(A) SEIZURE OF POWER AND *GLEICHSCHALTUNG*, 1933–5

1

The Creation of Totalitarian Dictatorship

When Hitler was appointed Chancellor on 30 January 1933 by President von Hindenburg, he became head of a coalition government of 'national concentration', in which conservatives seemed clearly to predominate. Apart from Hitler there were at the outset only two Nazis in the Cabinet. Wilhelm Frick became Minister of the Interior; Hermann Göring was at first Minister without Portfolio and on 28 April became Minister of Aviation. Göring also took over the Prussian Ministry of the Interior on an acting basis, and on 10 April became Prime Minister of Prussia, the largest state in the Reich. Nazi membership of the Cabinet was increased by one when Joseph Goebbels, on 13 March, became head of the newly created Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, but to the outward eye this scarcely affected the balance of power. For, in addition to what appeared to be the strong men of the government – Hugenberg, Minister for the Economy and Agriculture, and von Papen, Vice-Chancellor and Reich Commissar for Prussia – the government contained four more members of Papen's 'Cabinet of barons': von Neurath, the Foreign Minister, Count Schwerin von Krosigk, Minister of Finance, Gürtner, Minister of Justice, and Freiherr von Eltz-Rübenach, Minister of Posts and Communications. Together with von Blomberg, the Army Minister, and Seldte, the Stahlhelm leader who became Minister for Labour, these members of the 'old guard' were expected to keep the Nazis under control and ensure conservative policies. Papen's idea of taming Hitler seemed to have succeeded. 'We have roped him in' (*wir haben ihn uns engagiert*). In these terms von Papen dismissed conservative misgivings on the subject of Hitler and Nazism, and his self-confident assessment was accepted by most observers at home and abroad. 'In two months we'll have pushed Hitler into a corner, and he can squeal to his heart's content.'

Despite Papen's self-congratulation the Nazi leader, on the very day of the take-over and immediately before the new government was sworn in by Hindenburg, had won a decisive victory over his conservative ministers and especially Hugenberg, the leader of the German National People's Party

(DNVP). Hitler thus showed from the outset that he was by no means a puppet of powerful army and landowning circles, the bureaucracy and big business. Contrary to an agreement reached between the Nazis and the Nationalists during the negotiations which led to the coalition, after the new government was formed Hitler demanded the right to dissolve the Reichstag elected in the previous November and to hold fresh elections. These, as Hugenberg rightly feared, were unlikely to improve the position of the DNVP; in any case Hugenberg was opposed on principle to further elections and wished to see an extension of presidential power. Since the last election the Nazis and the Nationalists together controlled over 42 per cent of Reichstag votes, while the Centre (Catholic) Party held out hope that they would tolerate the new government if not actively support it. There was thus no compelling reason for new elections, but Hitler demanded them in the hope of using government power to gain a clear majority. He finally gained his point with Hugenberg, as otherwise the coalition seemed in danger, and the aged von Hindenburg, who stood ready to effect the ceremonial transfer of power, could not, it was felt, be kept waiting any longer.

The Reichstag was dissolved on 1 February 1933, two days after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. During the election campaign which lasted till the country went to the polls on 5 March, Nazi terrorist tactics, endorsed by the power of the state, were openly exercised against all political opponents, especially communists and social democrats. There now set in a progressive seizure of absolute power, in which it was often difficult to distinguish terroristic from legal measures. A decisive factor was that, in accordance with the modern recipe for a totalitarian *coup d'état*, the Nazis controlled the Ministry of the Interior, and hence the police power, in the Reich as a whole and also in Prussia. Göring, as head of the Prussian police apparatus, even created an auxiliary police force numbering 50,000, of whom 40,000 belonged to the SA or the SS. In this way police powers were conferred on strong-arm Nazi gangs. Then, in a notorious order of 17 February 1933, Göring instructed the Prussian police to 'make free (*fleissig*) use of firearms' (Hofer and Michaelis, 1965).

From the beginning of February onwards the new rulers used emergency decrees based on Article 48 of the Weimar constitution to restrict the activity of other parties, to limit press freedom and to ensure the docility of the civil service by means of purges. The process of reducing the bureaucracy to subservience was accomplished by party interference and by prudent self-adaptation on the part of civil servants. The law of 7 April 1933 'for the restoration of the professional civil service' gave the party and state full powers over officials who were in any way objectionable: it provided for the more or less arbitrary dismissal of any whose professional competence was in doubt, who were of 'non-Aryan' descent, or whose record suggested that they might not be prepared to act 'single-mindedly and at all times' in the interests of the national state.

