THE NAZI BLOOD PURGE OF 1934

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This thesis deals with the problem of determining the reasons behind the purge conducted by various high officials in the Nazi regime on June 30-July 2, 1934. Adolf Hitler, Hermann Göring, SS leader Heinrich Himmler, and others used the purge to eliminate a sizable and influential segment of the SA leadership, under the pretext that this group was planning a coup against the Hitler regime. Also eliminated during the purge were sundry political opponents and personal rivals. Therefore, to explain Hitler's actions, one must determine whether or not there was a planned putsch against him at that time.

Although party and official government documents relating to the purge were ordered destroyed by Hermann Göring, certain materials in this category were used. Especially helpful were the Nuremberg trial records; *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939; Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945;* and *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1934.* Also, first-hand accounts, contemporary reports and essays, and analytical reports of a
secondary nature were used in researching this topic. Many memoirs, written by people in a position to observe these events, were used as well as the reports of the American, British, and French ambassadors in the German capital.

The thesis is organized into four chapters and an appendix. The first chapter, entitled "The First Revolution," covers the period between 1919, immediately after the First World War, and January 30, 1933, when Hitler became the chancellor of Germany. It deals with the early days of the party, the development of the SA organization, Hitler's abortive putsch of November 1923, the conflicts within the party, and the fall of the Weimar government.

The second chapter, "Hitler's Consolidation of Power," covers the period from early 1933 up to the outbreak of the purge on June 30, 1934. This chapter includes a study of the idea of a second revolution among the disgruntled party members, particularly the element in the SA which demanded its share of the spoils of victory; the position of the SA within German society and its conflicts with the Reichswehr over the creation of a new, revolutionary army; Hitler's success in securing Reichswehr support for his claim to the presidency to be used upon the death of President Paul von Hindenburg; and the uneasiness and anxiety prevalent throughout the country just prior to the blood purge.
The third chapter deals with the purge, and bears that title. It includes a detailed study of the events of that bloody weekend, an approximation of the number of victims, Hitler's justification for the purge as revealed in his speech before the Reichstag on July 13, an analysis of the motives for Hitler's actions, and an observation on whether or not there was a planned putsch against the Führer.

The last chapter, entitled "Aftermath," covers the death of Hindenburg in August, the rise of Hitler as supreme dictator, the decline of the SA, and the ascendency of the SS, a rival organization. The appendix includes a partial list of the victims of the purge.

The thesis of this study is that there was no planned coup against Hitler at this time. The purge was a final settlement of the bitter conflict between the SA and Reichswehr over a new army, Hitler siding with the army officers in order to secure their support for his claims to the presidency, as well as an opportunity to eliminate certain political opponents.
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THESIS

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By

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CHAPTER I

THE ACCESSION OF HITLER:
THE FIRST NAZI REVOLUTION

From the time of his return to Munich following World War I until his consolidation of control over the National Socialist Party during the night of June 30, 1934, the career of Adolf Hitler was a study in dynamism. This study is concerned with the major struggles of the period, his failures and especial attention to the success that came out of the showdown events of that night at the end of June—"the night of the long knives," sometimes called "the second Nazi revolution." Important though it is, investigation of the events of June, 1934 is quite difficult, since neither institutions nor men are inclined to document their sins. Nonetheless, careful evaluation of existing materials enables the researcher to reach a defensible account of events leading up to the 1934 crisis along with a fairly comprehensive expose of what took place during that night of ruthless horror. Despite various disagreements within the party, only two possibilities need be considered: was there a planned revolt against Hitler, or did Hitler, in a
frenzy, carry out an unjustified blood-bath? Contrary to official Nazi reports, no organized coup against Hitler existed at that time. The story begins with Hitler's early association with the political group that would develop into the Nazi Party.

In the years immediately following the First World War, Munich, as well as the state of Bavaria, was a hotbed of right-wing activity. Here were gathered the Freikorps, a volunteer force of veterans organized at the end of the war to fight the Poles and Bolsheviks, and the anti-government forces under Major General Ritter von Epp and Captain Ernst Röhm, who would become the most prominent victim of the 1934 purge. Among those of the right who opposed the Weimar Republic, out of loyalty to the Fatherland, were many of the noble families, industrialists, and veterans who had served in the war. Within these segments of German society, Adolf Hitler began his political career.¹

Among the anti-government political parties in Bavaria was Anton Drexler's Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (the DAP or German Workers' Party) founded in January, 1919. The DAP possessed a simple, nationalistic orientation, seeking a

"national integration" by binding the workers and the bourgeoisie together. According to the party plan the workers would be coaxed away from Marxism by appeals to nationalism and socialism. In its desire to create a united Germany, the bourgeoisie would grant certain social and political rights to the workers.²

Hitler attended his first meeting of the DAP on March 7, 1919. On this occasion he found a group of approximately twenty-five men in the Sterneckerbräu, one of Munich's lower-class taverns. After listening for several hours, and even arguing with one of the speakers who advocated Bavarian separatism, he was given a copy of Drexler's Mein politisches Erwachen and a few days later received an invitation to join the party. Hitler was attracted to this small, obscure party because he realized that only in such an organization could he quickly rise to prominence; he joined after two more visits to party meetings.³

By 1920, Hitler was playing an important part in party affairs. He was director of the party's propaganda apparatus,

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and on February 24, he announced that the party's name would be changed to the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party or NSDAP). The provisions of the party's program, as announced, included abolition of the peace treaties which ended the First World War, additional territories for Germany's expanding population, denial of citizenship to Jews, an end to the immigration of non-Germans into Germany, abolition of unearned incomes, nationalization of all trusts, pensions for the elderly, communalization of department stores, liberal land reforms, capital punishment for crimes against the state, political education in the schools, prohibition of child labor, formation of a national army, the establishment of a German press, and the creation of a strong central authority.

Hitler defeated an attempt by the old leaders of the party to counteract his growing dictatorial methods, and by July, 1921 he had firmly entrenched himself as the party's leader. This defeat marked the end for the old element, as represented by Drexler, and the rise of a new leadership.

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under Hitler and Röhm. Hitler was afforded considerable freedom to pursue his revolutionary tactics without hindrance from the army or government in Bavaria. This immunity was due to the efforts of Röhm, whose influence in army and governmental circles was quite far-reaching.

Ernst Röhm was reared in Bavaria, where his father was a civil servant. His relationship with his parents was similar to that of Hitler: a strong attachment to his mother and cool relations with a harsh, domineering father. His childhood dream was to become a soldier, a dream turned reality during the First World War.

After the war, Röhm began organizing a subversive armed guard in 1919 in Munich, first under Colonel Hans von Seisser, a future follower of Hitler, and then under General von Epp. The future SA leader and some of his military colleagues joined the DAP in May. Their entry transformed the party's orientation from that of a workers' movement to one of extreme nationalism. Infusing a military code and manner

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7 Bullock, op. cit., pp. 67-68.
10 Nyomarkay, op. cit., p. 59.
into the party, this group adopted the brown-shirt uniform, the swastika, and the Roman salute which would become world-famous a few years later. After joining the party, Röhm brought in many members of the police and military, along with journalist Dietrich Eckart and economist Gottfried Feder. These two nationalist individuals were radically anti-Jewish, anti-capitalist, and anti-Marxist.

In November 1920 the Stürmabteilungen (SA) was created from the remnants of the Freikorps which had been disbanded upon orders of the government. The members of Captain Ehrhardt's brigade, who had drifted to Munich following a series of defeats by political opponents in Berlin, provided the beginning core of the SA organization. Although the SA was officially branded a gymnastics and sports organization, its true nature soon became evident. In 1921, Hitler described

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14 Konrad Heiden, Der Fuehrer, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston, 1944), p. 143.
the purpose of the organization, "The S.A. is not only intended to be a means of defence for the movement, but above all a training school for the coming struggle for liberty." The Storm Troopers' primary tasks were to distribute Nazi propaganda among the populace and serve as guards at political meetings. Disagreement over the role of this organization in Germany's military structure would be the primary cause of the 1934 upheaval.

The National Socialist Party was still a local Bavarian party in 1923. At that time, Hitler hoped to recruit the disgruntled anti-government, nationalistic forces in Bavaria. His objective that year was to secure the support of the Bavarian government and local army units in a move against the federal government. Röhm and Eckart introduced him to important politicians, and his position in Bavaria improved. These two also borrowed money to purchase the Völkischer Beobachter, a local newspaper in Munich; Eckart acquired a loan of 60,000 marks for the purchase, but most

\[\text{Konrad Heiden, A History of National Socialism (New York, 1935), pp. 82-83.}\]
\[\text{Grzesinski, op. cit., p. 250.}\]
\[\text{Bullock, op. cit., p. 91.}\]
of the money came from the Reichswehr, a loan "probably arranged by Captain Röhm." 19

The Nazi movement, thriving in periods of domestic stress and hardship, received additional impetus from the 1923 decline of the value of the mark and the French occupation of the Ruhr. 20 During this period, the conflict in views between Hitler and Röhm, which would climax in the 1934 purge, first became apparent. While Röhm favored emphasis on building up the army, secretly defying the Versailles treaty, and favored a military response to the French occupation of the Ruhr, Hitler emphasized politics. For Hitler, the main goal was to secure political power in Germany, and the military was purely a means to that end. 21

On September 2, 1923, in Nuremberg, a manifesto creating the German Fighting Union was formed with Hitler as one of the signatories of the pact. It called for the overthrow of the Weimar Republic and an end to the Versailles Diktat. 22

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19 Ibid., p. 98.
20 Bullock, op. cit., p. 89.
21 Ibid., pp. 93-94. Röhm resigned from the Reichswehr in September of 1923. The reason behind this is unclear; it probably was due to the charges levelled against him of armament swindling. Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 180.
Gustav von Kahr, the local dictator in Bavaria who also signed the manifesto, and Hitler both desired the overthrow of the republican government. The monarchist Kahr, however, favored either autonomy or separation for Bavaria. These two men constituted an "uneasy alliance," each exploiting the other to achieve his personal ambitions. 23 Kahr would be executed in the bloodbath of 1934.

Hitler's first major attempt to secure power came in the abortive putsch of November 8-9, 1923 in Munich. The motive behind the putsch was to present a fait accompli to the wavering Kahr and General von Lossow, head of the Bavarian Reichswehr. These two had been informed by Colonel Seisser, chief of the state police, that the northern states would not support an uprising from Bavaria against the government. 24 Hitler stormed into the Burgerbräu Keller tavern, proclaiming the start of the revolution. In the meantime, Röhm fortified Lossow's headquarters in the main section of the city 25 and occupied the war ministry, encountering no opposition from government forces. 26 However, Röhm was forced to surrender

23 Ibid., p. 103.
24 Ibid., pp. 105-106.
25 Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 197.
26 Carsten, op. cit., p. 114.
the following day two hours after the defeat of the party's forces under Hitler and General Erich von Ludendorff, the revered war hero. Hitler and Ludendorff had marched from the tavern to the Feldhernhalle in the center of the city, where they encountered government troops.\textsuperscript{27} Though Hitler fled the scene when shots were fired, Ludendorff held his ground. Both were later arrested.\textsuperscript{28}

The main participants in the putsch faced trial on February 26, 1924 and sentencing on April 1.\textsuperscript{29} The sentences meted out were surprisingly light. While Hitler received five years,\textsuperscript{30} Röhm, although found guilty, escaped a jail sentence.\textsuperscript{31} Hitler was sent to Landsberg Prison, where he lived in relative comfort until his release on December 20, 1924.\textsuperscript{32} The government initiated a special investigation of

\begin{itemize}
\item[27] Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 201.
\item[29] Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 203; Shirer, op. cit., pp. 114, 118.
\item[32] Bullock, op. cit., p. 121.
\end{itemize}
the subversive actions of Röhm in October, but quietly
terminated it in September of the following year.33

Up until the 1923 putsch, Röhm was the real leader of
the core of the party, which was the SA. The failure of
the putsch convinced Hitler that power could not be obtained
through a head-on collision between the government and the
party's paramilitary organization.34 By 1923, "Hitler no
longer had the S.A. in his hands, because Röhm was trying
to turn them into an army, a Nazi Reichswehr. So great was
the danger that in order to parry it and maintain his position
Hitler organized the S.S. [Schutzstaffel] as his own personal
force."35 The SS, or Black Shirts, would rival the SA up
to the 1934 purge, even though the Brown Shirts were higher
than the Black Shirts in the party's organization.

Röhm recognized the role of Hitler in the movement, but
had no qualms about disagreeing with him on important matters.36
In May 1924, Röhm organized the Frontbann, which he hoped
would become "the military arm of the völkisch [nationalist]

33 Fried, op. cit., p. 278.
34 Fest, op. cit., p. 141.
35 Vermeil, op. cit., p. 280.
36 Carsten, op. cit., p. 122.
movement." He strove to make this movement independent of politics and a separate entity in alliance with the political organization. Hitler demanded at a party conference on February 27, 1925 that the Frontbann be a part of the NSDAP and under the party's leadership. Röhm refused; he wanted the movement to have a military leader (himself) and a political leader (Hitler). In an attempt at compromise, the SA leader visited Hitler at his apartment in Munich on April 16, and discussed the need of building up the SA organization and recognizing the Frontbann. Harsh words were spoken by both of these temperamental men when they failed to reach an accord. Röhm, still seeking an agreement, wrote to Hitler later, praising their friendship with hopes that it would continue. Hitler did not answer the letter and made no comment either in public or private on the Röhm affair. Dejected, Röhm submitted his letter of resignation on April 30, and it was printed in

37 Nyomarkay, op. cit., p. 65.
38 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
40 Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 252.
41 Heiden, A History of National Socialism, p. 112.
42 Nyomarkay, op. cit., p. 66.
the party press on May 1.  His desire for personal 
hegemony in the military arena would pose his basic conflict 
with Hitler, leading to the 1934 showdown.

For the SA leader, this was the nadir of his life: he 
spent some time with friends, worked for a time as a sales-
man for a publishing company and also worked in a machine 
factory. In 1926, he received an invitation to join a 
newly established German military mission in Bolivia. Wish-
ing to see other parts of the world and to assume once more 
the duties of a soldier, he accepted the offer and left for 
Bolivia in 1928.

Hitler encountered more intra-party strife in his 
relations with the Strasser brothers, Gregor and Otto. 
Gregor Strasser had fought with von Epp in Munich during the 
spring of 1919. He joined the party in 1920 and led an 
SA contingent during the putsch of November 1923. For this, 
he served time in Landsberg prison, where Hitler was incar-
cerated. Hitler was quite fond of Strasser, and the feeling 
was mutual.  Gregor Strasser, "a man of broad and generous

43 Röhm, op. cit., p. 342.
44 Fest, op. cit., p. 141.
45 Röhm, op. cit., pp. 358-359.
46 Alfred Rosenberg, Memoirs of Alfred Rosenberg, 
translated by Eric Posselt (Chicago, 1949), pp. 145, 146. Unless
outlook," unfortunately lacked self-control and possessed "primitive instincts." 47

After the war, Otto Strasser joined the Social Democratic Party and edited its publication, Parliamentary Service. He later joined the National Socialist Party and was influential in building up party strength in Berlin. 48

Both of the Strassers were socialistic and nihilistic. They dreamed of a class struggle in Germany, allied with the workers' movements in the Soviet Union, China, and the Gandhi supporters in India. In a letter to a German Communist, Strasser wrote: "You and I are fighting one another, but we are not really enemies. Our forces are split up and we never reach our goal." 49

Gregor Strasser built a strong, virtually autonomous, branch of the party in northern Germany. In 1925-26, Hitler and the Strassers came into conflict over the question of expropriating the various royal lands in Germany. The

otherwise indicated, passages mentioning "Strasser" refer to Gregor.


48 Fritz Max Cahen, Men Against Hitler (Indianapolis, 1939), p. 137.

49 Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 286.
Strassers favored it, while Hitler supported the landowners. During a meeting at Bamberg on February 14, 1926, Hitler worked for a truce with Strasser. The Strasser group, which included Dr. Joseph Goebbels, outnumbered by the Hitler group, was forced to abandon its social program. Goebbels split with Strasser a month and a half later and became a fervent follower of Hitler, who rewarded his loyalty by naming him to the position of gauleiter of Berlin.

The break with the Strassers was completed when Hitler convened the Munich faction of the party in May 1926. The conference passed a decree which gave the Munich group the sole control over party affairs as a whole. It was agreed that everything done in the name of the party would have to bear Hitler's approval. This break over policy between Hitler and Strasser would be repeated six and a half years later, completely ending Strasser's involvement in party affairs until the June purge.

