had none of Saint-Just's doctrinaire revolutionary fanaticism or perverted idealism. In fact Himmler and Heydrich were two archetypes of the twentieth century raised to the *n*th degree—the ideologist and the technologist. They frequently invoked history and they twisted it to their own purposes but basically

Himmler and Heydrich were anti-historical figures, radical merciless rebels against tradition, morality and all humanitarian rules of conduct.

Heydrich's deity was power for its own sake; he was an incarnation of the technology of government by brute force, linked with that distrust of his lords and masters which earned him the nickname "Mr Suspicion"¹⁴ but he did not hate. The connecting link between Saint-Just and the victims of the guillotine had been hatred, but Heydrich did not hate the Jews; in his scheme of things, they were simply the subjects for a technical planning procedure, faceless objects for a "mopping-up action" on the ghastly scale ordered by the leaders of his State. With Heydrich hatred was an expression of personal spite. Grand Admiral Raeder, for instance, who had had him cashiered from the Navy, was an object of his undying thirst for revenge; Heydrich rejected all attempts at reconciliation by his former fellow-officers.¹⁵ Ideological hatred, on the other hand, was foreign to him, for he despised all ideologies, the National-Socialist included. Heydrich had a passion for all forms of sport; he was a fencer, a horseman, a pilot, a skier and modern pentathlon competitor; he was also SS Inspector for physical training; on occasions he would even protect Jewish sportsmen—for instance, he helped Paul Sommer, the German fencing-master, to emigrate to America and provided Kantor of the Polish Olympic team with money and papers.¹⁶

Heydrich obviously had none of that blind faith in Hitler which was the elixir of life to Himmler, the stimulant enabling the small-timer to grow to supernatural size. Heydrich could quite well visualise a Germany without Hitler but not a Germany without Heydrich. Those who knew him well are still convinced that, had he been alive on 20 July 1944, he might well have been found on the side of Stauffenberg—two of his fencing friends can remember him saying to them in Bad-Kreuznach in 1941 that he would be the first to do away with Hitler if "the old man makes a mess of things."¹⁷

Right to the end he remained a technician of power and an apostle of expediency. When, as Reich protector of Bohemia and Moravia, he was struck down by the Czech parachutists' hand grenade on 27 May 1942, the Czech conspirators were aiming not at a brutal overlord but

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at the sophisticated SS rationalist whose flexible stick-and-carrot policy constituted such a danger to their position that they could see no solution other than his liquidation.

Such a craftsman of pragmatism was, of course, infuriated by Himmler's interminable ideological ramblings. To his wife Lina, Heydrich would frequently unburden himself of his wrath with the Reichsführer and his racial fantasies. One evening, when he had drunk too much, he yelled: "Just look at his face, his nose—typically Jewish. A real Jewish lout!"¹⁸ Lina Heydrich egged him on, for she cordially loathed the entire Himmler family, particularly the "Madame Reichsführer." Even after the war Lina ridiculed Marga Himmler: "Size 50 knickers. That's all there was to her . . . that narrow-minded, humourless blonde female, always worrying about protocol; she ruled her husband and could twist him round her little finger—at least until 1936."¹⁹

Lina Heydrich had good reason to know how strong Marga Himmler's influence was. Urged on by his wife, Himmler demanded that Heydrich should divorce Lina, whom he regarded as impossible and ungovernable. But Lina Heydrich proved stronger than the jaundiced Frau Himmler. At one of Göring's garden parties she struck back. As chance would have it, Himmler was presiding at Frau Heydrich's table. She tells the story: "They were moments of tragicomedy. I put on my most mournful expression and sat stock still. Himmler asked: 'Why are you so quiet?' To which I replied: 'Do you find that surprising?' Then we danced. Himmler danced badly. Then he said, 'Well, Frau Heydrich, everything will be all right.' You see, that was typical of Himmler; on paper he ordered us to divorce, but when face to face with me, his courage left him. The matter was never referred to again."²⁰