However, it was after the Reichstag fire of 27 February 1933 that Hitler took his most decisive step towards practically unlimited power. The disputed

question of who caused the fire (cf. Part Two, Section 4, p. 137 below, and works in the bibliography by W. Hofer and others, 1972 and 1976. H. Mommsen, 1972a, and Tobias, 1964) is not of prime importance in this connection: the main point is the use made of it by the Nazis to seize and consolidate their power. On the day after the fire, which profoundly shocked the general public, von Hindenburg on the advice of the Cabinet issued a 'decree for the protection of the people and state' which in effect abolished the basic political rights conferred by the Weimar constitution, although this remained theoretically in force throughout the twelve years of Nazi rule. The decree created a permanent state of emergency and thus gave a cloak of legality to the persecution and terrorisation of the regime's political opponents.

The last 'semi-free' election in Germany took place in this climate of legalised insecurity and open terrorism, exercised in the first instance primarily against the Communist Party (KPD). The two parties of the left, the communists and the social democrats (SPD), were already prevented from taking part on a regular footing. Yet even in these elections, which were illegal by the standards of European parliamentary democracy, the Nazis gained only 43.9 per cent of votes. Thus the party was never returned to power by a majority of the German people. As for the plebiscites held during the Third Reich, which regularly acclaimed the Führer with over 90 per cent of 'Yeses', these took place under the political and psychological conditions of a well-advanced or firmly established totalitarian dictatorship, in which such percentages are all in the day's work.

The coalition of the Nazis and nationalists obtained 51.9 per cent of votes in the election of 5 March 1933, and in accordance with the constitution it could thus have governed with the approval of the Reichstag. However, on 21 March Hindenburg issued a decree supplementing that of 28 February and entitled 'law for the repelling of treacherous attacks against the government of national recovery'; and on 23 March Hitler proposed an 'Enabling Law' designed to terminate once and for all the effective authority of parliament and the constitutional organs of control. The new measure, which required a two-thirds majority of the Reichstag, was to confer on the government for four years the right to enact laws without requiring the consent of the Reichstag or the Reichsrat (Senate). The parties ranging from the Nationalists to the Catholic Centre and the other bourgeois groups were thus confronted with the decision whether to abdicate their own powers. With much hesitation they finally acquiesced in what they regarded as inevitable, believing that their only hope of influencing the government and avoiding worse evils lay in a policy of consent and co-operation, not of resistance. They hoped by their conduct to keep the government within the bounds of legality and thus influence the application of the Enabling Law; by adapting themselves they expected to save their own party apparatus and avoid personal damage to their leaders, officials and members. These hopes sprang from ways of thinking based on the concept of the *Rechtsstaat* (rule of law), which in principle had not been violated even by the

authoritarian Cabinets of Brüning, von Papen and von Schleicher, but which was sharply at variance with the practice of the Nazi dictatorship. The non-Nazi parties lacked the experience to realise that with a totalitarian regime there could be no question of helping to frame events, but only of resistance or subjection. Only the SPD under its chairman Otto Wels courageously voted against the Enabling Law, which was finally passed by the requisite two-thirds majority.

The social democrats' 'No' was seen by conservatives and the bourgeoisie as confirmation that under Nazi leadership they themselves were on the right side of the front uniting all non-Marxist forces. The adversary was clearly on the political left; and on 21 March, two days before the vote on the Enabling Law, this seemed to be confirmed by a major demonstration of unity between Hitler's new Germany and time-honoured Prussian traditions. At a solemn ceremony in the Garrison Church at Potsdam, Chancellor Adolf Hitler paid homage to the aged President, Field Marshal von Hindenburg, who was revered as a symbolic figure by the majority of Germans. The reconciliation of old Prussia with the new movement seemed complete; conservative and bourgeois Germany identified with the Chancellor's party, not suspecting that the scene had been planned and stage-managed by Goebbels as a 'sentimental comedy' with the object of emphasising Hitler's seriousness and lulling the apprehensions of his right-wing associates.