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50 Bullock, op. cit., pp. 135-137.
51 Ibid., p. 137.
52 Shirer, op. cit., pp. 181-182.
53 Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 293.
54 Ibid., p. 291.
Although Hitler was now secure in his position as the party's supreme leader, he was hindered by the current improvement in the domestic and international situation. The institution of the Dawes Plan, the French evacuation of the Ruhr, the signing of the Locarno Pact, and the election of popular Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg as the country's President brought a measure of security to troubled Germany by the end of 1925. Although Hindenburg was conservative, non-republican, and a nationalist, his very position strengthened the faltering republic.

To add to Hitler's problems at this time, the Bavarian government banned him from public speaking, because of his inflammatory rhetoric; and other states later followed suit. The ban in Bavaria remained in effect until May 1927; and in Prussia it lasted until September 1928. Hitler, though irked by these bans, was in no position to disobey the decrees since he was still on parole. During this period, he spent much of his time on the Obersalzberg above

\[\text{Bullock, op. cit., pp. 131-132.} \] The Dawes Plan eased the strain of reparations payments for Germany and the Locarno Pact eased the tension between Germany and her western neighbors. Shirer, \text{op. cit., p. 192.} \]

\[\text{Bullock, op. cit., p. 131.} \]
Berchtesgaden, where he put the finishing touches on *Mein Kampf* and planned for the future.  

The situation improved somewhat during the latter years of the twenties. The party captured twelve seats in the Reichstag election in May, 1928. Those elected included Herman Göring, who had just returned from Sweden, where he had lived in exile after being wounded in the 1923 *putsch*, Goebbels, Strasser, Wilhelm Frick, and General von Epp. The results of this election were still not very impressive; the party was only the ninth largest party in the Reichstag.  

However, party membership mounted steadily: 27,000 in 1925; 49,000 in 1926; 72,000 in 1927; 108,000 in 1928; and 178,000 by 1929.  

The problems with the Strassers emerged again when Otto Strasser, advocating nationalization of industry, had a falling out with the Nazi leader, who opposed his socialist ideas. Hitler, who considered the younger Strasser  

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58 Bullock, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143. Hitler was ineligible to run in the 1928 election because of his citizenship. He gave up his Austrian citizenship on April 7, 1925, and was a man without a country until he became a naturalized German citizen in 1932.  
to be a "parlor Bolshevik," ordered Goebbels to throw Otto out of the party. Otto left the party on July 4, 1930, \(^6^1\) emigrating to Prague, where he formed an organization called the "Black Front," which worked with other left-wing groups. \(^6^2\) At their last meeting before Otto fled the country, Gregor remarked semi-prophetically, "Goering will shoot us both . . . ." \(^6^3\) Though out of the country, Otto Strasser would also be involved in the events of the 1934 blood purge.

Also during the late 1920's, the SA retained its importance in party affairs, even after Röhm's resignation in 1925. A nation-wide organization was established on October 1, 1926, under the command of Captain Franz Felix von Salomon Pfeffer. Hitler had waited a year and a half to strengthen his own position as party leader before allowing the reactivation of the Brown Shirt organization under a new leader. Essentially, the SA at this time was an organization of various separate, local entities under local commanders with no effective central control. \(^6^4\)

\(^{6^1}\) Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 349.


\(^{6^4}\) Nyomarkay, op. cit., pp. 111-113.
The purpose of the organization was revealed in the SA order of 1926, which proclaimed the organization to be "a means to an end," the end being the victory of the Weltanschauung, or world order.\textsuperscript{65} According to this draft, the SA man, "a relatively mindless creature," would obey the orders of his Group leader, who represented Hitler. He was part of the Volk, the German race, and his individuality was nothing compared to the welfare of the Volk. His leaders often told him, "You are nothing, your 'Volk' is all!"\textsuperscript{66}

In the meantime, Hitler did not want to quell this revolutionary ardour, but wanted to keep it in check so as not to offend the army,\textsuperscript{67} whose help, or at least neutrality, he would need to secure power legally. He would face the same dilemma just prior to the purge in 1934, in trying to cope with these disparate organizations.

The SA at this time included many former army officers and unhappy middle-class youth. However, following the government-ordered dissolution of the Communist Red Front Fighters' League in May 1929, many Communists went over to

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., p. 27.

\textsuperscript{66}Otis Mitchell, "Terror As A Neo-Marxian Revolutionary Mechanism in the Nazi SA (1932)," \textit{Wichita State University Bulletin}, University Studies No. 63 (May, 1965), 9.

\textsuperscript{67}Bullock, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 168.
the SA. Communist members composed as much as thirty per cent of some SA formations. Despite their differences, the Nazis and these former Communists had a common enemy: the democratic Weimar government. Communist infusion into the SA caused considerable uneasiness among the conservative element in the party, who had little in common with the Leftist organization anyway. This conservative-radical enmity would surface before and during the purge.

The SA's new leader, Pfeffer, did not last long however. Because of conflicts over policy with Hitler, he resigned in August 1930, claiming that he had not received "the necessary moral and material support" from the party's political leaders. Röhm, his predecessor, would soon be his successor. Shortly thereafter, but with no connection, the Berlin SA revolted against the local leadership. Walter Stennes, SA Osaf Deputy East, disagreed with Hitler over SA units joining in Reichswehr training courses. Stennes, in favor of this policy, wanted the SA to be a militarized, autonomous, non-political agency. Like Röhm, he disapproved of the growing idolization of Hitler. When Chancellor Brüning issued an emergency decree on March 28, 1931,

68 Grzesinski, op. cit., pp. 251-252.
69 Nyomarkay, op. cit., pp. 116-118.
prohibiting political programs without approval of the police twenty-four hours in advance, Hitler ordered no confrontation, a policy that Stennes opposed. Hitler reacted by expelling Stennes, who retaliated by putting the Berlin party and SA groups under his control. Hitler went to Berlin and, because of his effective persuasion in speeches to the SA men, the revolt ended. Hitler, in a magnanimous mood, did not seek revenge on the rebels; he made some concessions and named himself the SA's supreme leader. The Storm Troops, for the moment, were under his exclusive supervision.

The brief, heady days of the late twenties were shattered by the world-wide financial collapse of the depression. Germany desperately needed a strong, effective national coalition to run the government if the republic were to survive. Such times of stress and uncertainty always served as a boon for Hitler. During the 1930 election campaign, he fostered the nationalism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism of the middle-class, and promised the farmers

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71 Nyomarkay, op. cit., pp. 116-118.
72 Bullock, op. cit., p. 155.
government aid to agriculture. Unlike other Weimar politicians, he promised action, not just rhetoric. The results of the elections revealed a substantial gain for the two extremist parties, the Nazis and Communists, while the moderate and other nationalist parties suffered a sharp decline in support. The National Socialist Party rose from the smallest to the second largest party in the Reichstag, and Hitler's position as a national leader to be reckoned with was enhanced as it had never been before.

Following the elections, Hitler summoned Röhm back to Germany. Upon his return in January 1931, Röhm assumed the duties of Chief of Staff of the SA and SS. By this time the SS was a force of more than 100,000, and becoming increasingly independent under the aegis of Heinrich Himmler, who had become its leader two years earlier. It was also apparent to Röhm that Hitler was beginning to favor the SS

73 Ibid., p. 159; Shirer, op. cit., p. 194.
74 Bullock, op. cit., p. 161; Shirer, op. cit., p. 195.
75 Röhm, op. cit., p. 362.
76 Ibid., p. 364.
78 Neumann, op. cit., p. 546.
over the SA. The Himmler-Röhm rivalry would be decisively culminated in the 1934 purge.

In the meantime, Röhm's task was to make Hitler "an idol" in the eyes of the SA. This Röhm accomplished even though he did not view Hitler as a demigod. The SA chief organized the force along army lines and conducted a drive for new recruits, which strengthened the SA in 1931 from 100,000 to 300,000 men. Under Röhm's guidance, the organization was based on the "squad." Any leader wishing to organize a squad could form one. He would incorporate his comrades into his squad, which bore his name, and then would report the organization of his squad to an SA chief. "Three to six squads formed a 'troop,' two to three troops a 'storm'; the storm, embracing seventy to a hundred and twenty men was . . . the actual marching and fighting cell of the Brown Army." A storm would be incorporated into a "standard," composed of one thousand to three thousand men. The next two steps in the hierarchy were the "brigade"

79Bayles, op. cit., p. 156.
80Heiden, Der Fuehrer, pp. 370-371.
81Nyomarkay, op. cit., pp. 119-121.
82Heiden, Der Fuehrer, pp. 398-399.
83Ibid., p. 399.
and then the "group" or "superior group," composed of as many as a hundred thousand men. In the 1930's, there were eight Groups, stationed at Königsberg, Stettin, Breslau, Dresden, Hanover, Frankfurt-am-Main, Munich, and Linz. Unlike the army, however, the SA suffered from a lack of arms and an effective disciplinary system.

Meanwhile, the Reichswehr Minister in Chancellor Brüning's government, Wilhelm Groener, began to distrust the SA with Röhm's return in January 1931. In Groener's estimation, Röhm's centralization and co-ordination of the SA presented a threat to the state and to the Reichswehr. Groener seriously suggested dissolution of the SA only after Hitler refused to support a prolongation of President Hindenburg's term of office in January, 1932. The Reichswehr Minister feared the possibility of a Hitler victory over Hindenburg which, he believed, would also entail an SA victory over the Reichswehr. Throughout 1931, Groener postponed disbanding the SA because of the shaky legal grounds upon which such a decree would stand and because some in the Reichswehr

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84 Ibid.
were reluctant to dissolve such a potential source of manpower for the army.\textsuperscript{87} Also, many of the SA leaders had earlier been officers in the Reichswehr: Röhm, Franz Ritter von Epp, Konstantin Hierl, and Walther Buch.\textsuperscript{88}

However, on April 13, 1932, the Cabinet signed the decree dissolving the SA, which was approved by Hindenburg, Brüning, many regional officials, and General Kurt von Schleicher, a prominent personage in both government and army circles. However, sharp criticism of the decree developed in the army and Groener was even criticized by some in his Ministry. When Groener's attempts to support his actions before the Reichstag met with loud heckling from the Nazi section, he became unnerved, thereby weakening his position. Hoping to save the Brüning government from further attack, he resigned on May 13.\textsuperscript{89}

Hitler was not overly alarmed by the decree banning and disorganizing the SA. He remarked, "The methods used for gaining power were in the past and remain to-day strictly constitutional. Consequently, I do not need the assistance

\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., pp. 440-441, 445-446.
\textsuperscript{89}Craig, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 448-453.
of the S.A. in order to gain power in Germany." Goebbels struck a different note in his diary, "The S.A. is, and always will be, the elite of our Party, unswervingly loyal to the Leader and the Movement, hard to withstand, inflexibly upholding our party principles. They form the vanguard of the German Revolution." Goebbels, though strictly an opportunist, was virtually Röhm's only supporter in the Nazi hierarchy. His sanction of Röhm's views would place him in a delicate position during the blood purge.

Meanwhile, in a bold effort to secure power, Hitler committed himself in 1932 to run against Hindenburg for the presidency. Röhm, one of the most vociferous advocates of a contest between the two, disapproved of any compromise with the government. Goebbels announced Hitler's candidacy at a Nazi rally at the Sportpalast in Berlin on February 22. Hitler's message during the campaign appealed to many in the army because of the promise to strengthen and expand Germany's military position. Also, many big businessmen

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90 Baynes, op. cit., p. 178.
91 Dr. Joseph Goebbels, My Part in Germany's Fight, translated by Dr. Kurt Fiedler (London, 1940), p. 35.
viewed him as the saviour of German capitalism from the threat of Communism and the trade unions.  

Schleicher and Röhm held private meetings discussing ways to undermine Brüning's government. They devised a plan by which all the paramilitary organizations of the political parties would secede from each party and place themselves under state control. Schleicher would then become general of a militia numbering in the millions. As a result, the general and the SA chief of staff would be accused in 1934 of trying to undermine Hitler's government. Gregor Strasser opposed any deals with Schleicher, favoring an alliance with the Center party and a compromise with Brüning. Schleicher offered Hitler the removal of Brüning, new elections for the Reichstag, and a removal of the ban on the SA and SS. Following the resignation of Brüning and his cabinet on May 30, a new government was formed under Franz von Papen; and the ban on the SA was

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94 Ibid., p. 199.
96 Heiden, Der Fuehrer, pp. 450-451.
97 Bullock, op. cit., pp. 208-209.
lifted on June 16. The ban had been removed by Hindenburg in return for Hitler's agreement to support Papen's cabinet. Hitler, however, criticized Papen in the July Reichstag elections.

The party's biggest support in these elections came from the middle-class, nationalists, and young people. The party received 13,745,000 votes and 230 Reichstag seats, making it the largest party in Germany. Despite this impressive victory, they still were not a majority party, polling only 37.3 per cent of the vote.

In light of these Nazi victories, Hindenburg summoned Hitler to meet with him on August 13. Hitler was reluctant to go, not knowing what Hindenburg would offer; Papen, however, persuaded him to meet with the President. Since Göring was in Sweden, Röhm was chosen to accompany Hitler. Hindenburg refused to meet with Röhm, because of the SA leader's reputation as a rowdy homosexual, and Hitler alone was called into the President's office. Hindenburg offered

98 Goebbels, My Part, pp. 86-88, 94. Brüning had been dismissed after Schleicher told Hindenburg that Brüning was no longer supported by the army. Craig, op. cit., pp. 448-453.


Hitler the positions of Vice-Chancellor and Premier of Prussia in the Papen government. The Nazi leader countered by demanding that Papen's government be dissolved and a new one, composed entirely of Nazis, created in its place. Hindenburg rejected this proposal and abruptly dismissed Hitler.

With the shattering of any hopes of compromise between Hitler and Hindenburg, the presidential election of 1932 between these two men occurred. Röhm ordered the SA and SS to go on alert and remain in barracks during the election. Before the voting, some of the troops encircled Berlin and many of the families of the Nazi chiefs left the capital. Röhm assured Schleicher that this alert was just a measure of precaution and was nothing to be alarmed about. The Nazis polled almost one-third of the popular vote, around eleven and a half million. Hindenburg polled 18,661,736 votes, but his vote was 0.4 per cent short of a majority and a second election was required. In the second vote, Hitler's total jumped to 13,417,460, but Hindenburg again


103 Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 447.
led, securing a majority victory with fifty-three per cent of the vote. In the elections, the trade unions and the democratic center parties which supported the republic voted for Hindenburg. The upper classes voted either for Hitler or Düsterberg, the candidate of the Nationalist Party. Although Hitler made an impressive showing against Hindenburg, the Nazi vote declined in November from its count in the July Reichstag elections. Many of the party's former supporters either stayed home or voted for the Communists, viewing them as more revolutionary. The Nazis lost two million votes and their representation in the Reichstag fell from 230 to 196 seats. Although they were still the largest party, Hitler's position had deteriorated since the victories of the previous summer.

Schleicher, alarmed at the growing support for the Communists and jealous of the close relationship between Papen and Hindenburg, enticed the cabinet into calling for Papen's resignation. Papen angrily followed the will of the majority and resigned on November 17, confident that he would be recalled after negotiations with Hitler failed. In interviews with Hitler on November 19 and 21, Hindenburg offered

104 Bullock, op. cit., p. 201.
him the chancellorship, only if he could rule with majority support, or the vice-chancellorship in a Papen government. This offer went against Hitler's all-or-nothing demands; he did not have a majority and did not covet a second-place position. 106

Lacking army support, Papen was relieved of his position by Hindenburg, who dismissed his friend with a "heavy heart." 107 General von Schleicher, the man who had schemed behind the scenes and had secured the resignation of Groener, Brüning, and Papen, became chancellor on December 2. Papen had favored calling for a dictatorship after proclaiming a state of emergency; Schleicher, however, opposed this plan, fearing the response of the Nazis and the Communists to such a policy. 108 Goebbels, confident that a National Socialist victory was near, wrote in his diary: "When he [Schleicher] is overthrown, our turn comes. We can but quietly wait. This experiment will only last a short time." 109

107 Shirer, op. cit., pp. 244-245.
109 Goebbels, My Part, pp. 177-178.
As chancellor, Schleicher attempted to divide the Nazi party by wooing Strasser into joining his government. Aware of this attempt, Hitler gave no thought of compromising with Schleicher.\textsuperscript{110} Strasser, along with Gottfried Feder, believed that Hitler should allow the party to enter into a coalition government with Schleicher.\textsuperscript{111} He saw the party on the verge of a financial collapse. The party had to procure support if it were to survive. In his estimation, there were two choices: credit for the party would be improved if it took a place in the government, or it could rely on the big businessmen for support. The second choice, of dependence on big business, was anathema to Strasser; therefore, he believed the wise course to be a rapprochement with Schleicher.\textsuperscript{112} Like Rôhm, Strasser would be accused after the purge of plotting with Schleicher against Hitler.