Heydrich's vexation, however, was all the greater when he realised how dependent he was upon Himmler with his pernicky mysticism about the SS Order. Although intellectually the superior of his Chief, Heydrich never forgot to treat his Reichsführer "as a Prussian second lieutenant behaves to a senior general."²¹ Kersten noted: "Heydrich behaves . . . with quite inexplicable servility. He addresses Himmler as 'Herr Reichsführer'—a thing ab-

solutely forbidden throughout the SS—instead of simply 'Reichsführer.' Heydrich's side of the conversation between them goes like this: 'Certainly, Herr Reichsführer; if that is the Herr Reichsführer's wish, I will have the necessary arrangements made at once and report back to the Herr Reichsführer.' To Lina, however, he would rage: "Himmler is always manoeuvring and trimming his sails; he won't take responsibility."²²

Himmler rather dreaded his senior staff officer's appearance with some proposition. Kersten says: "Sometimes I had the impression that after one of these expositions Himmler was quite overwhelmed." Heydrich's reports, Kersten goes on, were "masterpieces of exposition; a short sketch of the person or subject, then his arguments perceptively built up to the decisive trump card, which he played last of all, then his conclusion which Himmler could hardly resist."²³

Sometimes the intimidated Reichsführer plucked up his courage again—once Heydrich was gone. Then he would seize the telephone and tell Heydrich that he must first discuss with Hitler the measures already agreed.²⁴ Shortly thereafter Himmler would issue a different order, camouflaged for the benefit of Heydrich as an order from the Führer. On one occasion Himmler had the courage to lose his temper; he screamed at Heydrich, stuttering: "You, you . . . and your logic. We never hear about anything but your logic. Everything I propose, you batter down with your logic. I am fed up with you and your cold, rational criticism." Heydrich drew back and gave way at once. Himmler was pacified once more.²⁵

Himmler always kept suspicious watch on possible rivals, but he never regarded Heydrich as potentially dangerous. He had detected in Heydrich characteristics which, though admirable in a secret policeman, were hardly calculated to further more exalted political ambitions. He was irritable, power-hungry, always ready to pounce: he was glacial, incapable of friendship or even loyalty. Heydrich's restlessness, his versatile, though superficial, intelligence, his tendency to be a know-all, his urge to be top dog in everything, whether in the SD, the fencing room or over the bottle, could not conceal the fact that within him there was a vacuum in which both ideologies and human beings sank without trace.

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the truth for, in fact, Tukachevsky was not brought down by Heydrich and the SD. In 1937 Spalcke could not substantiate his suspicions but today the proof is there that Heydrich was no more than a small, unimportant pawn in a Soviet Secret Service game.

The fact was that in Stalin's opinion Tukachevsky had become overpowerful and a threat to his personal dictatorship; Stalin had decided to put an end to the Marshal long before Heydrich started his document gambit; he had been preparing his blow against the military ever since late 1936. In December 1936 Yezhov, the Head of the Russian Secret Police, set up an "Administration for Special Tasks" known as the "Special Bureau" and this undertook the initial investigations against Tukachevsky.³¹ Shortly thereafter Yezhov had General Vitaliy Putna, one of Tukachevsky's closest collaborators, arrested.³² On 27 January 1937 the first reference to the Marshal as a friend of the "traitor" Putna was made at the fake trial of Karl Radek, the right-wing deviationist.³³ On 3 March, in a speech to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Stalin referred to the enormous damage "which a handful of spies in the ranks of the Red Army could do to the country."³⁴ On 11 May Tukachevsky was dismissed as Deputy Commissar for War and put in cold storage as Commander of the remote Volga Military District.³⁵ Three weeks later he was arrested.³⁶

Comparison of this sequence of events with the accounts of the SS memoir-writers shows how small was the SD contribution to the Tukachevsky affair. Höttl of the SD says that "the systematic work of forgery" began on Heydrich's instructions in April 1937³⁷—by which time, Putna, Tukachevsky's friend, had already been publicly denounced and Stalin had spoken of the "handful of spies" in the Red Army. Schellenberg states that the forged documents were handed over to the Soviets in mid-May 1937³⁸—Tukachevsky had already been dismissed on 11 May.