Hitler had long ceased to be what the conservative 'gentlemen riders' had intended, namely, a faithful steed that would carry them swiftly to their objective. By now the position was reversed, though the fact was not yet obvious in the 'dual state' (Fraenkel, 1941) that was coming into being. For the majority of citizens life continued in a normal fashion, often with less disturbance than in the stormy last days of the Republic. The price paid for peace and quiet was unduly high, however, since it meant law giving place to terror in the political sphere. The Nazis began to honeycomb society with party associations and institutions: at the outset these competed with existing bodies, but by degrees they got the upper hand and either absorbed or displaced them. Such bodies as the SA and SS, the Hitler Youth and women's organisation, the Nazi associations of students, teachers and professors, doctors, civil servants, technicians, and so on, all served the purpose of totalitarian organisation and party control of the German people. All this regimentation gave an impression of order which had long been lacking. The nation marched steadily and in unison towards dictatorship; the new system did away with the inconveniences and incalculability of parliamentary procedure, and for this reason alone many Germans found in it something familiar and not unwelcome.

In the same way the boycott of Jews on 1 April 1933, directed *inter alia* against Jewish shops, appealed to feelings of antipathy that had long existed in Germany as elsewhere in Europe and which might be classed as 'normal anti-Semitism'; it was not hard to fan such feelings into something stronger. In the last years of the Weimar Republic Nazi propaganda had been fairly restrained in its anti-

Semitism and had preferred to stress the battle against communism as more likely to win conservative votes; but now the anti-Semitic component of Hitler's philosophy and of the Nazi state came to the fore. The 'scapegoat' aspect of racial agitation was calculated to have a rallying effect on the SA, whose restless and discontented members were seeking to discover their proper role in Hitler's state, and in addition it reflected the essence of Nazi thinking and the Führer's radical objectives. The regime began to introduce 'eugenic' measures immediately after the seizure of power, and the 'Nuremberg Laws' of 15 September 1935, together with the Law on German Citizenship and Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, degraded the Jewish population to the rank of second-class citizens and subjected them to discrimination and deprivation of rights. In these ways Hitler's racial policy became manifest at a fairly early stage. This policy, with the demand for the destruction of 'useless lives' and for the breeding of a biologically superior race, defined the historic task and ideological purpose, in short the motive force of Nazism in its negative aspect. The anti-Jewish measures aroused some uneasiness, but anti-Semitism also commanded a degree of popular support.

Political emigration from Germany began at this time, as did the witch-hunt against disaffected intellectuals, writers and academics: this reached a first peak in the public 'burning of un-German literature' organised by Goebbels and carried out by Nazi student leaders in the Berlin Opernplatz on 10 May 1933. This too was accepted by the general public, and the loss it represented to the nation's intellectual life was hardly appreciated at the time. Cultural life was largely steered into Nazi channels by the Reich Chamber of Culture, set up by Goebbels for the purpose on 22 September 1933.

Alarm at the new rulers' increasingly evident claim to a monopoly position was felt in conservative circles when the *Gleichschaltung* ('co-ordination') of the German component states (*Länder*) was carried out shortly after the take-over, between 31 March and 7 April 1933. The Nazis played on anti-particularist feelings and represented their action as a step towards unifying the Reich. No notice was taken of the fact that the independence of the *Länder* was destroyed in favour of a brand of particularism run mad, namely, the duality of state and party in Germany as a whole. This was a distinguishing feature of Hitler's dictatorship, as was 'what appears a curious lack of structure in the Nazi system of command' (Hofer and Michaelis, 1965). The confusion of functions among a multitude of mutually hostile authorities made it necessary and possible for the Führer to take decisions in every case of dispute, and can be regarded as a foundation of his power. The *Länder*, and not least Prime Minister Held of Bavaria, offered resistance to the law of 31 March 1933 'for the co-ordination of the *Länder* with the Reich'; but in the last resort this resistance was in vain, because their police powers had been invaded by the Nazis during the election campaign and they had thus already lost much of their independence. *Gleichschaltung* was soon to be extended to the local level in the Municipal

Ordinance of 30 January 1935. For the present it took the form of appointing Reich Governors for each *Land* under the law of 7 April 1933. This was followed on 30 January 1934 by the Law for the Reorganisation of the Reich, and on 14 February 1934 by the abolition of the Reichsrat.