In an effort for compromise, Hitler and Strasser met at Berlin's Kaiserhof hotel on December 7. Hitler angrily told Strasser that he was splitting the party into two camps and was ruining his (Hitler's) chances for leadership.

\textsuperscript{110}Taylor, op. cit., p. 64.

\textsuperscript{111}Calvin B. Hoover, Germany Enters the Third Reich (New York, 1933), p. 84.

\textsuperscript{112}Heiden, A History of National Socialism, p. 219.
Strasser denied this charge and stated that Hitler had sabotaged his attempts to strengthen the party's position. The meeting ended in a stalemate. After leaving, Strasser wrote Hitler a letter of resignation from the party,\textsuperscript{113} which became official on December 8.\textsuperscript{114} Strasser's resignation was complete; he did not re-enter the party scene for another year and a half.

Goebbels' optimism, when Schleicher became chancellor, had turned to pessimism, following Strasser's resignation. Goebbels wrote in his diary concerning the future: "The year 1932 has brought us eternal ill-luck . . . . The past was sad and the future looks dark and gloomy; all chances and hopes have quite disappeared."\textsuperscript{115} Also, President Hindenburg told Strasser in early January 1933, "I give you my word of honor as a Prussian general that I shall never permit this Bohemian corporal (Hitler) to become chancellor."\textsuperscript{116}

Papen, still smarting from Schleicher's maneuvers against him, met with Hitler on January 4. Papen suggested a joint

\textsuperscript{113}Heiden, \textit{Der Fuehrer}, pp. 504-505.


\textsuperscript{115}Goebbels, \textit{My Part}, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{116}Grzesinski, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 167-168.
government, in which both men would be chancellor. Hitler responded that he would have to be the head of the government. Schleicher, failing to divide the Nazis and incorporate the Strasser faction into his government, asked Hindenburg on January 23 for the right to rule through emergency decree, since he could not govern with majority support. Hindenburg refused for the same reason that Schleicher had opposed such a request from Papen a month earlier, the threat of a civil war. Hindenburg refused also to dissolve the Reichstag and on January 28, Schleicher decided that the only course left for him was to resign.  

On January 29, Göring visited Hitler at the Kaiserhof and reported that Hitler would be named chancellor the following day. Schleicher attempted to lure Hitler into siding with him against Papen and Hindenburg, but the Nazi leader was wise enough to see who had the upper hand. During the morning hours of January 30, 1933, the Hitler cabinet was sworn into office by the aged president. Hitler's fourteen-year dream of becoming Germany's leader had come true.

CHAPTER II

HITLER'S CONSOLIDATION OF POWER

On becoming chancellor, Hitler faced the task of building a dictatorship based upon a party of diverse elements. The National Socialist Party was by no means a monolithic apparatus, for in its political spectrum as a whole, there were conservative and radical elements, each having different ideas and goals. The radical elements of the party, seeking greater power, pressed for the elimination of the conservative groups found in the government and army. \(^1\) Among these radical groups was the SA, which was seething with restlessness and dissatisfaction during 1933-34. "They felt that not enough attention had been paid to them and their needs by the new regime which had risen to power through their efforts and work. The pay was small; the service was strenuous; dissatisfaction was spreading like wildfire." \(^2\) Although Hitler was aware

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of their desires, he never promised the Storm Troops any material benefits for their services.\(^3\)

Members of the SA wanted a second revolution, a revolution in which they could satisfy their lustful appetites for power, wealth, and mayhem. They dreamed of a "night of the long knives" after gaining power, they would run rampant throughout Germany, killing Jews, Marxists, and reactionaries. Their songs revealed this: "Sharpen your knives on the curb! Let your knives sink into the flesh of the sky-pilots!"; "Hang the black-frocked pigs [rabbis] in the synagogues! Throw hand grenades into the churches!"; "Hail the Hohenzollern on a lantern post! Keep the dogs a-swinging till they drop off!"\(^4\) Being "have-nots," they directed their wrath at the "haves" within Germany's society, and they had a vociferous spokesman in the person of their chief, Ernst Röhm.

Although the lower middle-class, which favored socialism for personal gain, constituted a majority in the SA,\(^5\) this

\(^3\) Testimony of Hermann Göring, March 18, 1946, The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1947), IX, 406.


\(^5\) Erich Koch-Weser, Hitler and Beyond, translated by Olga Marx (New York, 1945), p. 90.
class was not prominent in the organization's leadership. Its only representative, Chief of Staff Otto Wagener, had been dismissed by Röhm in 1931. An appropriate title, therefore, for the SA leadership that Röhm represented would not be "proletarian," or any other workers'-connote term, but "desperado." Röhm and his peers were reckless, desperate men, striving for the spoils of victory.

Hitler distrusted these "desperadoes" and considered them to be "a menace to his exclusive control of the party." However, he did not underestimate the importance of the Brown Shirts in terrorizing the opposition and building the Nazi State. During a meeting of the SA at Kiel on May 7, 1933, Hitler told them: "You have been till now the Guard of the National Revolution; you have carried this Revolution to victory; with your name it will be associated for all time. You must be the guarantors of the victorious completion of this Revolution . . . ."

6 Wolfgang Sauer, "National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism?", The American Historical Review, LXXIII, No. 2 (December, 1967), 412.


The SA at this time numbered about four hundred thousand men. Less than a fourth were party members and many former Communists had joined. Röhm often revealed his admiration for the revolutionary spirit of the German Communist Party and was not averse to recruiting former Communists into the SA because of their zeal.

Gregor Strasser, although in retirement, was concerned over the conduct of the SA and the way the party was heading. In March, he urged Walter Rohland, a brilliant technician, to join the party, explaining: "This is the beginning of the end. Criminals have gained control of the Party. You and people like you will be responsible for the inevitable debacle if you don't now join up and help remove the praetorians. Are we to stand idly by and let ourselves be overrun?" Using the literal connotation of the word "praetorian," Strasser undoubtedly was referring to the activities of both the SA and the SS. It is ironic that he would be accused a year later of plotting with this same organization.

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Meanwhile, a period of increased domestic unrest and upheaval appeared inevitable following the Reichstag fire in February. The Nazi government accused Marinus van der Lubbe, a dim-witted Dutch Communist, of arson, and used the fire as a pretext for more persecution of the opposition, particularly the Communists. The Nazis arrested thousands of political opponents by means of a government decree passed "For the Protection of the People and the State" and signed by Hindenburg on February 28, the day after the fire.\textsuperscript{12}

Shortly thereafter, Hitler was interviewed by D. Sefton Delmer, a reporter for the London \textit{Daily Express}. Delmer mentioned rumors circulating that Hitler was planning "a new St. Bartholomew's Night" in which he would purge his political opponents. Hitler scoffed at the suggestion: "I need no St. Bartholomew's Night. By the decrees issued legally we have appointed tribunals which shall try legally enemies of the State and deal with them legally in a way which will put an end to the conspiracies."\textsuperscript{13} No legal tribunals would be used during the St. Bartholomew's Night of June 30, 1934.

\textsuperscript{12}William L. Shirer, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich} (Greenwich, Connecticut, 1960), pp. 269-271.

\textsuperscript{13}Baynes, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 234-235.
Meanwhile, the SA was playing a significant role in the Hilfspolizei, an organization that was to curb the opposition parties, particularly the Social Democrats and Communists. An indication of the latent strength of these parties came during the Reichstag elections on March 5, in which the Social Democrats received 7,181,000 votes, while the Communists polled 4,848,000. Although the Nazis captured only 43.9 per cent of the vote, with the support of the Nationalist Party, Hitler was able to secure a majority.

In April Hitler also received the support of the Stahlhelm when its leader, Franz Seldte, joined the Nazi party and declared that his organization was to be placed under Hitler's control. In July, Hitler ordered the Stahlhelm to be placed under the direction of the SA

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14 Heinrich Bennecke, Die Reichswehr und der "Röhm-Putsch" (München, 1964), p. 38.

15 Alan Bullock, Hitler, A Study in Tyranny (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1962), p. 265. Hitler's position as dictator was secured by the passage of the Enabling Bill by the Reichstag on March 23, which allowed Hitler to govern free from any restrictions from the President, the Reichstag, or the Constitution. Hitler further strengthened his position by issuing a decree which disbanded all national military organizations other than the SA, the SS, and the Stahlhelm. Ibid., p. 270; Major Gert von Hindenburg, Hindenburg, 1847-1934, Soldier and Statesman, translated by Gerald Griffin (London, 1935), p. 262.
leadership and members of this veterans' organization were incorporated into the SA reserve. 16

It was apparent by the summer of 1933 that Hitler desired an end to the revolution and the beginning of an evolutionary period; he now wanted to consolidate what he had achieved. 17 He warned against a second revolution at a meeting of SA leaders on July 1 at Bad Reichenhall in Bavaria: "... I shall oppose with the greatest energy a second revolutionary wave, for it would result in a chaos. Anyone, no matter what his position, who rises against the regular authority of the State will be putting his head into a noose." 18 Röhm and the SA did not agree with Hitler's policy. They wanted a continuing revolution until they were able to secure their demands for material rewards. 19

Although the SA position was often the antithesis of their own, the army leadership desired an agreement with

16 Testimony of Theodor Gruss (Stahlhelm member), August 13, 1946, The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1948), XXI, 107.

17 Bullock, op. cit., p. 283.


19 Bullock, op. cit., p. 283.
these upstarts. Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau and General Werner von Blomberg, two Nazi sympathizers within the officer corps, met with the SA leaders at the July Bad Reichenhall conference. An agreement was reached, approved by Hitler, in which the SA agreed to a secondary role to that of the Reichswehr in military affairs. 20

Blomberg took further action to improve Reichswehr-SA relations and, in August, an agreement was reached by which the SA would provide the bulk of recruits for the army. This was a gain for the SA, which could now infiltrate army ranks, but Blomberg was willing to pay this price. On September 19, he ordered army personnel, when in civilian attire, to give the Nazi salute to Storm Troopers and, in October, he took disciplinary action against a young officer who did not salute the SA flag during a parade in Giessen. In late October, Blomberg issued a directive which called for a joint Reichswehr-SA effort in military training, recruiting, and emergency preparations. In a moment of foreboding, Reichenau remarked in November, "Should things go wrong in the cooperation with the S.A., then we will be in severe trouble." 21

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21 Ibid., pp. 34-35.
Meanwhile, Röhm was embittered over Hitler's friendly relations with the reactionaries and East Prussian generals. He wanted a new revolutionary army, but Hitler was inclined to retain the Reichswehr professionals and convert them later to National Socialism. These were fundamental differences. Hitler explained once in a private conversation, "I can't seriously be expected to draw the material for my military elite from the bow-legged and knock-kneed S.A.!") One of Röhm's arguments for a large "people's army" ran thusly, "If the soldier must fight and die because of policy, he demands control of that policy."\(^2^3\) The failure to resolve these differences would be an important factor in the occurrence of the purge.

Hitler made two compromises during the latter part of 1933 in order to partially appease Röhm's demands. On December 1, he made the SA chief a member of the cabinet, but when Röhm proposed that a new Minister of Defence be named, having himself in mind, Hindenburg and the Reichswehr High Command expressed strong disapproval. Hitler did nothing to defend Röhm's proposal. Another effort at


appeasement was a law giving state pensions to members of the SA, a pension similar to that applicable to war veterans.\textsuperscript{24}

Six days after his appointment to the cabinet post, Röhm addressed the diplomatic corps and foreign correspondents in Berlin. He denounced politicians, industrialists, and financiers who had not risked their lives for the party as his SA men had done. Röhm seemed to be trying to rival Hitler by setting up an SA state; special SA police, laws, privileges, educational programs, press channels, were established.\textsuperscript{25}

In the meantime, Hitler and some members of the army hierarchy were working together to improve relations between the government and the military. In a speech before the Reichstag on January 30, 1934, Hitler praised the good relations between the party and the Reichswehr. He spoke of the unconditional loyalty of the army.\textsuperscript{26} In an effort to please Hitler, Blomberg removed Colonel General Kurt von

\textsuperscript{24} Bullock, op. cit., pp. 287-288.

\textsuperscript{25} Wheaton, op. cit., p. 438. Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, wrote in the \textit{Volkischer Beobachter} on January 22, 1934, that the SA or any Nazi organization could never be independent of the party's high leadership. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 439.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 439.
Hammerstein, one of the staunchest of the anti-Nazis in the officer corps. 

Hitler would not act against the Reichswehr as Röhm wished, for three important reasons: his leadership was not strong enough to hazard a conflict with the army, he needed this well-trained military for his future foreign policy plans, and he would not dissolve the effective officer corps of the Reichswehr by merging it with the SA. 

He also feared a mass army composed of a large number of proletarians because of possible problems of discipline. Therefore, he would not alter the composition of the Reichswehr. Of course, this ran counter to Röhm's plans and hindered any possible compromise with the SA leader, who was still unwilling to renounce his call for a new, revolutionary army.

Although he was basically opposed to Röhm's plans, Hitler was still unwilling to abandon his close friend. On

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29 Beard, op. cit., p. 3. The struggle between the SA, favoring a large army composed primarily of "plebians," and the Reichswehr, favoring a small army tightly controlled by the Junker officers, was not unique. It was a manifestation of a decades-long struggle between these two schools of military strategy. Ibid., 3.
January 1, he wrote the leader of the Storm Troops a very warm, personal New Year's letter, using the familiar "du":

... I feel compelled to thank you, my dear Ernst Röhm, for the imperishable services which you have rendered to the National Socialist Movement and the German people, and to assure you how very grateful I am to Fate that I am able to call such men as you my friends and fellow-combatants.  

The cost of maintaining Röhm's restless army of almost 3,000,000 Storm Troopers was a great financial burden on the party. The SA chief offered a memorandum to the cabinet in February which envisioned the organization as the foundation for the new revolutionary army. The SA would be given the primary role in matters of defence, while the Reichswehr officers would be advisers for the SA and would train men for the SA organization.

On February 2 and 3, a meeting was held among prominent army leaders. They agreed that co-operation with Röhm was no longer possible and that the matter would have to
be settled by Hitler. Blomberg stressed caution for fear of possible violence. A note from Röhm arrived during the conference and was read by Reichenau to those assembled: "I regard the Reichswehr now only as a training school for the German people. The conduct of war, and therefore of mobilization as well, in future is the task of the S.A."\(^{34}\)

This announcement definitely precluded any future compromise which might have averted the outbreak of the bloodbath that summer.

Despite Blomberg's pleas for caution, there was much strife between SA and army men. The soldiers looked down on the Brown Shirts as upstarts. Röhm hoped to win over the young officers of the Reichswehr to his plan for a new revolutionary army with the SA as its nucleus. Most of these officers, however, were traditionalists and had no sympathy for Röhm's views.\(^{35}\) The rank-and-file Storm Trooper, meanwhile, considered himself to be part of the Reichswehr, ready to battle the foreign foes of the state.\(^{36}\)

\(^{34}\) Ibid., pp. 37-38.


The excesses of the SA occasionally were directed against foreigners working in or visiting Germany. A staff member of the British embassy in Berlin was assaulted for not saluting a small parade marching down the Unter den Linden. Also, during a march of SA formations from Hamburg to Berlin, an "un-Aryan" man in an automobile was attacked. He was later taken to a hospital and identified as a Portuguese Consul-General headquartered in Hamburg. Hitler was concerned about the recklessness of the organization because of the effect it might have on the army, President Hindenburg, the stability of the country, and his own position. He ordered Röhm to put a stop to some of the excessive "acts of revenge."

The matter of the SA was discussed between Anthony Eden, British Lord Privy Seal, and Hitler when the British minister arrived in Berlin during February. Hitler was anxious to be in good graces with Britain and agreed to

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reduce SA membership by two-thirds. He also promised to reduce the importance of the remnant force.  

A conference was convened by Hitler on February 28 in Berlin, attended by army leaders, leaders of the SA and SS, and Göring. Concerning the SA-Reichswehr dispute, Hitler openly ruled in favor of the army; it would be the military arm of the state, while the SA would be confined to "political tasks." The Storm Troops would engage in protection of Germany's frontiers and would train youths not in the army and form a reserve of army veterans. These duties would be under the command of Blomberg, the reichswehr minister, and a document, implementing Hitler's orders, was signed by the two military leaders. Trying to appear gracious in defeat, Röhm invited all present to breakfast. After Hitler and the others had left, however, he stormed in anger against Hitler, calling him "the ignorant corporal," and labelling the document a Diktat. One of the witnesses of this emotional outburst, SA officer Viktor Lutze, reported to Hess the disparaging remarks made by Röhm. When Hess refused to get involved, Lutze left for the Berghof to tell

40 Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, Dr. Goebbels (New York, 1960), pp. 128-129.