Any attempt to ascribe to the SD some major hand in the liquidation of Tukachevsky presupposes that the Soviet Secret Service was working through several channels simultaneously. In any case it may reasonably be assumed that Yezhov's Special Bureau would have looked for incriminating material in Germany, a country with

which Tukachevsky had Service relations. In the post-war period he had frequently visited Germany; he had been a guest of the Reichswehr at their manoeuvres and he had shaken Hindenburg's hand.³⁹ What more natural source of incriminating material for Yezhov than the National-Socialist Regime, which had never approved of military collaboration with the Bolshevik "world enemy"? The Soviets, however, obviously had to conceal their interest in this incriminating evidence and, for this purpose, Skoblin, a double agent with the panache of an ex-civil war general, was exactly the right man to lure Heydrich into a game which the omniscient "C" never perceived.

One regularly repeated feature of the Tukachevsky story is, however, totally untrue—that Heydrich asked his opposite number Canaris for the Reichswehr's correspondence with the Soviet Army and, when the Admiral refused, obtained it by breaking into a Wehrmacht office.⁴⁰ Spalcke, the Russian expert, confirms that Canaris knew nothing of Heydrich's plans up to the time of Tukachevsky's death. When Spalcke reported to the Admiral on the Tukachevsky affair, the latter was completely unsuspecting.⁴¹

Canaris used to go riding with Heydrich in the mornings and was, no doubt, informed of the SD's stroke of genius on one of these occasions. The news must have shaken him for it revealed to him the existence of a world of crooks, capable of dragging the whole Reich down to ruin. Abshagen, Canaris' biographer, considers that the Tukachevsky affair was the turning point in the Admiral's attitude both to Heydrich and to the regime.⁴² Barely a year later Canaris had become determined that the entire leadership both of the Sicherheitspolizei and the SD must go.

Here then were the first signs of conflict between the Wehrmacht and the SD/SS. The SD's second new field of activity, however, aroused the suspicion of an authority far more dangerous to it than the Wehrmacht—the Party. The Ausland-SD had already broken the letter of the law contained in the Canaris-Best agreement; now the work of the Inland-SD violated the spirit of an unwritten agreement subordinating the SD to the Party—Rudolf Hess had declared the SD to be the sole intelligence and counter-espionage organisation of the National-Socialist Party.⁴³

This unique position had been granted to the SD only

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he went to the German Gymnastic Festival in Breslau and there reached agreement with Hitler, who was also present.¹⁵¹ The Dictator forbade the SD to intrigue further against Henlein. Henlein was therefore saved, though the price demanded was high. The SS, on the other hand, was left to draw the necessary conclusions from the changed situation—Henlein, the ex-critic of the Nazis, was given the rank of SS-Gruppenführer.¹⁵²

The Foreign Ministry diplomats, however, had now been shown how far the SS had already penetrated into their foreign-policy preserve. Von Ribbentrop did manage to prevent Lorenz of VOMI being nominated Secretary for German minority questions,¹⁵³ but this only increased the SD's greed for diplomatic privileges. The next foreign policy crisis saw the Foreign Ministry completely outpointed by the SD. The Dictator left it to his own trusted Secret Service men to lay on the scenario—the destruction of the "remainder of Czechoslovakia" in March 1939.

Hitler had worked out a sophisticated plan. The leaders of the ultra-conservative and clericalist Slovak Peoples' Party were to be urged to declare their country's secession from the centralised Czechoslovak State; simultaneously the Czechs were to be encouraged to suppress the Slovak revolt. In the resulting upheaval Hitler would emerge as arbiter and take both countries under his control. The "remainder of Czechoslovakia" was to form the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia remaining as a theoretically independent State under the "protection" of the Greater German Reich.

Early in 1939 SS-Gruppenführer Wilhelm Keppler, together with SS-Standartenführer Edmund Veesenmayer and a troop of SD agents, travelled to Bratislava and established contact with the Slovak politicians.¹⁵⁴ These secret emissaries had strict instructions from Hitler that under no circumstances were they to allow the Foreign Ministry to know the purpose of their journey.¹⁵⁵ Keppler and his gang arrived just in time; the Prague government, weary of continuous friction with the semi-autonomous provincial Government of Slovakia, had just invited the Slovaks to a conference of reconciliation in the capital. The men from Berlin, however, persuaded Josef Tiso, the Slovak Minister-President, to reject the invitation from

Prague and make immediate preparations for Slovak independence.¹⁵⁶

At this point, one of the most prominent of the Slovak politicians threw a spanner in the works. Dr Karel Sidor, the Slovak Minister of State in the Prague Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Hlinka Guard (a sort of Slovak SA) rejected the Germans' separatist plan. This gave the remaining Slovak politicians pause. The Germans negotiated with Sidor but he refused to budge.¹⁵⁷ The SD therefore turned to its normal solution in such situations—criminal methods.

