

The Night of the Long Knives



Aim

To explain how Hitler become dictator

RECAP



30th January 1933

Hitler becomes
Chancellor of
Germany

4th February 1933

Passes decree to allow
“free and peaceful
elections” on 5th March



22nd February 1933

Goering employs 50,000 SA
as police to ensure “free and
peaceful” elections



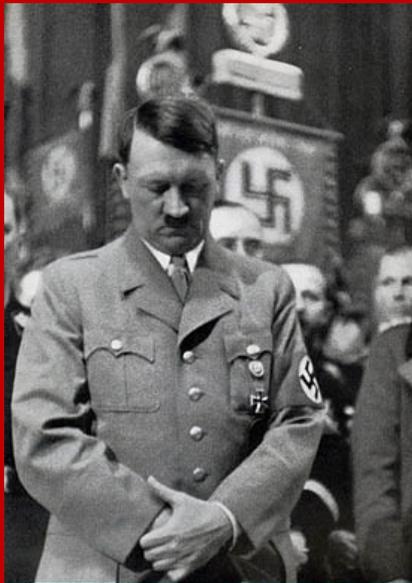
27th February 1933

Reichstag Fire



28th February 1933

“A Decree for the Protection of
the People and the State”



23rd March 1933

Enabling Law



- Hitler had already used the Reichstag Fire to get rid of the communists
- June 1933: banned the Social Democrat Party
- Then banned ALL other parties
- July 1933: Law Against the Formation of New Parties
- July 1933: banned all Trade Unions
- Nazis now had ALL government jobs

WITH ALL POLITICAL OPPOSITION GONE, CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER GROUP THAT MIGHT BE A THREAT?

Supporting the SA

Reasons for:

1. Röhm was an old friend of Hitler.
2. The SA had fought for Hitler in the 1923 Munich Putsch and in later fights against the Communists.
3. They were committed Nazis.
4. The SA had grown to over 2,500,000 men – it was much larger than the army if it came to a fight.



Reasons against:

1. The SA was beginning to get out of hand. It was interfering in the running of the country and the law courts.
2. It disapproved of some of the Nazi leaders.
3. If Hitler used the SA to control the army, then he would have to go along with their other demands.
4. Hitler did not agree with many of the SA's anti-capitalist policies and working-class aims.



Supporting the army

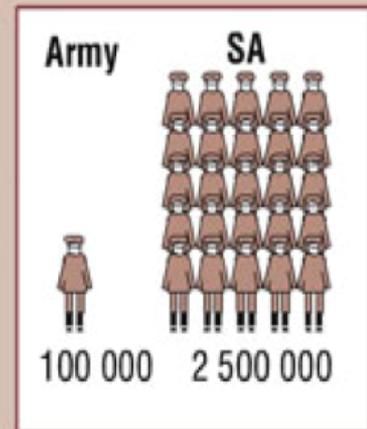
Reasons for:

1. The army was well trained, organised and disciplined.
2. It was the only organisation which had the power to remove Hitler.
3. It had the support of big business and conservatives.
4. An efficient army was needed for Hitler to retake the land lost in the Treaty of Versailles.



Reasons against:

1. The army was small – it had only 100,000 men.
2. How loyal the army would be to Hitler was unknown.
3. Some of the generals disliked Hitler and the Nazis.





The S.S. (Schutzstaffel)



- Hitler's personal bodyguard
- Wore an all black uniform
- Had to be a good 'Aryan' type to join
- Led by Heinrich Himmler
- Himmler arranged the Night of the Long Knives, the SS killed the SA leaders
- During WWII the SS Death Head units were in charge of the concentration camps
- In June 1944, the SS had over 800 000 members



The S.A. (Sturmabteilung)



- Often called stormtroopers or brownshirts
- Hitler's personal army used to disrupt political meetings and protect him from revenge attacks
- Often members of Freikorps and had experience in stirring up violence
- Led by **Ernst Rohm** (an old friend of Hitler's) until the Night of the Long Knives
- Himmler claimed that Rohm was planning a coup against Hitler and he was arrested and shot
- After his death, the SA was taken over by Victor Lutze. The SA gradually lost its power to the SS.