Hitler personally. After listening to Lutze's story, Hitler remarked, "We must allow the affair to ripen fully." 42

Hitler was cognizant of the effects of such an order on the SA. He referred to the reactions of his Brown Shirts in an interview with author Hermann Rauschning at the time, "My S.A. men are disappointed . . . . What did they imagine, I asked them. Could I recommend that Germany should have two mutually independent armies?" 43

The tensions within the army and party leadership concerning the SA were exploited by Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler. 44 Göring and Röhm had been friends during the early days while they were building up the SA. However, Göring became jealous of Röhm's close friendship with Hitler and came to view the SA leader as a rival. 45 Göring began to side with the Reichswehr against Röhm; the

42 O'Neill, op. cit., p. 42. An indication of a possible showdown with the SA being in Hitler's thoughts was a secret order given to Göring in January to collect information that could be used to damage the SA. Wheaton, op. cit., p. 439.


former was now a general and head of the Prussian Gestapo, an organization which frequently clashed with the SA.\textsuperscript{46} Röhm's hatred of Göring dated back to the unsuccessful putsch of 1923, when he blamed the Nazi leader, who directed the SA at that time, for the defeat and accused him publicly of being a coward who fled from battle.\textsuperscript{47} This enmity with Göring would cost the SA chief-of-staff his life.

Another rival of Röhm's was Heinrich Himmler, who assumed command of the Gestapo in March 1934. He wanted the SA to be subordinate to him and his SS organization.\textsuperscript{48} By 1934, Himmler's SS was virtually an investigative organization to note the activities of the SA.\textsuperscript{49} The Black Shirts numbered about 200,000 at this time; though smaller in number than the Brown Shirts, they had undergone training far superior to their counterparts in the SA.\textsuperscript{50} The only supporter that Röhm had in the party hierarchy was Joseph Goebbels, who remained sympathetic to his plans at least

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{46} Telford Taylor, \textit{Sword and Swastika} (New York, 1952), pp. 76-77.
\bibitem{50} Delarue, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 101.
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until April. He provided publicity for Röhm's message, introduced him to the foreign diplomats, and extolled the SA chief in his speeches and articles. However, as in the case with Gregor Strasser, Goebbels would abandon Röhm when he viewed it as expedient to do so.

During that spring, there was much anxiety, discontent, and uneasiness in Hitler's Reich, due to a variety of factors: the conflict between church and state, the fears of inflation, the numerous arrests and reports of concentration camps, and a hostile attitude towards the rest of Europe. Such conservatives as Papen, Blomberg, and members of the aristocracy were discontent with the state of affairs as were such radicals as Röhm and portions of the SA leadership. Rumors were rife: a demise of the Hitler government, a restoration of the Hohenzollerns, dissatisfaction and disunity within the Nazi Party, and the possibility of a purge. Göring, who had pro-monarchist sympathies,

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51 Konrad Heiden, Der Fuehrer, translated by Ralph Manheim (Boston, 1944), p. 741.
53 Ludecke, op. cit., pp. 760-761.
54 Martha Dodd, Through Embassy Eyes (New York, 1939), pp. 133-134.
was concerned enough to order Frick, the minister of
interior, to dissolve all monarchist organizations. 55
Despite this very real, and potentially dangerous, dis-
satisfaction, Hitler's position remained relatively secure
due to the indecisiveness and lack of unity within these
groups. 56

Röhm and his cohorts refused to waive their policies.
Röhm addressed some members of the foreign press assembled
at Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry on April 18, "The revolution
which we made is not a national revolution but a National
Socialist one. We wish to stress the last word, Socialist."
Silesian SA leader Edmund Heines told his men in the latter
part of May, "We shall only lay down our arms when the
German revolution is complete." 57

Hitler was told privately in April that Hindenburg
was failing fast in health. The Führer knew that many of


57 Delarue, op. cit., p. 104.
the army officers desired a restoration of the Hohenzollern monarchy. He desperately needed the support of the Reichswehr in his bid for the presidency after Hindenburg died. If Hitler was to retain the support of the army in his efforts to succeed Hindenburg as president, he would have to do something about the SA. Otherwise, he would be inviting open conflict between the SA and the Reichswehr, a possibility which could have severe repercussions and run counter to Hitler's cardinal rule of not conflicting with the army; a rule he had maintained since 1923. However, he was undecided at this time on what course to take regarding Röhm's organization.

On April 11, 1934, Hitler reviewed naval maneuvers on board the Deutschland, along with Generals von Blomberg, von Fritsch, and Admiral Raeder. Hitler, in view of Hindenburg's illness, proposed that he be the president's successor. He was supported by Blomberg and promised to

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59 Taylor, op. cit., p. 78.

60 Bullock, op. cit., pp. 292-293.

61 Shirer, Rise and Fall, p. 298.
deal with Röhm and the SA, offer guarantees to the army and navy of their special place in the German nation, and conduct efforts to increase Germany's military power. These terms were accepted by the military men and they promised the support of the Reichswehr.62

Meanwhile, in an attempt to renew their popularity, Röhm and several SA leaders launched a drive for public support in May. Several personal appearances were made throughout the nation: Röhm visited Stettin and was made an honorary citizen of that city on the twenty-sixth, Berlin SA leader Karl Ernst made an address two days later at Oranienburg, and Röhm triumphantly marched through Pomerania.63

Hitler and Röhm held a lengthy meeting on June 4 to discuss the current situation. Hitler pleaded with the SA chief not to provoke the Reichswehr in view of the declining health of Hindenburg. Röhm assured the Führer that the SA would support him, an offer scorned by Hitler, who was aware

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62 Goldston, op. cit., pp. 79-80. The Reichswehr senior officers assembled at Bad Nauheim on May 6 for a ten-day conference. On the seventh, Fritsch urged the officers to keep "a close watch" on Röhm and the SA; he stressed the possibility of an SA-directed putsch. O'Neill, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

of the adverse feelings towards Röhm both at home and from countries abroad, particularly Britain and Italy. The Brown Shirt organization had outlived its usefulness; Hitler now viewed it as a stumbling block in his drive for better relations with the Reichswehr and the western powers.

Röhm and Ernst, aware of the rumors circulating of a pending SA putsch, made efforts to show that they were false. Ernst swore in a ceremony before Wilhelm Frick, the minister of the interior, that he was not involved in any plans for a putsch. Röhm sent a conciliatory message to General von Fritsch in which he expressed his desire that the rift between the SA and the army could be peacefully settled. Ernst wrote a letter to Edmund Heines, SA leader in Silesia, on June 5 in which he warned of a conspiracy among Göring, Goebbels, and Himmler to eliminate the SA leadership. He wrote that he had signed "an account of the events in February," the Reichstag fire, and wrote that this was "the strongest weapon" that they had against Göring and Goebbels. Ernst revealed a particular contempt

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for Goebbels in the letter; he wanted to see Göring and Goebbels done away with, with Hitler's approval.  

Upon orders of Hitler, Röhm announced on June 8 that the SA would take a month's leave through July and would resume activities around August 1. He warned the "enemies of the S.A." not to look upon this leave as the end or weakening of the organization, warning, "The S.A. is, and remains, Germany's destiny." The SA leader left on sick leave for Bavaria. In spite of his warning, some expected that when the organization returned to duty, there would be a reorganization and reduction in size. In fact, this

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66 Fritz Tobias, The Reichstag Fire, translated by Arnold J. Pomerans (London, 1963), pp. 315-316. Ernst had signed a confession on June 3 that he, Fiedler, and von Mohrenschild [last names only given in source] set fire to the Reichstag. The plans had been instigated by Göring and Goebbels. Others knowing of the plans were Röhm, Heines, Manfred von Killinger, "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, and Sander. This confession was to be "insurance against the evil plans of Göring and Goebbels [against the SA]." Ibid., pp. 317-321. All of those mentioned knowing of the plans would be killed during the purge except von Killinger, the prime minister of Saxony, and Hanfstaengl, Hitler's court jester.


68 Wheaton, op. cit., p. 441.

disbanding of the SA through July was Hitler's first step towards remolding the Storm Troops into a smaller party army.  

It was at this point that Gregor Strasser re-entered the party scene after an absence of six months. Hitler conferred with Strasser, who was then director of the Schering-Kahlbaum pharmaceutical firm, on June 13, the day before he would fly to Venice to meet with Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. He offered Strasser a cabinet post, which Strasser agreed to accept if Hitler would remove Göring and Goebbels. It was planned for Strasser to join the cabinet in September, following the resignation of Göring.  

Hitler had issued orders that the former Nazi leader was not to be bothered in his private life. However, Strasser still was not safe, due to such powerful enemies as Göring, Goebbels, and Himmler.

Hitler met with Mussolini in Venice on the fourteenth and fifteenth of June in order to offset the gradual

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70 The Nation, July 25, 1934, p. 90.

71 Otto Strasser, Hitler and I, translated by David and Eric Mosbacher (Boston, 1940), p. 179; Dr. Otto Strasser, Die deutsche Bartholomäusnacht (Zürich, 1935), p. 76.

rapprochement between France and Russia to isolate Germany. The Führer deeply admired "Il Duce," even though Mussolini did not have such a high regard for him at that time.

Jubilant crowds cheered ovations as the two dictators passed through the city. Mussolini warned Hitler against any German moves against Austria and suggested that he control the radical left of his party, meaning Röhm. After the meetings, Hitler was more undecided than ever about what course to take in regards to the SA. Since Röhm wanted to go to war to annex Austria, it is possible that, to appease Mussolini, Hitler knew he would have to take action against Röhm.

To add to Hitler's problems, the popularity of his government had reached a low ebb by the summer of 1934. Uneasiness was prevalent throughout the country. The

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conservative group was afraid that Hitler would implement SA policies, and radical party members were concerned that Hitler had sold-out to the conservatives. Also, the Junkers and financial leaders were afraid of an SA putsch, and uneasiness between the party and the Catholic Church was intense.76

The conservative elements were dismayed by the attacks on their parties and the vociferous anti-Semitism which was spreading throughout Germany. With the president's approval, some of the leaders of this group drafted a speech, ghost-written by von Papen's colleague, Edgar Jung, and delivered by the vice-chancellor at the University of Marburg on June 17. In the speech, Papen appealed to Hitler's conscience and criticized the Nazis' use of power. He denounced the suppression of certain liberties by the Nazi government. He explained that he supported the formation of the National Socialist government because it was viewed as a workable reform to an unworkable political system. He favored the eventual restoration of the monarchy and asked Hitler to break away from the revolutionary, demagogic elements in his party. He levelled an attack on Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry and expressed the need for an end to coercion,

76 Schuman, op. cit., p. 83.
spiritual regimentation, judicial inequities, and government censorship. Papen received a resounding ovation from the academic group at the end of the speech. 77

Goebbels banned the reporting of the Marburg address and only the Frankfurter Zeitung had the opportunity to print some brief extracts from the speech. Copies of the speech had been made available by some of Papen's friends for the diplomatic community and correspondents. 78 Hindenburg sent a wire to the vice-chancellor the day after the speech, expressing his approval, 79 which was echoed by many Reichswehr, financial, and industrial leaders. 80 A few days later, Papen met with Hitler, who told him, "that was a bad breach of faith on your part, you know . . . for the rest I am 95 percent of your way of thinking." 81 Goebbels made speeches on

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78 Von Papen, op. cit., pp. 310-311.

79 Fay, op. cit., 609.

80 Delarue, op. cit., p. 106.

the twenty-first and twenty-third in which he attacked the "gentlemen" in their "armchairs." He was enraged when he met Papen at the Hamburg Derby on June 24, due to the hearty welcome given to Papen by the crowd there. 82

The Catholic Youth Movement also showed a particular antagonism towards the regime. Many open battles occurred between the Hitler Youth and its Catholic counterpart, particularly frequent in Bavaria and the Rhine and the Ruhr areas. 83 On June 26, the government launched an attack against the conservative element hostile to the regime. The Catholic printing company which printed Papen's speech was destroyed by secret service men and its owner was arrested. That afternoon, the Gestapo went to the home of Edgar Jung, the author of the Marburg speech. Dr. Jung sneaked a chance to write "Gestapo" on his bathroom wall before being carted off, but still was later executed. On the same afternoon, Dr. Werner Schotte, a close friend of von Papen's and editor of a conservative weekly publication, was arrested and murdered by the Gestapo. 84 The first act of the purge had been staged.

82 François-Poncet, op. cit., pp. 131-132.
83 Edith Roper and Clara Leiser, Skeleton of Justice (New York, 1941), p. 96.
84 Tibor Koeves, Satan in Top Hat (New York, 1941), pp. 226-227; The Times (London), June 29, 1934, p. 16.
Goering issued a warning to the malcontents in a speech to the Prussian state council on June 19. He stated: "If the Fuehrer wished a second revolution, then we will be on the streets tomorrow. If he does not wish it, then we will crush everybody who tries to make such a revolution against his will." This was a direct warning to the SA members who had been clamoring for a second revolution for the past year and a half.

There was a definite feeling during the latter part of June that something dramatic would occur. Rumors, as usual, were widespread. There were rumors that the Reichswehr was planning to join with the SS in removing the SA and the radicals in the government, thereby establishing a conservative government under Hitler.86

Goebbels, of the same radical nature of Röhm, was concerned over the possibility of a shakeup. His main concern was not to lose his position at the top of the Nazi hierarchy. He maintained contacts with Röhm up to about two weeks before the purge occurred. During June, he served as an emissary for Hitler in meetings with the SA leader at the Bratwurst-Glöckle, Röhm's favorite tavern in

85 Ludecke, op. cit., p. 768.

86 Dodd to Secretary of State, Berlin, June 20, 1934, U.S. Dept. of State, op. cit., p. 224.
Munich. Exactly what they talked about is difficult to determine; but in light of future events, their discussions must have included very important matters. The landlord, wine-waiter, and steward at this Munich inn would be murdered during the purge, probably on Goebbels' orders, being afraid of what they might disclose concerning the meetings.

Hitler went to Neudeck on the twenty-first to confer with Hindenburg on the tense domestic situation. Blomberg told Hitler there that Hindenburg was very concerned about the state of affairs and would declare martial law and establish a government controlled by the army if the situation did not improve. It became evident to Hitler that the "establishment" wanted the SA done away with; and, if he did not act soon, he would be a figurehead in a government controlled by the military. However, the vacillating Führer would need an opportune moment before he would strike down his most intimate friend and the organization that helped him obtain power.

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88 Strasser, Flight From Terror, p. 241; Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, p. 129; Wheaton, op. cit., p. 442.
Hitler had three good reasons to take action against the SA and lessen its importance: (1) they were becoming more undisciplined and leaders such as Röhm were becoming too ambitious; (2) the SA contained many philosophical enemies of the party, notably the Communists; and (3) a reduction of the SA would better enable Hitler to negotiate an increase in armaments for Germany. Also, the hundred thousand highly-trained men of the Reichswehr were more valuable to him than the two-and-a-half million plus half-trained Storm Troopers.

The stage was definitely being set for the purge several days before it occurred. Himmler called SS leader Friedrich Karl Freiherr von Eberstein into his Berlin office around June 22 to inform him that Röhm was planning a coup and that the SS should be placed on alert. Himmler and Göring had been compiling information discrediting the SA and its leaders--the graft, licentiousness, and perversion (Röhm and Heines were publicly known to be homosexuals).

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89 Fay, op. cit., 615.
90 Gunther, op. cit., p. 51.
91 Testimony of Friedrich Karl von Eberstein (SS member), August 3, 1946, The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1948), XX, 289.
92 Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, pp. 126-127.
Although an SA-planned putsch was not imminent, the actions of certain SA leaders did nothing to dispel these rumors. General Halder, Chief of Staff in Wehrkreis VI, reported to General von Fritsch in June that a Westphalian SA leader told him that he would succeed Halder when the SA and Reichswehr merged. Fritsch told Halder that similar occurrences were taking place throughout Germany; Fritsch installed an infantry regiment at Doberitz to be used to defend Berlin in case it was needed.\footnote{Hildegard Boeninger, "Hitler and the German Generals," Journal of Central European Affairs, XIV (April, 1954), 21-22.}

On the twenty-fifth, Hess broadcasted a speech from Cologne, unmistakably directed at Röhm. He stated that "human idiosyncrasies and weaknesses," a very clear reference to Röhm's sexual life, would be overlooked by "great achievements." In a direct warning, he read, "Revolutions in States with a complex modern economic life cannot be conducted after the pattern of the paltry annual revolutions of small exotic republics [a reference to Röhm's earlier involvement in the Bolivian Army]."\footnote{Heiden, Hitler, pp. 391-392.}

Whatever was to occur, there could be no mistake concerning the attitude of the army. In the latter part of June,
an article by Reichswehr Minister Blomberg appeared in the Völkischer Beobachter, which stated that the army firmly supported the Nazi regime. Meanwhile, Hitler spoke with Blomberg on the twenty-seventh of "cleansing" and SA and "lifting out" Röhm and his retinue.