Alfred Naujocks, the SD troubleshooter, was ordered to Slovakia with a sabotage squad. He was to engineer incidents apparently the work of the Slovak Nationalists.¹⁵⁸ All was going well—the first bombs had gone off in a Bratislava chocolate factory, Prague had swallowed the German bait, deposed the Tiso Government and declared a state of emergency in Slovakia—when suddenly an amateur diplomat took a hand unscheduled in the programme.¹⁵⁹

Josef Bürckel, the Gauleiter of Vienna and another SS Gruppenführer, called on Sidor, whom Prague had meanwhile nominated Minister-President of Slovakia in place of the separatist Tiso, and tried to get him to change his mind. But "these remarkable efforts on the part of the Gauleiter" (Keppler's caustic description) failed.¹⁶⁰

Back in Berlin Hitler was becoming nervous. Time was pressing. Suspecting that the Germans were playing a double game, Hacha, the Czechoslovak President, had announced his arrival for a visit to Hitler on 14 March¹⁶¹ and this meant that the dictator was forced to obtain the Slovak declaration of independence not later than the evening of the 13th; without it Hitler would not obtain the capitulation which he intended to force on the Czechs. On 11 March Keppler went to Tiso once more, imploring him to agree to a split with Prague. During the night of 12–13 March Tiso gave way.¹⁶² Hardly had he given his agreement than an invitation to Berlin reached him from Hitler. A few hours later he was in Hitler's presence, just in time to lay Slovakia at the feet of the overlord of Central Europe before Hacha arrived.¹⁶³

For the first time the SD had shown its mettle as the executor of Hitler's will in a matter of foreign policy.

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by the Italian Foreign Minister; Ribbentrop pointed out to him that "applications for authorisation for foreign travel by leading personalities of the State and the Party should be transmitted in writing and in good time to the Foreign Ministry." Only if Himmler would inform him of the exact purpose of his journey to Italy, could he, as Head of the Foreign Ministry, decide whether he could recommend this journey to the Führer. He continued: "If you are basing yourself upon the assumption that your functions within Germany give rise to some form of special authority to take action abroad, I would point out that on my side I could under no circumstances recognise any claim to authority in relation to foreign countries such as might affect the external policy of the Reich."²¹⁷

In south-eastern Europe, where SS contacts were particularly numerous, Ribbentrop now put a stop to any further SS foreign-policy adventures by allying himself to a force which had already, on several occasions, stood in the way of Himmler's foreign-policy ambitions—the SA. In summer 1941 he filled all Embassy and Legation posts in the Balkans with SA leaders, deliberately selecting survivors of the Röhm putsch. SA-Obergruppenführer Seigfried Kasche from Lower Saxony became Minister in Zagreb, SA-Obergruppenführer von Jagow from Berlin Minister in Budapest, SA-Obergruppenführer Manfred Freiherr von Killinger from Central Germany Minister in Bucharest, SA-Gruppenführer Hans Ludin from Swabia Minister in Bratislava and SA-Obergruppenführer Adolf-Heinz Berkerle from Hesse Minister in Sofia.²¹⁸ None of these men had forgotten that they were once near to death at the hands of the SS.

Ribbentrop, in fact, drew a line which Himmler was never allowed to pass. When SS-Gruppenführer Werner Best joined the Foreign Service, Ribbentrop told him that from now on he must be his, Ribbentrop's, man, not Himmler's.²¹⁹

But his erstwhile friend's pinpricks could now no longer hurt the Reichsführer-SS. He had long since realised that the longer the war went on, the less foreign policy mattered. The field of independent foreign policy was growing ever smaller; the world of neutral and independent states was shrinking. Occupation policy was taking the

place of foreign policy. In the West, and even more important in the vast open spaces of the East, a new field of activity was opening. There Himmler, with his prophet's eye, saw a promised land—the world of the German master-race.