While the *Gleichschaltung* of the *Länder* may have had a sobering effect on many of Hitler's conservative allies, the traditional ruling class and the bourgeoisie applauded the measures of 2 May against trade unions, which marked a further decisive step towards totalitarian dictatorship. The Nazi Party evidently feared the power of the unions, which they had not been able to overcome in the works council elections held in March 1933. Accordingly they avoided open confrontation with the ADGB (the German TUC) and organised labour, and resorted to a double strategy alternating friendly gestures with persecution and violence. May Day was proclaimed a holiday in honour of national labour, with huge mass demonstrations organised in co-operation with the unions. Like the non-Nazi parties, the ADGB under its chairman Leipart, notwithstanding encroachments by the SA against his members, chose to conform in order to survive and above all to save the organisational structure of the unions. Accordingly the executive of the free unions declared that it would keep entirely out of politics and confine itself to the social sphere, 'whatever the nature of the state regime'. Its leaders hoped that in return for this the Nazis would permit the existence of a unified trade union system. On 1 May this expectation seemed justified, but it proved to be an illusion on the following day, when, in accordance with a prearranged plan, union premises were occupied by force and leading officials were arrested. The unions were then incorporated, not into the appropriate party organisation – the *Betriebszellenorganisation* – which already existed, but into the German Labour Front (DAF), founded on 10 May and headed by Robert Ley, chief of staff of the political organisation of the Nazi Party. After its reorganisation in November 1933 the DAF became in practice, though not in law, a compulsory association of employers, clerical and manual workers, in short 'all persons involved in working life irrespective of their economic and social status' (proclamation of 27 November 1933). With the destruction of the unions, the power of employers and employees to negotiate salary and wage rates also came to an end. This function henceforth belonged to a new institution, the Public Trustees of Labour (*Treuhänder der Arbeit*), set up under a law of 19 May 1933.

This development is clear evidence of the fact that, although the Third Reich was friendly to employers, it is not to be regarded simply or mainly as an instrument of counter-revolution. In the first place, it is impossible to overlook certain features of Nazi policy tending towards social equality and the elimination of class differences: these gave the regime a political complexion of its own, indicating that it was not primarily pro-employer or anti-worker. Secondly, from 1933 onwards the state and party began to display their power on the shop-floor *vis-à-vis* employers as well as workers. For, despite the regime's bias towards

employers in wage disputes, it could not be overlooked that the boss's traditional position of 'master in his own house' was in some ways more restricted by the party's new measures than it had been by the unions in Republican days. These measures included the appointment of 'labour trustees', protection against dismissal, paid holidays and the obligation to provide increased welfare benefits. In addition the leisure organisation *Kraft durch Freude* (KdF: Strength through Joy), set up under the DAF on 27 November 1933, brought innovations particularly in respect of holidays and the use of leisure-time by the masses, including the system of saving to buy a 'people's car' (*Volkswagen*). These measures were felt to be progressive and were calculated to excite popular gratitude. They also had to some extent an egalitarian effect, being designed to eliminate class differences in the 'national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*) of the Third Reich; a similar purpose was served by the State Labour Service introduced on 26 June 1935, which was compulsory for all young people. Such measures went beyond politics in the direction of economic and social reform, the modernising effect of which was not fully visible until later, but which meanwhile helped the regime to dominate all sections of the population and to further its aims in regard to war, expansion and racial policy.

At the same time it could not be overlooked that employers were considerably favoured by Hitler's economic policy, which was largely the work of Hjalmar Schacht, president of the Reichsbank from 17 March 1933, and from 30 July 1934 also Reich Economic Minister and Minister for the Prussian Economy. Wages, for instance, were frozen at the level which prevailed during the world-wide slump of 1932. This was not much altered in the second half of the decade, when skilled workers became scarce and a 'grey market' came into existence, with employers evading the ban on wage increases so as to attract and keep employees by means of covert rewards and indirect grants.