By the last week of June, the Reichswehr and some of the SA units had been placed on alert, each suspecting an attack from the other. The SA was not planning a revolt for June 30. The other side probably knew this, Göring, the chief of the secret police; Himmler and Heydrich; and the two Reichswehr officers, von Blomberg and von Reichenau. The army was placed on alert on the twenty-fifth, and on the twenty-eighth, Göring and Himmler placed the police and SS in the capital on alert. Karl Ernst, the SA leader there, learned of this development on the twenty-ninth. He believed that the alerts were the preparations of the "reactionaries" for a coup against Hitler; he, therefore, placed the SA in the capital on alert that afternoon.

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95 François-Poncet, op. cit., p. 132.
98 Ludecke, op. cit., p. 770.
99 Heiden, Der Fuehrer, pp. 756-757.
The *Reichswehr* and the SA were in reality responding to defensive measures on the part of each other. In Silesia, the army commander, Kleist, and the SA leader, Heines, realized this to be true. They met on the twenty-eighth and learned that neither was planning an attack on the other, but that both were taking defensive measures. That night, Heines telephoned Kleist that the same was occurring throughout Germany. He promised to meet with Röhm the next day and get a rescinding order. Kleist suspected that the whole thing had been started by Himmler and reported this suspicion to Fritsch, Beck, and Reichenau. Reichenau responded, "That may well be right, but is too late now." It really was not too late, however, for Fritsch or Reichenau to get Blomberg to cancel the army alert.

In an attempt to avert a confrontation with the other side, Röhm agreed with "a Reichswehr general" to turn over SA arms in Munich to the local police, a neutral force in the SA-*Reichswehr* controversy. He sent instructions to Munich Group Leader Schneidhuber to implement this transfer. When the SS in Munich saw the trucks pull up at the SA depots and transfer these arms, the SS leaders informed

\[100\] O'Neill, op. cit., p. 47.
Hitler that the SA "was arming." Unfortunately, Röhm had not told the SS about his agreement with the general.  

Aware of the dangerous state of affairs, Röhm invited Hitler to the SA leadership conference which would be held on the thirtieth at Wiessee, a resort town just south of Munich. This conference was planned by Röhm to discuss the domestic situation with Hitler. The SA chief was not planning a revolt against Hitler at that time; however, "if Hitler had refused to listen to what Roehm considered his legitimate demands, Weissee would have been the prelude to the final showdown." If Röhm did initiate any action, it would never be to eliminate Hitler, but rather eliminate the SA leader's enemies and impose his policies on the Führer.

Hitler was still not ready for a showdown, because of an indecisiveness over how to handle the man and the organization that had given him in the past such dedicated service. His vacillation took the form of erratic jumping from one engagement to another throughout the country.

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102 Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, p. 128.
103 Ludecke, op. cit., pp. 770-771.
between the twenty-first and twenty-ninth. He inspected a mountain road in Bavaria and toured the Krupp plant. On the twenty-eighth, Göring and he attended a wedding in Essen between Gauleiter Josef Terboven and Maria Stahl, who was rumored to be a former sweetheart of Goebbels'. At Essen, Himmler made a report on the SA crisis to Hitler; Röhm had been expelled from the German Officers' League that day. That evening, Hitler and Göring left for the Kaiserhof hotel to discuss the situation. Soon after midnight, Hitler left by car for the Hotel Dreesen in Godesberg. Upon Hitler's instructions, Göring left for Berlin fifteen minutes after Hitler's departure.

On the twenty-ninth, Hitler inspected labor installations in the Godesberg area. The army was placed on emergency and chosen SS units were given instructions for a purge. Hitler kept in contact with Göring in Berlin. Goebbels arrived at Hitler's hotel that evening and informed the Führer that Karl Ernst had ordered the Berlin SA to go on

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105 Wheaton, op. cit., p. 443.
alert; this action defied Hitler's order banning all SA operations through July. Hitler discussed the situation with Goebbels, Viktor Lutze, and Otto Dietrich, and afterwards wired Röhm that he would attend the SA conference scheduled for the following day. He planned to arrest the SA chief at the meeting with no thought of killing him. After dinner, Hitler received a telephone call; upon hanging up, he looked "pale and shaken." The call had been from Göring, who informed Hitler that Röhm was in a conspiracy with Schleicher and Gregor Strasser to overthrow Hitler and eliminate the Reichswehr. Plans allegedly had been made for an attack on government offices for the following morning. Prince August Wilhelm of Hohenzollern would be the new President, Schleicher would be appointed Chancellor, Strasser would be Vice-Chancellor, and Röhm would be named Minister of Defense. The SA leaders would be generals of a new German army. Without asking for proof from Göring, this call started Hitler on his blood purge, his intense

106 Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, p. 130; Heiden, Der Fuehrer, pp. 757, 759-760.

107 Fromm, op. cit., p. 171.

anger over this alleged treachery eliminating his indecisiveness of the previous few days. The big Mercedes cars drove up to the hotel and Hitler, his staff, and Goebbels left for the Bonn airport at Hangelar. There, they boarded a plane for Munich; the time was 4:00 A.M., Saturday, June 30. The weather, appropriate for what was to come, was stormy with heavy rain and lightning.  

That same evening, in Berlin, Himmler was a dinner guest at the home of Joachim von Ribbentrop. Unaware of the approaching crisis, Ribbentrop asked why he had not seen Röhm lately. Himmler answered tersely, "Röhm is as good as dead."  


CHAPTER III

THE PURGE

While Hitler was conducting his eleventh-hour business in the Rhine region, Röhm was involved at Wiessee. On June 29, he dined with his doctor, Emil Ketterer, and SS Gruppenfuhrer Bergman. Around 11:00 P.M., they retired for the night in preparation for a meeting of SA leaders, to be attended by Hitler, the following morning. At the conference Röhm planned to urge Hitler to allow the SA to be transformed into a Reichswehr reserve and, if Hitler refused, the SA chief was thinking of resigning and emigrating to Bolivia. Although Röhm, at this point, was not personally inclined to lead or take part in a putsch against Hitler, SA Gruppenfuhrer Willi Schmidt and other leaders scheduled to attend the meeting were prepared to stage a putsch if their plan was rejected. Meanwhile, Obergruppenfuhrer Edmund Heines arrived at Wiessee after midnight, but did not meet with Röhm. The SA chief was fast asleep, having been given an injection earlier for his neuralgia. The only people present at the inn, besides Röhm, Ketterer, Bergman, and Heines, were two adjutants and two drivers.¹

¹Ernst ("Putzi") Hanfstängl, Hitler, the Missing Years (London, 1957), pp. 257-258.
Hitler, accompanied by Goebbels; Lutze; Otto Dietrich, his press chief; and three of Dietrich's adjutants, Brückner, Schaub, and Schreck, arrived at the Munich airport around four in the morning. He ordered Major Schneidhuber, the chief of police, and Willi Schmidt, Munich's SA leader, brought before him immediately. In dramatic fashion, the Führer tore the insignia from their uniforms and had the men taken to Stadelheim prison.²

Hitler was now ready for a showdown. With a detachment of SS men, he left for Wiessee in a caravan of cars occupied by Goebbels; Lutze; Otto Dietrich; Wilhelm Brückner; Sepp Dietrich, leader of Hitler's bodyguard detachment; Christian Weber and Emil Maurice, two of Hitler's personal attendants; and SS Major Buch. When the entourage arrived at the inn about 6:00 A.M., SA Standard leader Count Spreti was the first one arrested. When the Count reached for something in his pocket, Hitler struck him with his whip. At the same time, one of Röhm's adjutants pointed a pistol at Hitler, but was outmaneuvered by Sepp Dietrich. Hitler then went directly to Röhm's room. As the SA chief-of-staff, clad only in a nightgown, climbed out of bed, Hitler

shouted accusations of treachery at him. In the next room, Heines was
found in bed with a young man; both were taken outside and shot by
Maurice and Weber. Röhm entered one of the cars for the trip back to
Munich, and Stadelheim prison. Meanwhile a number of SA leaders were
arrested on the road between Munich and Wiessee, and still others as
they debarked from their trains in Munich for the planned conference.3

While Hitler was at Wiessee, the Reichswehr occupied the Brown
House in Munich. But upon his return, when it was discovered that
there would be no opposition from the SA, the SS took over complete
control at the party headquarters.4

On June 30, approximately two hundred SA leaders were
imprisoned by the SS in the Munich area in a period of eight


hours. Röhm arrived at Stadelheim with his personal staff around 11:00 A.M. and was taken to a cell. Hans Frank, minister of justice in Bavaria, visited the cells where Röhm and the SA leaders were kept, and told them not to worry about the SS guards because Stadelheim was the "palace of justice" where all would receive a fair trial. Röhm, astounded by what had transpired, told Frank, "The Führer is under the influence of my deadly enemies . . . he is about to destroy the entire S.A." When Frank was ordered to shoot the prisoners, he purposely failed to carry out instructions. Sepp Dietrich telephoned Hitler at the Brown House and told him of Frank's refusal; Hitler brow-beat Frank on the phone for interfering with his orders. Shortly thereafter, Hitler had a revolver placed in Röhm's cell, so that the SA chief could have the "privilege" of taking his own life. Angrily refusing to commit suicide, Röhm was shot down in his cell by Theodor Eicke and Michael Lippert, two SS men from the nearby Dachau concentration camp. His last words to Frank had been, "All revolutions devour their own children."^5 He and the "children" had

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served Hitler well in the struggle for power; their only complaint was that they did not receive their share of the spoils of victory.

Although Hans Frank was unsuccessful in stopping the executions, he persuaded Hitler to reduce the number of victims at Stadelheim from two hundred to around sixty. Nevertheless, many SA leaders were gunned down by Major Buch's firing squads: August Schneidhuber; Fritz Ritter von Kruasser, a senior Group leader and close associate of Röhm's; Hans Hayn, Group leader in Saxony; Hans Peter von Heydebreck, Group leader and adjutant to Heines; Rolf Reiner, a Staff-Adjutant; von Uhl, a Standard leader and close associate of Röhm's; Count Spreti, the first one arrested at Wiessee; and SA leaders Koch, Lasch, and Kopp.

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At the end of the day, one of the SS commanders remarked to his men in the firing squad, "Well done, men, you've taken some good cracks at the Reds and the Blacks [symbolic of Communism and of political Catholicism]. Maybe you'll soon get another chance." 8

Around noon, Hitler told the assembled rank-and-file of the SA and SS in the Munich Brown House that Röhm was no longer in command of the SA and that Viktor Lutze would be the former leader's replacement. 9 An order, concerning the future conduct of the SA, was also issued, calling for:

(1) "blind obedience and discipline," (2) SA leaders causing public embarrassment were to be expelled, (3) no more expensive dinners, (4) any banquets or dinners given, other than those of official nature, were not to be financed by public funds, (5) SA leaders were not to use limousines for personal use and were not to engage in "public drunkenness," (6) the behavior of the SA man was to set a good example for the public, and (7) the SA was to be kept "clean and decent." 10

In Berlin, the police occupied the headquarters of the SA late in the morning and made arrests throughout the.

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8 John B. Holt, Under the Swastika (Chapel Hill, 1936), p. 31.

9 Delarue, op. cit., p. 111.

10 The Times (London), July 2, 1934, p. 16.
city. The police swarmed everywhere, patrolling the streets and cordoning off the government buildings on the Unter den Linden and the Wilhelmstrasse. People rushed through the streets trying to learn what was taking place. The police answered "no comment" to all queries; and only one newspaper, devoting a mere page to the latest news, appeared on the streets. For several hours, Berlin had no telephone communication with the rest of the world.

Göring took command in Berlin, assisted by Himmler, Heydrich, and Paul Koerner, one of Göring's aides. Before commencing action, these men waited until 11:00 A.M. to see who won out at Munich, Hitler or Röhm. If Hitler had been shot by Röhm's followers in Bavaria, Göring planned to make some sort of deal with the SA chief. But when the news from Munich arrived, he began a series of arrests, and was determined not to go through the legal channels of court.


action. Göring, Himmler, and Heydrich had made a list of those who were to be executed in the Berlin area; Heydrich and Himmler had also compiled their own special list, which contained the names of many Catholics. Those whose names appeared on the death lists were taken to the cadet school of Lichterfelde and were shot before firing squads. Heydrich also issued signed orders during the day calling for the execution of various other persons for high treason on what he claimed to be commands from Hitler.  

During the day, Prince August Wilhelm, Nazi Party member, son of the former Kaiser Wilhelm II, and close friend of Röhm's, was ordered to appear before Göring, who presented him the cabinet list which designated the prince as the provisional president. He also asked the prince about a telephone conversation with Karl Ernst. "Auwi," as the prince was known to his friends, told Göring that Ernst was a friend and had called to bid farewell before

departing on a honeymoon to Madeira; the Nazi leader knew the prince was telling the truth, for he had a record of the conversation. The Kaiser's son was one of the few fortunate ones to survive the purge because Göring probably feared the domestic and diplomatic repercussions of executing such a personage.

During this Saturday, the Berlin prisoners at Lichterfelde had to appear before a panel of judges, which included Göring. The court informed the prisoners of the charges against them, but did not allow them to say anything on their behalf, and they were all summarily condemned to death. The SS, as in Munich, had charge of the executions. A blank was put into one gun in each of the squads, so that each man could believe that his gun was the one with the blank. Before every execution, an SS man would open the shirt of each victim and draw a circle in charcoal around the area of the victim's heart. Each squad fired to the rhythm: "The Fuehrer wills it. Heil Hitler! Fire!" The men on these firing lines had to be rotated frequently to ease the strain on each one.

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Just before embarking on his honeymoon cruise to Madeira, SA chief Karl Ernst was arrested and brought back to Berlin. He was executed at Lichterfelde along with his adjutants, Sanders and Kirschbaum; and SA leaders von Mohrenschild, Hoffman, and von Beulwitz, who was press chief for the Berlin SA. Ernst was murdered because he knew too much about the Reichstag fire and could use his letter of confession, written earlier, to damage the regime. The bodies of Ernst and the other victims were later cremated at Schmargendorf.17

Among those brought to Lichterfeld was one Gehrt, a World War air force captain who had served in Göring's squadron and had been awarded the highest Prussian medal, the Pour le Merite. He was ordered by his captors to go home, bathe, put on his uniform and report back to Göring. Happily, he drove home, believing that his war comrade, Göring, had saved him. But two hours later, he was back in prison awaiting execution. After doing as he was instructed, he reported to Göring, who, in the presence of his staff, grabbed Gehrt and ripped the medals off his chest. The Nazi leader then ordered the surprised and broken man to be returned to his cell and shot.18


18 Konrad Heiden, One Man Against Europe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1940), pp. 134-135.
It appears that Göring learned, through his spy system, of the June conference between Strasser and Hitler and, feeling threatened, used the purge as an opportunity to eliminate his rival.19 Around noon, Strasser was arrested at his home and taken to a Gestapo prison. He was thrown into a large room where about a hundred SA leaders had been placed. A few hours later, an SS man came and conducted him to a private cell. Shots were fired into his cell, one of the bullets striking a main artery in Strasser's body. Soon, blood was gushing onto the walls and floor of the cell; Strasser was allowed to bleed to death, an agonizingly slow and painful death.20

On July 7, the family of Gregor Strasser received urn number sixteen, containing his ashes with the inscription:

"Gregor Strasser, born 31 May 1892 at Geisenfeld, died


30 June 1934 at 17.20. Secret State Police Berlin."\(^{21}\)

Also, Hitler ordered that a pension be given to Frau Strasser.\(^{22}\)

This irony became even more tragic when a Frenchman, who lived in the same neighborhood as the Strassers and knew them slightly, came across one of Strasser's sons not long after the murder of the boy's father. The Frenchman asked him what he thought of his godfather, Hitler, after what had just happened. "The boy swallowed, and staring ahead of him said: 'He is still our Führer!'"\(^{23}\)

The circle of death encompassed some of Strasser's associates as well. His lawyer, Dr. Voss, was executed because he had been collecting political documents of an incriminating nature.\(^{24}\) Oberleutnant Paul Schulz, Strasser's closest confidant, was arrested and taken for a ride. He was thrown out of the car, hit by five shots while trying to flee, and left for dead. Fortunately, he was able to pull himself together, flag down a passing car, and reach the safety of Switzerland.\(^{25}\)

\(^{21}\) Strasser, Bartholomäusnacht, p. 44.