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state" persons, deportation of the Poles and their so-called "re-settlement" in the Government-General.¹¹²

All was now ready. Lorenz and his staff had meanwhile been concluding their preparations for the repatriation of the German Balts and on 20 October the first settler ships arrived from Estonia;¹¹³ the Balts were due to be accommodated in the Danzig area. However, if Himmler thought that his new access of power had passed unnoticed by his rivals, he was soon disillusioned. One of the Reichsführer's bitterest enemies who, to make matters worse, was entitled to wear the uniform of an SS-Gruppenführer, refused to allow the RKF to interfere in his kingdom in any way—this was Gauleiter Forster.

To ensure that all the various authorities co-operated in the repatriation exercise, it had been Himmler's intention to nominate the most senior personality in each area as his representative. Forster, however, who was in charge of the Danzig-West Prussia Gau, refused to take orders from Himmler and the latter had to nominate the HSSPF as his representative.¹¹⁴ No persuasion could bring Forster to co-operate with the RKF. When VOMI personnel, assisted by the Sicherheitspolizei, began to earmark whole areas of West Prussian towns for the reception of immigrants, Forster summoned the VOMI representative and threatened him with arrest if he did not immediately order his people to stop.¹¹⁵ Forster proved so inhospitable that the repatriate ships heading for Danzig were re-routed to Stettin.¹¹⁶ He only changed his attitude after a couple of telephone calls from Himmler, and even then he would only allow the returning Balts the most transient accommodation in his area.¹¹⁷

Himmler was compelled to postpone settlement of the German Balts to the following year. Owing to Forster's obstruction and the inefficiency of the VOMI organisation, the repatriates' situation was so miserable that another critic of Himmler's racial policy appeared, the National-Socialist ideologist Alfred Rosenberg, who was a German Balt himself. In a letter to Himmler he complained that "the manner in which the Balts are treated is reminiscent of the Bolshevik period." VOMI, he went on, had turned the German Balts into "a disorganised mob of disappointed, embittered and hopeless men."¹¹⁸ But Forster and Rosenberg were not Himmler's only rivals and opponents.

Others were on the scene to dispute his authority over the settlement area upon which the whole success of his operation depended.

Gauleiter Koch of East Prussia, for instance, was also in charge of certain ex-Polish territories now incorporated in his Gau and known as "New East Prussia"; he refused to allow his area to be used for the re-settlement of the RKF's German repatriates. When Professor Konrad Meyer-Heterling, Greifelt's senior area planner, initiated a survey, Koch threatened to have him thrown out of East Prussia.¹¹⁹ Others found more subtle methods of opposition. For instance Himmler set up a Central Real Estate Office to direct the requisitioning of Polish land; hardly had he done so than Göring's Four-Year Plan office organised a "Haupttreuhandstelle Ost" [Main Trust Office for the East—HTO]. Here was the Reich's Number Two staking his claim to control of all Polish-Jewish property—precisely the land which Himmler's Central Real Estate Office wished to reserve for its settlers.¹²⁰

Göring immediately rubbed into Himmler the fact that he was not regarded as an equal. Alerted by the formation of the HTO, Himmler promptly made representations to Göring in his capacity as head of the Four-Year Plan; Göring, however, referred him to the Head of the HTO, Max Winkler—a mere burgomaster. Only after endless discussions did Himmler reach agreement with Göring's representative: the HTO to retain control of all Polish industrial and urban property, Himmler being allowed only confiscated agricultural property in German-occupied Poland.¹²¹

Yet even now Himmler was not in full control of his new settlement area. He had had to concede some voice in the business to Darré, his disillusioned friend of the old Artaman days, now Minister of Agriculture.¹²² Moreover, Darré now reinsured via Göring's newly constituted organisation in the East. He set up his own office for the management of requisitioned Polish estates and placed it under Göring—clearly in the hope of strengthening his hand vis-a-vis the RKF.¹²³

In face of such resistance Himmler had to manoeuvre with caution if he was to achieve his object. The National-Socialist rule of self-frustration would soon have brought the RKF to an end, had Himmler not been able to rely

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sick Jews being carried out on litters, went from one to another with his service revolver and shot each in turn.⁶⁷