After the Nazi take-over the German economic situation on the whole improved, and unemployment fell. As the world economy gradually recovered, the new regime vigorously pursued work-providing schemes that had been begun under previous governments. The policy of creating employment was accompanied by a call to combat the 'folly of rationalisation' and to dispense with 'mechanical aids'. Laws of 1 June and 21 September 1933 for the reduction of unemployment, loans to young couples, a 'repair and maintenance programme' with tax advantages for private and commercial building, and the building of the first Reich autobahn under a law of 27 June 1933 – all these paved the way for the reduction of unemployment, as did 'voluntary' labour service, the employment of those out of work as rural labourers for a low wage, or their engagement in 'badly paid relief works' (Hofer and Michaelis, 1965). Other factors were compulsory military service, introduced on 16 March 1935, Reich labour service (also compulsory) from 26 June 1935, and the economic effects of rearmament after the turn of the year 1933/4. As a result of all this, between January and July 1933 the total of those out of work fell by over a million to less than 5 million,

after which it sank steadily and rapidly to 1 million in the autumn of 1936. At all times it was a combination of favours and terrorism, the stick and the carrot, that won the regime popular support and accounted for its dynamic progress.

While the trade unions had been forcibly incorporated in the DAF, associations representing farmers' interests were absorbed into the Reich Food Corporation (*Reichsnährstand*) set up by a law of 13 September 1933. This was operated at the consumer's expense, in the interest of achieving autarky in foodstuffs and because imports were hampered by lack of foreign exchange. In order to increase agricultural production as fast as possible, the regime abandoned its plan to carve up the large estates. Richard Walter Darré, the Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture and Prussian Minister of Agriculture, preached the Nazi agrarian philosophy of 'blood and soil' and protection of the peasantry as the 'life-source of the Nordic race'. Under the Hereditary Farms Act of 29 September 1933 farms of more than 7·5 hectares (18·5 acres) and, as a rule, less than 125 hectares (308·5 acres) were declared 'hereditary' provided the owner could furnish evidence of 'racial purity' as far back as 1 January 1800. They were thus 'in principle inalienable and exempt from encumbrance' and could not be partitioned on the owner's death; at the same time they were sheltered from the effects of commercialisation. But the law 'was often applied less rigorously than it might have been' (Farquharson, 1976).

Unlike the workers and rural labourers, heavy industry was at first exempt from party interference. Although the party's ideology was a middle-class one, it refrained for the time being from tampering with the big concerns, chain-stores and banks which threatened the existence of an independent middle class. On the contrary, such enterprises continued to develop and concentrate under the Third Reich, and for the present escaped the *Gleichschaltung* applied in other fields. The Reich Association of German Industry changed its name on 19 June 1933 to Reich Corporation (*Reichsstand*) of German Industry in deference to the 'corporative' ideology of the Third Reich, which in fact was largely confined to propaganda, but it remained relatively independent under the leadership of Krupp von Bohlen and Halbach. This situation was unaffected by the law of 27 February 1934 'on preparing the organic structure of the German economy' – with the basic object of making the economy substantially more dependent on the state – or the reorganisation of industrial associations in the Reich Chamber of Industry (*Reichsgruppe Industrie*) which also took place in 1934. The Third Reich needed the co-operation of big business, which was still a major factor in the land, and allowed it a certain autonomy even after 1936, which year marked a turning-point in the relationship between the economy and politics. After that time the primacy of politics over economic interests was made clear, and both employers and employees were impartially deprived of their rights in the spirit of 'full Fascism' (Schweitzer, 1965).

At the outset Hitler was acutely dependent on the voluntary co-operation of both industry and the army in order to start effecting his ambitious and utopian