\(^{22}\) Delarue, op. cit., p. 116.

\(^{23}\) Heiden, Der Fuehrer, pp. 771-772.

\(^{24}\) Heiden, Hitler, p. 408.

\(^{25}\) Ludecke, op. cit., p. 774.
Otto Strasser was supposed to be killed at the same time. A "Mr. Frank," in reality a Gestapo agent, was sent to Prague to win the confidence of Strasser. "Mr. Frank" tried to coax Strasser into flying with him to London to meet with anti-Nazi forces there. Strasser was suspicious of the man and summoned the Prague police. This "Mr. Frank," who escaped to Germany, was supposed to get Strasser on the plane, which would have gone to Germany, and Strasser would have been arrested there. Thus, Otto escaped the cruel fate which befell Gregor, and the latter's semi-prophetic remarks before his brother left for Prague proved true.

Another victim was General and former Chancellor von Schleicher. At 7:00 P.M. on June 29, Schleicher received a visit from his friend, Arno Moysischewitz, to whom the general denied any recent political activity and stated that he had seen Röhm on only one occasion since January 1933. He admitted a close friendship with the French Ambassador, André François-Poncet, but remarked that their meetings were social and not political. At 12:30, the next day, Schleicher's cook answered a call at the door. The callers swarmed through the house and fatally shot the general at his desk. Upon

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hearing these shots, Frau Schleicher ran into the room and was also murdered. The cook fled from the house, and the bodies were discovered later by Schleicher's stepdaughter.  

Schleicher had loathed the Nazi government and made no secret of his disdain for it. He often made threats against the regime and sarcastically criticized it. Earlier, before the purge, rumors circulated in Paris that Schleicher, considered to be a stalking horse for the Hohenzollerns, was planning a coup against Hitler. Hitler, on the other hand, felt nothing but bitterness towards Schleicher. The former chancellor had delved into the Führer's war record; he had interviewed a physician who claimed that Hitler had not suffered from gas poisoning in the war, but was psychotic and neurotic. Although Schleicher did not publish this report, he kept it in his possession. Hitler also begrudged the attempts Schleicher had made in late 1932 to capitalize on the rift between Strasser and himself. The former chancellor also had a bitter enemy in Göring, who probably ordered his execution.

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28 François-Poncet, op. cit., p. 136.
One of Schleicher's closest friends, General Kurt von Bredow, learned of the general's death during the evening. When he arrived at his home, Gestapo agents were standing at his front door. Without any warning, Bredow was fatally shot by these men.  

Earlier that day, at 9:00 A.M., Franz von Papen arrived at his office and was summoned to Göring's home in the garden of the Air Transport Ministry. The house was surrounded by armed SS guards. He met the Nazi leader and Himmler in the study. Göring informed von Papen of the "revolt" and also of Hitler's flight to Munich to deal with Röhm. Papen interjected that Hindenburg should be informed and a state of emergency declared; Göring rejected this suggestion and advised Papen to return home and remain there. The vice-chancellor protested, to no avail, that this would amount to house arrest. When Papen left Göring's home and passed by his office at the Vice-Chancellery, he noticed that it had been occupied by the SS. Upon arriving home, he encountered SS guards who informed him that this detachment would serve as a guard for him. His telephone and radio had been disconnected and he remained virtually under house arrest for

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three days.\textsuperscript{32} Papen escaped execution due to warnings given
Hitler and Göring by Hindenburg and Werner von Fritsch,
head of the Reichswehr. Upon learning of Papen's arrest,
Fritsch informed Göring that the Nazi leader would be held
accountable before the Reichswehr for any harm to the vice-
 chancellor.\textsuperscript{33}

Röhm, Strasser, and Schleicher were the three most
prominent victims of the purge, but many more died during
this bloody weekend. One such victim was Werner von
Alvensleben, a friend of Schleicher's. Hitler had been
told that Röhm and Fritsch had met at von Alvensleben's
hunting lodge in Mecklenburg. There, supposedly, an agreement
had been reached which would set up a militia under Röhm
composed of men who had completed their stint in the military.
In this organization, ex-soldiers would receive additional
military training and serve as a reserve for the army. Röhm
had also promised not to become involved in the internal
affairs of the army. Hitler had become angry upon hearing
of this alleged agreement, viewing it as a potentially
dangerous alliance.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32}Papen, op. cit., pp. 314-317; Testimony of Franz von
Papen, June 17, 1946, The International Military Tribunal,
Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of
the Tribunal, 1948), XVI, 296-298.

\textsuperscript{33}Tibor Koeves, Satan in Top Hat (New York, 1941), p.
230; "Expiring Reich," op. cit., p. 15.

\textsuperscript{34}Papen, op. cit., pp. 319-320.
Former Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, like Schleicher, undoubtedly would have been another victim of the purge; however, on the advice of friends, he fled to Holland on June 3, partially disguised and accompanied by a group of Dutch priests.\textsuperscript{35} Gottfried Treviranus, a close friend of Brüning's, member of the Brüning cabinet, and staunch opponent of Hitler, escaped execution on June 30. He was playing tennis at his home that afternoon when a lorry of SS men drove up to arrest him. They were told that Treviranus was upstairs, but, once they got there, they noticed that it was his father. Upon hearing the commotion in the house, Treviranus jumped over the garden wall and drove off in his car. He was spotted while driving off, and the SS men fired shots at the car, but missed. Treviranus drove into Berlin, lost his SS pursuers in heavy traffic, and borrowed some clothes from a friend. He went to Schleicher's house and noticed a crowd milling around; he learned from an SS man that Schleicher had been killed. Treviranus then drove into the country, where he deliberately ran his car off the road. He then returned to Berlin by taxi and hid in a friend's house until things quieted down.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{35}Gunther, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 49; Whitaker, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{36}Gunther, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 55-56.
Herbert von Bose, Papen's closest associate, was chatting with two industrialists in the Vice-Chancellry when three SS men entered. They asked him politely to step into an adjoining room, and shot him. Bose died because he had accumulated an index on various political leaders and possessed damaging documentation on the activities of Himmler and Heydrich. The body of Papen's other associate, Edgar Jung, was found during the morning of July 1, lying in a ditch off the highway near Oranienburg.37

Others eliminated included those who aborted Hitler's 1923 putsch, Lossow, Seisser, and von Kahr. General von Kahr's death was pure revenge. He had been addressing a meeting in the Burgerbräukeller in Munich on November 8, 1923, when Hitler and his men burst in and announced the revolution. Kahr agreed to support Hitler in the establishment of a new government with Hitler as chancellor. Kahr was then allowed to leave the tavern, and after leaving, told the police what was happening and soldiers were rushed to

37Papen, op. cit., p. 325; Testimony of Gisevius, April 25, 1946, International Military Tribunal, Trial, XII, 261; Heiden, Der Fuehrer, p. 770; Heiden, Hitler, p. 409. Papen testified at Nuremberg that he knew of Bose's execution but was unaware of Jung's fate and had hoped his associate had escaped to Switzerland. Argument of Dr. Kubuschok (Lawyer for the Defense), July 22, 1946, The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1948), XIX, 158.
the scene. His death was caused by multiple wounds from pickaxes; his mutilated body was found in a swamp outside Dachau. 38

Other victims included Karl Stuetzel, former Minister of the Interior in Bavaria; Richard Scheringer, a former Nazi who had been converted to Communism; Alexander Glaser, a lawyer and enemy of Hans Frank's; Hans von Seassner, Munich State Police leader; three members of the family of Baron von Aretin; Ramshorn, chief of police in Gleiwitz; Schraegmuller, chief of police in Magdeburg; Dr. Fritz Gehrlich, who had made the mistake of accusing Göring of being corrupt; Dr. Villarn, an SA leader; Herr Sempner, owner of one of Röhm's favorite inns; von Detten, who had served as an arbiter between the regime and the church; Dr. Otto Ballerstaedt, an opponent of the NSDAP in 1923 who helped place Hitler in prison following the attempted putsch of that year; Klaus Heim, leader of the Holstein farmers; and Dr. Heimseth, a personal friend of Röhm's.

Dr. Willi Schmidt, a music critic for the Münchener Neueste Nachrichten, was executed in Munich; he was mistaken for the

SA leader of the same name. Also, most of the SA members who started the Reichstag fire in 1933 were killed. Professor Lorenz Morsbach, manager of the student exchange program, was imprisoned at a concentration camp near Wittenberg for having been an acquaintance of Röhm's. None of the victims were given a funeral and their bodies were cremated. In several cases, the ashes were sent through the mail in cigar boxes or plain urns to their families. One victim was decapitated and the severed head was sent to his widow in a sack.

Catholic circles were also hard hit by the purge. Many undoubtedly were victims of revenge for having voiced a conservative opposition to certain elements in the regime. Dr. Fritz Beck, a Catholic youth leader and manager of Munich's Catholic Students' House, disappeared. When his


40 Schuman, op. cit., pp. 443-444.

41 Whitaker, op. cit., p. 17.
foreign students in Munich demanded an explanation for his mysterious disappearance and even threatened to engage in anti-German propaganda when they returned home, a report was issued which stated that Beck had committed suicide. However, his nude body was discovered two days later near the village of Pasing. Father Bernhard Stempfle, who had edited Mein Kampf, was also executed; it was feared that he knew too much concerning the mysterious death of Hitler's beloved niece, Geli Raubal, in 1931. His body was discovered in woods outside Munich; his neck had been broken and there were three bullet wounds around his heart. Another victim was Adalbert Probst, who had served in the Bavarian Landtag as a Bavarian People's Party deputy from 1919 to 1933 and led a Catholic youth group headquartered in Munich. He was arrested at 8:00 P.M. on July 1, while visiting Mgr. Wolker, general president of the Catholic youth organizations, in the Hartz Mountains.


The Catholic leader, Erich Klausener, was also murdered by two SS men who entered his office around noon on June 30. As Klausener reached for his hat to accompany the men, he was hit in the head by two shots. One of the murderers was SS leader Gildisch. Defying church doctrine, the executioners cremated the Catholic leader's body. Catholics reacted heatedly to the execution, the cremation, and the refusal to allow a public requiem to be held for Klausener. Also, the Vatican did not believe the official reports from Germany that his death was a suicide.45

Göring held a press conference for the foreign correspondents at the Chancellry late in the afternoon of June 30. He spoke of the alleged Röhm-Schleicher attempt at a revolt, a second revolution. Denouncing the moral degeneration of Röhm and his associates, the Nazi leader described the tense situation which prevailed within the country and told the newsmen that the SA had plotted to kidnap Hitler and institute a three day reign of terror. Göring also stated that Schleicher had been involved with a foreign power and had been shot while resisting arrest. Furthermore, he explained

that he had "extended" his orders from Hitler, executing some who were not on Hitler's black list of enemies, but on his own.  

Meanwhile, an official party statement issued from Munich the same day said that Röhm and Schleicher had plotted against the party and the state. Their "go-betweens" were alleged to be "another Storm Troop leader and an obscure person well known in Berlin [Alvensleben] to whom Der Führer had always strongly objected."  

Hitler flew back to Berlin late in the day on the thirtieth. Berlin's Tempelhof Airport was surrounded by SS guards, and Göring and Himmler were among the welcoming party. Hitler, the first to step out of the plane, looked "pale, unshaven, sleepless, at once gaunt and puffed." Followed by Brückner; Schaub, one of his adjutants; Sepp Dietrich; and Goebbels, he walked "slowly and laboriously" towards the waiting cars. Before reaching them, he stopped momentarily to discuss something with Göring and Himmler. Himmler pulled a "long, tattered list" of victims from his pocket. Hitler scanned the list and, at one point, reading

46 Gisevius, op. cit., pp. 155-156; Manvell and Fraenkel, Goering, p. 133.
Gregor Strasser's name, he tossed his head back with "violent emotion" and anger. For some inner, secret reason, Strasser's death affected him with intense emotion.

When Hitler arrived in Berlin, the capital was tense and filled with rumors, although there was no outward sign of disorder. Hitler was enraged over the extent to which the purge had been conducted in Berlin; apparently Göring's and Himmler's bloodbath was too excessive even for his taste. The next day, in an attempt to restore calm, Goebbels issued the following statement: "The boil has been lanced. Morality, decency, and purity have been restored. The whole nation breathes easily again, as if freed from a horrible nightmare. Peace, order, and public security are again assured. The Reich is there and, above all, our Führer."

Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick told Hitler that Sunday, 
"... if you don't proceed at once against Himmler and his

49 Dodd, Diary, pp. 117-118.
50 Frischauer, op. cit., p. 107. After the purge, Amsterdam's Telegraaf reported that General von Fritsch had "threatened to arrest Hitler unless he would immediately stop the executions without trial." Prince Hubertus zu Loewenstein, On Borrowed Peace (Garden City, 1942), p. 65.
51 Schuman, op. cit., p. 448.
SS as you have against Roehm and his SA, all you will have done is to have called in Beelzebub to drive out the Devil." Hitler did not listen. Later that day, he hosted a tea party for a few guests in the Chancellry garden, where he appeared insecure and very rigid. In contrast, Göring was jovial at the party; his mind was clearer now that his rivals, Röhm and Strasser, were gone.  

The army continued its policy of non-involvement. On July 1, Blomberg issued a statement which claimed that the armed forces did not interfere in "internal political battles." Also, the Volkscher Beobachter revealed the official version of the events of June 30 in a report of a conspiracy between Röhm and Schleicher behind Hitler's back and mentioned the Führer's flight to Munich, Röhm's execution, and the deaths of General and Frau Schleicher.

In the meantime, all papers and evidence dealing with the purge were destroyed upon the orders of Göring. The following instruction was issued by Göring to the SS and Gestapo on July 2: "The Minister-President of Prussia and

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54 Walter Anger, editor, Das Dritte Reich in Dokumenten (Frankfurt am Main, 1957), pp. 31-32.
the chief of the State Secret Police has been invested with full police powers. On orders from above, all documents relating to the action of the past two days are to be burned."55

President Hindenburg, meanwhile, was given only a one-sided version of the events.56 Hitler submitted a draft for the president to sign and publicly send to him so that the people's confidence in the regime would be reinforced. When Hindenburg questioned Blomberg concerning the veracity of Hitler's report, the Reichswehr Minister replied that the account was correct.57 Whereupon Hindenburg's secretary, Otto Meissner, placed the telegram before him, and the president reluctantly signed it.58

From the reports which have been brought to me, I see that by your decisive initiative and by your brave personal risk you have nipped all the treasonable activities in the bud. You have saved the German people from a grave danger. For this I express to you my heartfelt gratitude and my sincere respect.

With best greetings, Von Hindenburg.

55 Delarue, op. cit., p. 117.
59 Testimony of von Eberstein, International Military Tribunal, Trial, XX, 291.
To Göring, he cabled: "For your energetic and successful action in crushing the attempt at high treason, I express to you my gratitude and respect."\textsuperscript{60} Of course, by this time, Hindenburg was senile with but a short time to live.