Pitilessly the Einsatzgruppen decimated Russian Jewry. By winter 1941/42 they had reported the following figures for Jews liquidated: Einsatzgruppe A—249,420, Einsatzgruppe B—45,467, Einsatzgruppe C—95,000 Einsatzgruppe D—92,000, a total of almost half a million.⁶⁸

The first wave of Einsatzgruppen was soon followed by a second batch of SS murderers. Behind the front a German civil administration had meanwhile been established under Alfred Rosenberg who was entitled "Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories"; he was responsible for two Reich Commissariats known as "Ostland" and "Ukraine"; these were again sub-divided into "Commissariats-General." Within this civil administration the Reichsführer-SS occupied a key position, for a Führer decree of 17 July 1941 had charged Himmler with "police security in the newly occupied territories" and empowered him "in discharging his responsibility to give instructions to the Reich Commissars."⁶⁹ Himmler had already nominated HSSPF [Senior SS and Police Commanders] as his principal representatives in Russia: Gruppenführer Hans Prützmann as HSSPF North in Riga, Gruppenführer Erich Kiev; in mid-1942 they were reinforced by Brigadeführer Gerret Korsemann as HSSPF Caucasus.⁷⁰

Each of Himmler's senior representatives controlled a regiment of Ordnungspolizei and certain Waffen-SS units reinforced by half-trained "auxiliary volunteers" from the Baltic States and the Ukraine. They were given liquidation tasks similar to those of the Einsatzgruppen—anything which the initial murder brigades had missed was to be steam-rolled by the formations of the HSSPF. The latter soon started a sinister race with the Einsatzgruppen for numbers of Jews liquidated. The eventual winner turned out to be Jeckeln who, for the month of August 1941 alone, reported a total of 44,125 executions, primarily of Jews.⁷¹

Actual numbers of Jews killed by units under the HSSPF during the early months of the Eastern Campaign cannot be accurately established. It is known, however, that when the Einsatzgruppen and HSSPF formations suspended operations at the end of 1941 to gather strength for the

following spring, 500,000 Jews had been murdered, 300,000 by the Einsatzgruppen.⁷²

In spite of these "successes" the SS murderers were now showing clear signs of exhaustion. In September Schulz, a Commando leader, had requested a posting;⁷³ Rasch, commanding an Einsatzgruppe, had gone on leave, never to return;⁷⁴ in November Nebe had told his deputy, Werner, that he was for home (Werner's comment was "Arthur, if you can't go on, I'll release you"); Gisevius says that Nebe was "a mere shadow of his former self, nerves on edge and depressed";⁷⁵ Nebe's driver, Köhn from the Kripo, had shot himself in horror at the anti-Jewish atrocities.⁷⁶

A few months later even Himmler's most aggressive Eastern minion became a victim of the nightmare—von dem Bach-Zelewski was taken to the SS hospital in Hohenlychen, suffering from a nervous breakdown and congestion of the liver. Haunted by his guilt, he would pass his nights screaming, a prey to hallucinations. Dr Grawitz, the Head SS doctor, reported to Himmler: "He is suffering particularly from hallucinations connected with the shootings of Jews which he himself carried out and with other grievous experiences in the East."⁷⁷ When the doctor asked him why he was in such a state of fear, Bach-Zelewski growled: "Thank God, I'm through with it. Don't you know what's happening in Russia? The entire Jewish people . . . is being exterminated there."⁷⁸ Yet when Bach-Zelewski asked the Reichsführer whether the Jewish business in the East could not now be brought to an end, Himmler replied angrily: "That is a Führer order. The Jews are the disseminators of Bolshevism . . . if you don't keep your nose out of the Jewish business, you'll see what'll happen to you!"⁷⁹

Even so fanatical a devotee of the Führer's orders as Himmler must have known that, apart from a small minority of natural sadists and killers, the men of the Einsatzgruppen felt like Bach-Zelewski or Brigadeführer Eberhard Herf, Head of the SS Personnel Hauptamt, who wrote that he "wished to get out of the East, since frankly I've had more than enough of it."⁸⁰

Nevertheless in the Einsatzgruppen a determined army of death had arisen, unparalleled even in the SS. Wholly dedicated to achievement, "hardness" and camaraderie,

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