aims in the sphere of racial and foreign policy. In the first years after the take-over the 'economic dictator' Schacht made rearmament possible by risky methods of procuring credit, the so-called *Mefo-Wechsel*. These were bills which could be drawn by armament manufacturers on a Metal Research Company (*Metall-Forschungs-GmbH*), founded for the purpose with a modest capital, in return for supplies to the state; the latter guaranteed the bills *vis-à-vis* the Reichsbank, which was obliged to discount them. Schacht mistakenly believed that he could discontinue the process at a stroke when the economy had recovered sufficiently and it was necessary to effect a consolidation of social policy. He realised too late that Hitler's ideas on rearmament, economics and politics were basically different from his own, and that the Führer had no notion of stopping rearmament once the economy had revived and society was once more on an even keel. On the contrary he wanted to go on arming in order to make war, wiping out debts by old-fashioned methods of plunder, and finally to destroy the existing social order both nationally and internationally. Schacht did not yet realise that he was playing Hitler's game. His 'new plan', based on the 'decree on commercial exchanges' dated 4 September 1934 and in force from 24 September, provided essentially for the bilateralisation of foreign trade; it involved quotas and the planning of imports according to a 'scale of national urgency' (H. Flaig) and promoted exports on a barter and compensation basis. The plan introduced an export offensive which served the purpose of promoting social consolidation at home; its author accepted the risk of conflict, for example, with the USA in areas such as South-East Europe and Latin America, where economic ambitions overlapped. In general it represented a more realistic political alternative to Hitler's bellicose and ideological aims. The Third Reich, as far as its relations with big business were concerned, was still in a state of 'partial fascism' (Schweitzer, 1965). Hitler had no interest in embarking on a collision course with the powerful industrialists: his interests in part coincided with theirs, and by co-operating in their sphere the conservatives helped the regime to increase its power and thus worked for their own overthrow. Although the state regulated the competence of the various 'Reich industrial groups' – for example, by the system of supervision and auditing in respect of allocations of foreign currency and raw materials, developed from summer 1934 onwards, and also by price control – and although it could always use as a threat the charge of industrial sabotage, none the less it seemed that politics and industry, the party and big business, which had only come together during the last weeks of the moribund Weimar Republic, were in general on pretty good terms. It was by no means the case, however, that 'capital' and big business played a decisive part in bringing Hitler to power. They did not support him with funds to any great extent until after the take-over, when the March elections had to be financed. At that time the big industrialists contributed 3 million Reichsmark to Hitler's movement and the other pro-government parties. This was when the Nazi Party had already become the decisive political factor; moreover, after the Führer had

addressed a select circle of business representatives in the palace of the Reichstag president, Göring had assured a meeting of industrialists and financiers on 20 February that the coming election would be the last for ten or even a hundred years. By contrast, at the end of the Weimar Republic the industrialists, while certainly not friendly to the dying regime, gave their support not to the Nazis but to von Papen's model of a 'new state', and in general were ready to come to terms with any political force that was not committed to the abolition of private property.

Against the background of a totalitarian dictatorship that already existed in essential respects, there followed in June and July 1933 the 'self-*Gleichschaltung*' of the political parties, which lost heart and capitulated to Nazi power and Nazi terror. After the SPD was banned on 22 June 1933 the Catholic Centre, the last of the democratic parties, on 5 July yielded to the monopolistic claim of what the new rulers had already, on 14 April, declared to be a 'one-party state'. According to a view which some dispute (Scholder, 1977), an important reason for the surrender was the prospect of the Concordat of 20 July 1933, which seemed to offer the Catholic church in Germany favourable terms and a legal basis for resistance to the Third Reich.

While the Catholic church could present a united front to the Nazi state, among the Protestants there was open conflict between those who represented older and newer attitudes: liberal theology and religion-based socialism on the one hand, and on the other the 'Evangelical National Socialists' who styled themselves 'German Christians'. The conflict was in full swing when, on 25 April 1933, Hitler publicly endorsed the latter movement and appointed Ludwig Müller, an army chaplain for the Königsberg area, as his 'plenipotentiary for the affairs of the Evangelical churches'. A conflict then arose over the post of bishop for the proposed new 'Reich church': the German Christians supported Müller and announced his appointment in opposition to Pastor Fritz von Bodelschwingh. Among other acts of interference in church matters by the state and party, the Nazi Party gave massive support to the German Christians in the campaign preceding the church elections on 23 July 1933. The national synod which was elected as a result duly appointed Müller Reich bishop on 27 September. This inaugurated a contest which was to last as long as the Third Reich. Resistance to the new authorities and the German Christians was organised by the Pastors' Emergency League founded at Berlin/Dahlem in September 1933 by Martin Niemöller, and by the Confessing church which developed from it and which first met as a body at Ulm on 22 April 1934. A protest by the Synod of Barmen (29–31 May 1934) was also of importance in the development of the dispute. This was the first occasion on which voices of opposition were raised by conservative and bourgeois Germany, which – on a basis of injured interests and disregarded knowledge – complemented and varied the resistance of the communists, which was essentially ideological. But it must be recognised that these protests were not on the whole very successful: cf., for example, Papen's Marburg speech of 17 June 1934.