On July 3, Hitler convened the cabinet in order to present his story. He told them that Röhm had been preparing a revolution for a year, but that he had not acted against the SA chief before because of the domestic political situation. Röhm had ignored his entreaties to honor the SA-Reichswehr agreement reached that spring. Those involved in the plot included General von Schleicher, Werner von Alvensleben, Gregor Strasser, and representatives of the French government. Röhm planned to blackmail Hitler by resigning if the Führer did not agree to more independence for the SA. The SA chief had agreed to the month's leave of absence because his plans were not succeeding; he was arming the SA for an eventual showdown with the Reichswehr. The coup was to start at 4 A.M. on June 30; Hitler had planned to go to Wiessee to announce at the SA meeting that day that Röhm was under arrest. Hitler told the cabinet that he took quick action to end the affair when he learned that the Berlin SA had been mobilized for Saturday afternoon. According to the

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 291.
Chancellor, this mobilization constituted a mutiny and his duty was to quell it quickly and ruthlessly. After Hitler's discourse, Blomberg praised the Führer for his "resolute and courageous action." The cabinet immediately approved a bill legalizing the suppression of the alleged coup, "The measures taken to suppress treasonable and seditious acts on June 30 and July 1 and 2, 1934, have become law for the defence of the State in an emergency."^61

The cabinet session ended at 2 P.M. and Hitler left for Neudeck two hours later where he dined with Hindenburg and heard the president express approval of the purge. Before leaving Berlin that afternoon, Hitler had issued the following proclamation:

Measures for the suppression of the Roehm revolt were concluded during the night of July 1, 1934. Whoever on his own authority and irrespective of his intentions shall commit acts of violence in the wake of this action shall be turned over to normal justice for punishment.62


Papen's three-day house arrest also ended on July 3. He immediately left for the Chancellery and found Hitler in the midst of a cabinet meeting. When Hitler was told that Papen was in the building, he sent word for the vice-chancellor to take his usual place at the cabinet table. Papen refused, requesting a private meeting with Hitler. Red-eyed from lack of sleep, Papen told the Führer that he wanted to resign; Hitler asked him to wait until things settled down and to attend an address that he was planning to make before the Reichstag. Papen retorted that this request was out of the question and abruptly departed.\(^6\)

Hitler wanted to keep Papen in the cabinet for the moment because of the vice-chancellor's popularity and close ties with the conservative and Catholic groups.\(^4\)

Believing Hitler's story at the time of a planned SA revolt,\(^5\) Papen was primarily angry over the executions of Jung and Bose, and his humiliating house arrest of three days without contact with the outside. He demanded that

\(^6\)Papen, op. cit., p. 318.


\(^5\)Testimony of von Papen, June 18, 1946, International Military Tribunal, Trial, XVI, 360.
Bose's body be turned over to the family for burial. He also sent Jung's widow one-thousand RM, but did not attend Jung's funeral. Papen would be offered an ambassadorship to the Vatican during the second week of July, but decline; however, he would later serve Hitler as ambassador to Austria and Turkey.

At this time, German newspapers were publicly accusing France of conspiring against the Reich. Mention was made of a meeting on May 30 at the Geneva Disarmament Conference between French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou and the British representatives. Barthou supposedly remarked that since Hitler's days were "numbered," no concessions would be made towards Germany. The French reacted to these charges by calling the report a "nonsensical fable."  

On the eighth, in a speech to the Nazi Congress at Königsberg, Hess vaguely hinted at plans being made by the French government to attack Germany and warned that Germany would stubbornly resist any such move. He also stressed

66 Davidson, op. cit., pp. 39, 212.

67 Testimony of Hans Heinrich Lammers (Chief of the Reich Cancellry), April 9, 1946, The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1947), XI, 96.

68 The United States News, July 9, 1934, p. 6.
the need for peaceful relations between the two countries. 69

The Foreign Minister, Baron von Neurath, reported in a memorandum on July 5 that François-Poncet had visited him the day before. The French ambassador had complained of the announcement in the Völkischer Beobachter on July 1-2 that he and others in the French embassy had conspired against the government. While admitting close relations with Schleicher and having met with Röhm before, he denied any plotting between these two and himself. Neurath had replied that the ambassador should not be surprised of rumors of his involvement, since there were associations with the two men, but assured Poncet that the uproar "would soon die down." 70 The Foreign Minister also assured Poncet that any idea of the French government supplying the SA with supplies was an "absurd fable," but that the Brown Shirts had received arms from another country which he was not at liberty to reveal. Neurath told Poncet that the government never suspected France or the French embassy in Berlin of any duplicity. 71

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69 The Times (London), July 10, 1934, p. 17.
71 Secretary General Leger to Ambassador Köster, Paris, July 18, 1934, Germany, op. cit., pp. 188-189.
The British ambassador in Berlin, Sir Eric Phipps, was given the official story of the purge by Göring and relayed the report to London. While British officials doubted the Nazi explanation of the purge, most were pleased at the strife within the Hitler regime, even though concerned about its implications for Germany's foreign policy. Some feared a rebirth of the Junker element which pushed Germany into the First World War. In contrast, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was pleased that Hitler struck against the radical elements. The Popolo d'Italia, official government paper, approved Hitler's action, but pointed out that such a situation would not have arisen if the causes for treason had been eliminated earlier.

The week following the bloody night was one of ominous quiet. Hitler, announcing a month of political tranquility, retired to the Bavarian Alps. The situation in Berlin

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73 "Britain Is Anxious Over Reich Events," The New York Times, July 1, 1934, p. 3.
was outwardly calm; however, the "state of mind of the population . . . [was] one of doubt, bewilderment, and terror." 77 Reaction to the purge was mixed. Among the intellectuals and upper-class, there was shock at the brutality and a sense of hopeless resignation. Among the working-class, there was a large measure of support for Hitler's firm action against "traitors"; this view was shared by the party rank-and-file. 78 An example of the post-purge atmosphere in Germany was the arrest of forty-five people in Nuremberg for criticizing the purge. 79 A young Jew named Stein was buying a paper in Berlin and made derogatory remarks about the regime. He was arrested on the spot, and a few days later his father received his ashes. 80 To ease the prevailing tensions, the government organized a Gute Laune, "Good Cheer," drive with loud, lively music played on the radio and in restaurants.

77 Dodd to Secretary of State, Berlin, July 7, 1934, op. cit., p. 237.


80 Dodd to Secretary of State, Berlin, July 24, 1934, op. cit., p. 242.
There were some rumblings among the Storm Troopers, who feared the purge might be a prelude to a complete dissolution of the SA. Viktor Lutze issued an order on the fourth forbidding mass meetings of the SA during the month of July. To alleviate the fears of his men, he issued the following statement to the Brown Shirts, "Adolf Hitler is faithful to the Storm Troops. He loves the Storm Troops."

But, how many were killed as a result of the purge? Estimates vary greatly. An official government announcement on July 7 proclaimed fewer than fifty killed. Correspondents in Berlin estimated as high as a thousand to twelve hundred. Goebbels made an announcement that seventy-nine had been killed, replacing in the announcement the customary standrechtlich (according to law) with auf Befehl des Führers (by order of the Führer). A book published in Paris by a group of left-wing émigrés from Germany gives the following partial list of the number: 137 in Munich, 68 at Lichterfelde, 74 in the city of Berlin, 54 in Breslau, 32 in Schlesien, 14 in Lichtenburg, and 22 in

82 Olden, *op. cit.*, p. 329.
Sachsen.  

A United Press report on June 30 listed 122 deaths in Munich alone. Another report estimated that more than 2000 SA men were imprisoned at Dachau, but obviously, this does not necessarily mean that all were killed. At the Nuremberg trial after the war, Field Marshal Erhard Milch testified that between four and five hundred people were sent to concentration camps, while one hundred to two hundred were killed. The correct number of victims is probably somewhere in the middle of the two extreme estimates; therefore, a safe approximation would be around five hundred.

Hitler returned to Berlin from his respite at Berchtesgaden on Tuesday, July 10 and began working on the speech to be delivered before the Reichstag on the following Friday. On the same day, Göring summoned the Reichstag to assemble on Friday. The purge had eliminated eight members of the

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84 Branting, op. cit., pp. 89-90.
85 Strasser, Bartholomäusnacht, p. 115.
Reichstag, or a little over one per cent of its total membership. Göring ordered all delegates to be present, the only exception being those members who could produce a certificate of illness signed by a doctor. Not a single ambassador from the Great Powers was present for the speech.

Hitler claimed in his speech that in April and May he began to receive many reports of talk within the SA leadership of the need for a "new revolution," but that Röhm had denied the reports. During May and June, he hesitated to take any decisive steps against this alleged threat. He stated that this vacillation was due to a disbelief that such a close comrade as Röhm could be guilty of disloyalty and the hope that a compromise could be reached which would prevent any upheaval within the party or the SA.

Hitler mentioned meeting with Röhm for about five hours around the first of June. When he told Röhm of the reports of an impending "national-bolshevist rising," the SA chief scoffed at these rumors and promised Hitler that he would straighten things out. In reality, according to Hitler, Röhm went ahead with his plans and was prepared to remove

Hitler, since he (Röhm) could not rely on Hitler's support; Standard leader Uhl allegedly confessed that he was under orders to remove Hitler. 90

The Führer claimed that the plan for the uprising was composed of four basic schemes. SA propaganda would spread the word through the rank-and-file that the army was planning to attack it. The SA would then be brought to alert in anticipation of the attack. Support would be needed in making these preparations; Röhm had collected twelve million marks for the undertaking. The leaders would spread the word that the action was to protect Hitler and restore his "freedom of action"; a fait accompli would then be presented to the indecisive Führer. 91

The Reichstag was also told that Röhm had conspired with Schleicher to bring about changes in the government. This duo was alleged to have been brought together by "Herr von A-- [Alvensleben]." Also involved were von Detten, General von Bredow, and Gregor Strasser. Hitler said that the SA had literally been split into two factions; those who supported Röhm out of a communal bond of shared weaknesses (homosexuality) or out of loyalty to the leader and those

90 Ibid., pp. 270-271.
91 Ibid., pp. 268-270.
who were repulsed by what was happening. The Fuhrer claimed that this latter faction was being discriminated against by the former, which controlled the SA movement. The first was composed of men like Röhm, Ernst, Heines, Hayn, and Heydebreck. The latter was led by the new chief of staff, Lutze, and Himmler, head of the SS.\textsuperscript{92}

Hitler stated that at 1 A.M., June 30, he received calls from Berlin and Munich. From Berlin, he learned that things were readying for a surprise attack led by Ernst at five that afternoon. From Munich, he supposedly learned that the SA was on alert in their quarters. He left for Munich at 2 A.M., determined to nip the matter in the bud. He remarked on the number of victims:

\ldots Nineteen higher SA leaders, thirty-one leaders and members of the SA were shot \ldots three leaders of the SS while thirteen SA leaders and civilians who attempted to resist arrest lost their lives. Three more committed suicide. Five who did not belong to the SA but were members of the Party were shot for taking part in the plot. Finally there were also shot three members of the SS who had been guilty of scandalous ill-treatment of those who had been taken into protective custody.\textsuperscript{93}

Hitler did not mention the murders of the Catholic leaders. During the purge, he showed himself to be above

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{92}Ibid., pp. 265-267; 270.
\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., pp. 273-274, 276-277.
\end{footnote}
the law and to possess the power of life or death over anyone whom he believed guilty of treachery.\textsuperscript{94} In closing the Reichstag session, Göring proclaimed, "And if abroad it is believed today that chaos threatens Germany, the German people respond with the single cry: We all approve always of what our leader does."\textsuperscript{95} The speech lasted an hour and a half. Hitler was very emotional in his delivery and was wildly hailed by those assembled. Following his speech, he showed visible exhaustion as he sunk into his chair. As he left the hall, he was presented with a bouquet of red roses by two little girls from the Deutsche Mädchen Bund.\textsuperscript{96}

It is inconceivable that the SA was planning a revolt for June 30, when its chief leaders, Röhm, Heines, Hayn, von Krausser, and Schneider were either at Bad Wiessee or

\textsuperscript{94}Oswald Garrison Villard, "Hitler's 'Me und Gott,'" The Nation, 139 (August 1, 1934), p. 119.


\textsuperscript{96}"Hitler Justifies Killing," The New York Times, July 14, 1934, p. 1. Notably absent from the hall was von Papen. The vice-chancellor revealed his support for Hitler in a letter written the day after the speech; it appeared that Papen was more concerned of clearing his name than protesting the deaths of two of his close associates. Exhibit GB-501, June 18, 1946, International Military Tribunal, Trial, XVI, 366-367.
planning to go there for the scheduled SA meeting that day. If a revolt had been planned, they would have been in their various districts commanding their units and not in a small resort town in southern Germany, isolated from the alleged battle zones of Munich and Berlin. Also, Berlin SA leader Karl Ernst was in the process of leaving the country that day for his honeymoon cruise.

It is possible that there could have been contacts among Röhm, Schleicher, and Strasser; all were politically aligned towards the left. Schleicher and Strasser had worked closely in 1932 to form a joint government. However, there were too many fundamental differences among the men. Schleicher surely would not have supported Röhm's plans for the army. There was also a conflict of ideas between the SA chief and Strasser; Röhm wanted to organize the SA into the protectors of the revolution, while Strasser envisioned the members of the trade unions to assume this role.

Earlier, Generals von Schleicher and von Hammerstein considered the possibility of a coup d'état against the Hitler regime, but came to the conclusion that such a move would

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97 Heiden, Hitler, p. 393.  
98 Greenwood, op. cit., p. 300.  
be doomed to failure. After all, they reasoned, Hitler had been legally appointed chancellor by President Hindenburg and, because of this, the Reichswehr would view a coup against Hitler as an affront to Hindenburg.\textsuperscript{100} Also, they would come into conflict with the army generals loyal to Hitler, such as Blomberg and Fritsch.

Hitler, meanwhile, was poised between two opposing factions, the leftists, such as Strasser and Köhm, and the rightists, such as Hindenburg, Papen, and Göring. Goebbels kept close to Hitler, ready to support the winning side.\textsuperscript{101} This shrewd opportunist was in contact with Otto Strasser in Prague and planned to join forces with the Strassers, in the event Hitler fell from power.\textsuperscript{102} There were rumors during and after the purge that Göring had made plans to eliminate Goebbels, and the Propaganda Minister, aware of such plans, had left Berlin and stayed by Hitler's side throughout that weekend.\textsuperscript{103}


\textsuperscript{101}Strasser, Hitler and I, p. 177.

\textsuperscript{102}Goebbels, Diaries, 1942-1943, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{103}Dodd, Through Embassy Eyes, p. 146; H.S. Hegner, Die Reichskanzlei, 1933-1945 (Frankfurt am Main, 1960), p. 131.
It is also unlikely that Papen was involved in any plotting with Schleicher and Röhm. There was a bitter enmity between Papen and Schleicher dating back to late 1932. Also, Papen felt only contempt for Röhm, whose life style was completely in contrast to his own.

Again, Hitler's allegations of the collaboration of a foreign power, supposedly France, in a plot, are incredible. Except for Schleicher, François-Poncet was not very close to any of the major figures involved in the alleged revolt. However, the Schleicher-Poncet meetings were too infrequent for any plotting to have occurred. At their last meeting on Easter Sunday, 1934, Schleicher made no references to any conspiracy, although he did criticize the regime, which was usual for him. Also, both disliked Röhm, whom both found repugnant.

What then were the motives behind Hitler's action against the SA and his political opponents? Hitler had lost control

104 Dodd, Embassy Eyes, p. 160.
105 François-Poncet, op. cit., pp. 138-139. The antagonism between Röhm and Poncet was revealed in a memorandum by the secretary of state, Bülow, on January 26, 1934. He hoped that Röhm would meet Poncet at a dinner given by the Argentine Minister; their meeting would be more cordial on this "neutral soil." Germany, op. cit., p. 422.
over parts of the SA prior to the purge; by this decisive action, he would restore his complete control over the organization. Up to June 29, he hoped to reach a compromise with Röhm. It was only when he received Göring's report on that date and the news of the Berlin SA being placed on alert, that he decided to act. Enraged and mistakenly fearful of a coup, he struck with a vengeance. He had allowed diverse beliefs within the party only as long as they did not threaten his position. He also feared an army uprising if he supported Röhm's position; and, if he did not have the army's support, he might lose claims to the presidency upon the death of Hindenburg. He desired an evolutionary period and believed that an attack on the Reichswehr would imperil Germany's military structure. The bloodbath was also an opportune moment for Göring, Himmler, and himself to eliminate such personal rivals as Kahr, Lossow, Bredow, and the Catholic leaders.

Some enlightening, reflective accounts of the purge were made by participants in the immediate post-purge era, and later at the Nuremberg Trials and in written accounts following the end of the Second World War. It is unlikely that Röhm's life style was as considerable a factor for the purge as Hitler claimed in the Reichstag speech. Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's photographer, wrote that Hitler once mentioned Röhm's private life, but claimed that the SA leader was too valuable to the party to reproach and that his private life was of no interest to him. After the purge, sometime in July, Hitler discussed with Hermann Rauschning the significance of the events and his relations with the army: "Anyone who gets out of step will be shot ... . At a moment when everything depends on the party's being a single close entity, I must listen to the reactionaries taunting me with the inability to keep order and discipline in my own house." He further described the current state of affairs with the Reichswehr, "The insubordination of my S.A. has deprived me of a great many trump cards. But I hold plenty of others." Concerning the presidential succession and army support, he said, "They can't pass over me when the

old gentleman dies . . . They're at their wit's end, these miserable busybodies, these second-rate clerks."  

In his cell at Nuremberg, Göring revealed his intense paranoia and hatred of Röhm and the SA,

Roehm! Don't talk to me about that dirty homosexual swine! That was the real clique of perverted bloody revolutionists! They are the ones who first made the Party look like a pack of hoodlums, with their wild orgies and beating up Jews on the street and smashing windows! They would have given you a real demonstration of a bloody revolution! What a gang of perverted bandits that S.A. was! It is a damn good thing wiped them out or they would have wiped us out!  

Himmler, Göring's right-hand during the purge, remarked in the immediate post-purge era, "It appalled everyone . . . and yet everyone was certain that he would do it again if such orders were issued and if it were necessary."  

On the witness stand at Nuremberg, General Alfred Jodl, who would become one of Hitler's closest wartime generals, testified that there was no putsch planned by Röhm that weekend, but that one would have occurred before long.  

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111 Gilbert, Psychology of Dictatorship, p. 96.  
112 Exhibit USA-170, August 29, 1946, The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1948), XXII, 224.  
113 Testimony of General Alfred Jodl, June 3, 1946, The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War
In 1935, Reichenau admitted to Gisevius, a police officer, that it had not been easy to handle the affair of June 30 so that it appeared to be a "pure Party matter." He was admitting that the army leadership was indirectly guilty of what happened; they had followed Himmler and his SS to eliminate a shared enemy, the SA. The SS, however, in a few years time, would pose an even more menacing threat to the army.  

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Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1948), XV, 305.

Gisevius, op. cit., p. 173.
CHAPTER VI

AFTERMATH

Hitler was aware, before and during the purge, that Hindenburg's days were numbered. After June 30, with a promise of support from the Reichswehr, an end to the troublesome SA leadership, and the support of the majority of German citizens for his actions, he needed only to bide his time. In fact, his position as Germany's "Führer" was more secure than it had ever been during the preceding year and a half.

Hitler visited the dying president on the morning of August 1, and also called a cabinet meeting for 9:30 that evening. ¹ A decree was passed by the cabinet, effective that date, proclaiming that Hitler would assume the powers of president, as well as chancellor, upon the death of Hindenburg. ² It was only a matter of hours before the law would be implemented, for Hindenburg died at 9:00 A.M.,

¹The Times (London), August 2, 1934, p. 10.

the following morning. Members of the Reichswehr took an oath of allegiance to the person of Adolf Hitler on that day.

After Hindenburg's funeral, Hitler talked privately of socialism and revolution with some of his cronies, "My Socialism is not class war, but order . . . . Revolution is not games for the masses. Revolution is hard work . . . . The revolution cannot be ended . . . . We shall never allow ourselves to be held down to one permanent condition." To enable the German people to express their approval of the past events, a plebiscite was held on August 19. Forty-five and a half million voters, or 95.7 per cent of the total electorate, voted; the results were thirty-eight million votes in approval and four and a quarter million in opposition. Hitler's position as dictator of Germany was secured.6

One of the results of the purge was the formation of a bond of alliance between Hitler and the Reichswehr.6 Although

3The Times (London), August 3, 1934, p. 12.
a number of generals had been alarmed at the excesses of the purge, the majority supported Blomberg's policy of avoiding this party conflict. The only generals to speak out against Schleicher's execution were von Mackensen and von Hammerstein. Mackensen referred to Schleicher's death as murder. Blomberg issued an order forbidding army officers to attend the funeral, but von Hammerstein defied the order.

The indifference of the Reichswehr towards the bloodbath was clearly revealed in an interview that Reichenau gave in early August to a reporter from the Petit Journal, "The death of Schleicher . . . caused us grief, but we were of the opinion that for some time he had ceased to be a soldier." A Pomeranian nobleman, angered over the brutal executions of Schleicher and Bredow, tried to coax Generals von Witzleben, Bock, Rundstedt, Brauchitsch, and Field Marshal von Mackensen into a plot against Hitler; all, however, refused adamantly.

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Hitler did apologize later to the Reichswehr Officer Corps for the execution of General von Schleicher and promised them that such a thing would never happen again.\textsuperscript{11} The army also demanded that the general's name be cleared, which was done, and one of the men who murdered General and Frau von Schleicher was shot by the Nazis.\textsuperscript{12}

Like the Reichswehr, the Catholic Church did not publicly criticize the purge, even though a large number of Catholics had been killed. Waldemar Gurian, a German Catholic refugee living in Switzerland, wrote in a pamphlet that the German bishops, as the "last moral authority in Germany," should condemn the massacre. He stated that their silence was the greatest tragedy of the whole event.\textsuperscript{13}

Berlin's Bishop Bares did write a cautious letter to Hitler following the purge:

I do not doubt for a moment that Your Excellency did not include Klausener in the framework of those measures thought to be necessary against proven revolutionary elements, and that his death was only


\textsuperscript{13}Gunther Lewy, The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany (New York, 1964), p. 171.
the result of an unfortunate chain of unforeseen events.\footnote{J.S. Conway, The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-45 (London, 1968), pp. 93-94.}

Dr. Dietrich, the Bishop of Nassau-Hessen, wrote a letter praising Hitler: "The events of June 30th, 1934, have opened the eyes of the blind, and demonstrated to the world, as I always affirmed, the unique greatness of the Führer. He has been sent to us by God."\footnote{Ibid., p. 94.}

Author Vernon McKinzie interviewed Reich Bishop Mueller to record his views on the purge. The Bishop told him, "If Christ Himself had been beset by such traitors, similar action to that taken by Hitler would have been inevitable."\footnote{Vernon McKenzie, Through Turbulent Years (New York, 1938), pp. 71-72.} Such a reply could be expected from a man personally appointed by Hitler, but the timidity of the other church leaders in taking a stand against the illegal, immoral, and un-Christian actions of the Hitler regime can only be labelled as cowardice, an epithet also applicable to the Reichswehr generals.

Hitler never realized the extent of the purge. Even after being briefed on the events in areas other than Munich, he still was not aware of the large number of executions,\footnote{...}
many of which were due to personal revenge. He promised to prosecute those guilty of killing innocent victims during the purge, and some were tried and given severe sentences, but Hitler vetoed any legal action against the executioners of Klausener and Jung.18

The SS was independent of the SA following the purge.19 In late July, as a reward for their services during the purge, Hitler declared the SS to be an independent organization and proclaimed Himmler to have equal status with SA leader Lutze. Himmler's organization numbered 250,000 at this time.20

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18 Testimony of Franz Schlegelberger (State Secretary in the Ministry of Justice), The International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg: Secretariat of the Tribunal, 1948), XX, 266.


20 The Times (London), July 26, 1934, p. 11. During the latter part of 1934 and early 1935, about 150 SS leaders were murdered and a card with the initials "R.R." was pinned on the corpses. These initials meant Rächen Röhm, "the avengers of Röhm." These avengers were a core of SA men who continued to be faithful to the memory of Ernst Röhm. Jacques Delarue, The Gestapo: A History of Horror, translated by Mervyn Savill (New York, 1964), pp. 125-126.
While the stature of the SS was boosted following the purge, the opposite was true of the SA. It was placed under the personal direction of Hitler, and on July 9, Viktor Lutze announced a reduction in the organization from 2,500,000 to 800,000 men; its 1934-35 budget was set at 250 million marks; while most of the SA concentration camps were closed, and the remainder transferred to SS control.

For a variety of reasons, Hitler did not completely dissolve the SA after the purge. He needed it to counterbalance the power of the Reichswehr; it was composed of the "common man," whose support Hitler needed and desired; and it provided a useful force against civil unrest and political opposition. Also, if the SA men were discharged, having


22 Frederick L. Schuman, The Nazi Dictatorship (New York, 1939), p. 415. After the purge, Rudolf Hess announced that every tenth member of the SA high command had been shot, whether he was guilty or not. Daniel Lerner, The Nazi Elite (Stanford, 1951), p. 73.


25 Grzesinski, op. cit., p. 255.
little or no skills, they would join the undisciplined ranks of the unemployed and pose a serious threat to the regime.\footnote{26}{"The Future of the Brown Shirts," *The Christian Century*, LI (July 18, 1934), No. 2, p. 940.}

After the purge, the SA in Berlin was still grumbling in opposition to the murders. Many of those shot at Lichterfelde had been very popular, and a large number of Storm Troopers in the capital found it difficult to believe the government's explanation.\footnote{27}{John Brown, *I Saw For Myself* (London, ND), pp. 43-44. This author had a private chat with two SA men, who had been friends of Rõhm's. They said that Rõhm was not planning any coup against Hitler; in fact, shortly before his death, they said, he told a group of SA leaders that he remained loyal to Hitler. They told Brown of rumors heard that plans had been made after the Reichstag fire to eliminate Rõhm and his associates, who knew the truth about the fire, at an appropriate time. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.}

Hitler and Lutze had a hard time placating the bitter Brown Shirts.\footnote{28}{Grzesinski, *op. cit.*, p. 254.} Many in the SA leadership still cherished the idea of the party army, even years after the purge.\footnote{29}{Hermann Rauschning, *The Revolution of Nihilism*, translated by E.W. Dickes (New York, 1939), pp. 160-161.}

Hitler addressed the assembled SA forces at the Nuremberg party rally on September 9, the first time since the blood purge. He told the fifty thousand Troops, in an attempt to
ease the tension among them: "Only a madman or a conscious liar can say that I have any such intention or that anyone ever had any intention of destroying the organization that we ourselves have created in long years of effort." Lutze also spoke, in a shrill voice, and was given a cool reception by his audience.30

The position of the SA was truly revealed in a statement made by Lutze to the organization in the early summer of 1935, "... It is now more necessary than ever before that we continue to serve as the army of the faith in village and city, and spread the faith among our fellow-citizens."31

There was no doubt then that the SA was to be solely a political army, serving Hitler in a manner determined by him.

In 1938, the SA was given a concession of sorts over the army: the authority to train the reservists before and after their army services. This concession was significant in that a large number of men no longer would be under

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the influence of the army, but rather under the SA. However, from June 30, 1934, the SA was a second-rate organization, subordinate to the SS and the Reichswehr. The SA, as it existed in the 1920's and early 1930's, died with its chief of staff, Ernst Röhm.

APPENDIX I

A PARTIAL LIST OF THE VICTIMS OF THE BLOOD PURGE

The following is a partial list of the victims, in alphabetical order, of the blood purge. The sources for the compilation of this list are: Klaus Bredow, Hitler rast (Saarbrücken, 1934), pp. 69-70; Dr. Otto Strasser, Die deutsche Bartholomäusnacht (Zürich, 1935), pp. 237-241.

1. Altenhausen, von; SA leader in Brandenburg.
2. Alvensleben, Werner von; alleged "go-between" in negotiations between Köhm and General von Fritsch.
3. Aretin, Baron.
4. Ballerstedt; resident in Munich.
5. Beck, Dr. Fritz; "Catholic Action" leader in Munich.
6. Bergmann; SA Staff leader.
8. Bose, von; Associate of Franz von Papen's.
10. Camphausen; a Catholic movement leader.
11. Charig, Dr.; resident in Hirschberg.
12. Decken, von der; adjutant to von Papen.
15. Ehrhardt, Captain; veterans' movement leader.
17. Engel; SA Standard leader in Breslau.
21. Förster, Dr.; lawyer in Hirschberg.
22. Frasenhauser; SA leader in Saxony.
23. Gehrt; World War air comrade of Göring's, holder of the "Pour le mérite" war medal.
24. Gerlich, Dr. Fritz; head editor of the Münchner Neuesten Nachrichten.
25. Glaser, Dr. Alexander; lawyer in Munich.
27. Haber, Dr.; leader of Catholic student movement.
31. Heim, Dr. Georg; founder of Bavarian Peoples' Party.
32. Heimsoth; friend of Ernst Röhm's.
33. Heines, Edmund; SA Obergruppenführer in Schlesien.
34. Heines; SA leader in Breslau.
35. Heydebreck, Hans Peter von; SA Group leader in Pomerania.
36. Hoffmann; SA leader in Stettin.
37. Huber; publisher.
38. Jakobssohn, Dr.; resident of Glogau.
39. Jung, Dr. Edgar; associate of von Papen's, ghost-writer of the Marburg speech.
41. Kahr, von; former Bavarian Minister-President.
42. Kasche; SA brigade leader in Kottbus.
43. Kessel, von; police lieutenant in service to the Gestapo.
44. Kirschbaum; SA adjutant to Karl Ernst.
45. Klausener, Dr. Erich; leader of the German Catholic Action movement.
46. Koch, Hans Karl; SA leader in Koblenz.
47. Koch; SA Oberführer in Breslau.
48. Köppel, Ewald; resident in Landeshut.
49. Kopp; SA brigade leader in Berlin.
51. Krausser, Ritter von; SA Staff Obergruppenführer.
52. Kunze; SA leader in Berlin.
53. Laemmermann; SA leader in Plauen.
54. Lange; SA leader in Leobschütz.
55. Lasch; SA brigade leader in Weimar.
56. Lindemann, Dr.; resident in Glogau.
57. Litzmann, Hans; SA leader.
58. Loennicker; SA leader in Berlin.
59. Lossow, von; Reichswehr general in Bavaria.
60. Lütgebrune, Dr.; lawyer, member of SA.
61. Maerker; SA leader in Brandenburg.
62. Mahrenschchild, von; SA adjutant to Karl Ernst.
63. Marcus; SA leader in Berlin.
64. Marriaux, Dr.
65. Martin; SA leader in Dresden.
67. Max; Ernst Röhm's chauffeur.
68. May; SA leader in Austria.
69. Mede, von; SA brigade leader and press chief in Munich.
70. Morsbach, Dr.; leader of the student exchange service in Berlin.
71. Moulin-Eckardt, Graf du; SA Group leader.
72. Muhlert, Pfarrer; member of Munich's Catholic Action.
73. Muhsam, Erich; imprisoned at Oranienburg.
74. Müldeuer, Major von; former adjutant to the Crown Prince.
75. Oppenheim, Junior; resident in Gunzenhausen.
76. Oppenheim, Senior; resident in Gunzenhausen.
77. Overhau; SA leader in Berlin.

78. Pabst, Major.

79. Pfeffer, Hauptmann von.

80. Probst, Adalbert; leader of the Catholic Youth movement in the Rhineland.

81. Ramshorn; SA brigade leader in Gleiwitz.

82. Rechberg, Arnold.

83. Redwitz, Baron.

84. Reh, Wilhelm; resident in Landeshut.

85. Reiner; SA Group leader and adjutant to Ernst Rohm.

86. Röhm, Ernst; Chief of Staff of the SA.

87. Rossbach, Oberleutnant; SA leader.

88. Sack, Dr.; alleged to have Communist connections.

89. Sander; SA Staff leader.

90. Sanders; SA brigade leader and press chief in Berlin.

91. Schäffer, Dr.; Bavarian finance minister.

92. Scheringer, Richard; Reichswehr lieutenant.

93. Schiftan; resident in Landeshut.

94. Schleicher, Elisabeth von; wife of General von Schleicher.

95. Schleicher, General Kurt von; former Chancellor.

96. Schmidt, Wilhelm; SA Group leader in Munich.

97. Schmidt, Dr. Willi; music critic for the Münchner Neuesten Nachrichten.
98. Schmidt; SA adjutant to Edmund Heines.

99. Schneidhuber, August; SA Obergruppenführer in Munich.

100. Schotte, Dr. Walter; author and publisher of Prussian Yearbook.

101. Schragmüller; SA brigade leader in Magdeburg.

102. Schreiber; SA leader in Breslau.

103. Schritan, Dr.; resident in Landeshut.

104. Schröder; SA Standard leader in Saxony.

105. Schröder; SA leader in Dresden.

106. Schwarz; SA Oberführer in Berlin.

107. Schweikardt; SA leader in Berlin.

108. Seisser, von; former chief of police in Munich.

109. Spreti, Graf; SA Standard leader in Munich.

110. Stadler, Dr.; former general plenipotentiary of the House of Ullstein.

111. Stein, Leo; resident in Berlin.

112. Stempfle, Professor; journalist, edited Mein Kampf.

113. Stieler; SA leader in Berlin.

114. Strasser, Gregor; retired Nazi leader.

115. Stützel, Dr.; former Interior Minister of Bavaria.


117. Uhl; SA Staff leader.

118. Villarn, Dr.; SA doctor in Berlin.
119. Voss, Dr.; lawyer for Gregor Strasser.

120. Wechmar, von; SA brigade leader in Liegnitz.

121. Winkler; general secretary of the Catholic Union association.

122. Zehntner, Karl; owner of the inn, "Bratwurst-Glöckle."

123. (a) His head-waiter

124. (b) His steward

125. Zweig, Dr.; lawyer in Hirschberg.

126. Zweig, Frau Dr.; wife of Dr. Zweig.
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