After Hitler and Frick had, on several occasions from July 1933 onwards, declared the revolution to be at an end, the Führer still had to cope with a challenge from within his own movement. It was becoming more and more urgent to decide what was to be done with the SA (*Sturmabteilung*: Storm Detachment), the strong-arm force which, in its devotion to the Führer, had played an important part in destroying the Weimar Republic, fighting political opponents in the streets and enabling Hitler to seize power. It now claimed its reward, and from its ranks was heard a half-articulate cry for a second, social revolution, reflecting the tradition of the 'left-wing' National Socialists who had left the party or been expelled from it in 1930. The SA leaders, especially the chief of staff Ernst Röhm, wanted to command a people's militia to be created by merging the conservative army with the revolutionary SA, in such a way that the 'grey rock' of the *Reichswehr* would be submerged by the 'brown flood' of Nazi troops. The corps of officers, headed by von Blomberg, naturally viewed this demand with suspicion and hostility. Hitler, who wanted Germany to be ready for war as soon as possible, preferred to ally himself with the conservative officers against the social romanticism of the SA. Röhm's alleged intention to carry out a putsch was used as a pretext to remove the SA leaders with the army's help, to reward the latter and consolidate Hitler's power. The conservatives who desired to see an end to the revolution had their wish; the military were relieved of a troublesome rival institution, whose place in the Nazi scheme of things was henceforth taken by the SS (*Schutzstaffel*: Defence Echelon). This body was not only Hitler's praetorian guard but increasingly became the ideological spearhead and prime defender of Nazi racial policy. Within a year of Hitler's accession to power the SS under Himmler had already wrested control of the political police from the SA in all the constituent German states. In Prussia, where Göring created the Secret State Police (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, Gestapo) on 24 April 1933 as an instrument of state terrorism, one of its duties being to establish concentration camps, the SS also succeeded in gaining decisive control over this body. Göring, who was appointed head of the Gestapo by a law of 30 November 1933, was obliged in April 1934 to accept Himmler as deputy to himself, and the latter appointed Heydrich, his subordinate in the SS, to head the Gestapo.

The army's role as sole defender of the nation was safeguarded by the elimination of Röhm. In return, the officer corps raised no objection to the arbitrary murders of opponents of the regime which were perpetrated at the same time as the 'Röhm putsch', though the henchmen of Göring and Himmler included among their victims two generals, von Schleicher and von Bredow. Altogether the effect of the putsch was to strengthen the Reichswehr outwardly but to leave it in a highly demoralised state.

Among those murdered in addition to the SA leaders were conservative opponents and critics of the regime such as Edgar Jung and von Bose – two of von Papen's closest collaborators; also Gustav von Kahr, the former state

commissioner in Bavaria, and Erich Klausener, head of Catholic Action in Berlin. Hitler's claim that he had the SA leaders shot because homosexuality had been rife among them was a threadbare excuse to cover a political showdown. However, few members of the public realised this, and political leaders including von Papen commended Hitler's action. Carl Schmitt, then the leading German expert on public law, justified it in an article entitled 'The Führer defends the right': this maintained that judicial power belonged to the 'true leader' of the nation and that in emergency he was entitled and bound to enforce the law in his capacity as supreme judge. In this way the dictator's will was given force of law, and Hitler's power was henceforth accepted as being essentially unrestricted.

Shortly afterwards, on 2 August 1934, Hindenburg died and Hitler assumed in his own person the offices of both President and Chancellor. The take-over of power was thus complete: no institution or personality any longer offered any competition to him in practical or prestige terms. On the same day the Reichswehr was made to take an oath of loyalty to Hitler personally: this was arranged by the zealous War Minister von Blomberg, to ensure Hitler's favour towards the army and himself. It was the oath of loyalty to the Führer and Chancellor, instead of to the country or the constitution, which was to cause such heavy conflicts of conscience to the officers who later took part in the resistance to Hitler. In summer 1934, however, his regime seemed to be consolidated, his dictatorship over Germany was established and the 'brown revolution' of the Nazis followed its course within what were still largely traditional forms. In this way the profile of the Third Reich was equally made up of tradition and revolution, and the same may be said of the beginnings of Hitler's foreign policy.