Fact file

On 2nd October 1933, Rohm sent a letter to the Reichswehr (Army) that said:

"I regard the Reichswehr now only as a training school for the German people. The conduct of war ...in the future is the task of the SA.

Blomberg and Reichenau, with Goering and Himmler, began to plot against Rohm and the SA. Himmler asked Reinhard Heydrich to assemble a dossier on Rohm. Heydrich, who also feared him, invented evidence that suggested that Rohm had been paid 12 million marks by the French to overthrow Hitler.

Adolf Hitler had his own reasons for wanting Rohm removed. Powerful supporters of Hitler had been complaining about Roehm for some time. Generals were afraid that the SA, a force of over 3 million men, would take over the smaller German Army and Rohm would become its overall leader. Rich businessmen, who had funded the Nazi victory, were unhappy with Rohm's socialist views and his claims that the real revolution had still to take place. Many people in the Nazi party disapproved of the fact that Rohm and many other leaders of the SA were homosexuals



Ernst Rohm

Leader of the Sturmabteilung

Ernst Rohm, 1887-1934

A professional soldier with the rank of Captain in World War One. Joined the *Freikorps* after the War for excitement, and recruited Hitler to gather intelligence on the German Workers Party. Was impressed by Hitler's speaking skills and became his friend, both joining the Nazi Party.

Rohm helped form the SA (*SturmAbteilung*), and was jailed after the Munich Putsch. In 1925 he went to Bolivia in South America as a military instructor, not returning to Germany until Hitler called for him in 1930.

Rohm was a natural rebel with revolutionary views. He once commented that he held more in common with the Communists than with the middle classes. In his biography he wrote: "I am an immature and wicked man, war and unrest appeal to me more than middle class order".

He was a very heavy drinker and a homosexual. His often disgraceful behaviour upset many conservatives.

A Cabinet member in 1933, he disagreed with other Nazis with his belief that the SA should control the Wermacht (German Army)

Comments made by Ernst Rohm to Kurt Ludecke (January, 1934)

Hitler can't walk over me as he might have done a year ago; I've seen to that. Don't forget that I have three million men, with every key position in the hands of my own people, Hitler knows that I have friends in the Reichswehr (ARMY) you know! If Hitler is reasonable I shall settle the matter quietly; if he isn't I must be prepared to use force - not for my sake but for the sake of our revolution.

Hitler was aware that Rohm and the SA had the power to remove him as leader. Goering and Himmler played on this fear by constantly feeding him with new information on Rohm's proposed takeover. Their masterstroke was to claim that Gregor Strasser, whom Hitler hated, was part of the conspiracy against him.

Ernst Rohm, announcement to SA (May, 1934)

1934 will require all the energies of every SA fighter. I recommend, therefore, to begin organizing holiday in June. For a limited number of SA leaders and men, June, and for the majority of the SA, July, will be a period of complete relaxation in which they can recover their strength. I expect the SA to return on 1st August completely rested and refreshed in order to serve the nation and fatherland.



Gregor Strasser

”I am a man marked by death.

Whatever happens, mark what I say; from now on Germany is in the hands of an Austrian who is a congenital liar, a former officer who is a pervert and a clubfoot.

And I tell you, the last is the worst of them all. This is Satan in human form”



Hitler was paranoid that Rohm was trying to remove him, and he also believed the SA were too powerful at 3 million members. Most of the SA were upset with Hitler, feeling undervalued, but they loved Rohm.

Rohm also wanted more socialist policies, like taxing the rich and help the working classes.

Hitler, and others felt Rohm wanted to replace the German Army (Reichswehr) with the SA.

Himmler and Heydrich, leaders of the SS were also unhappy with Rohm's power and wanted their own SS to expand. They told Hitler that Rohm was plotting against him.

Hitler arranged a meeting with Rohm and other SA leaders on 30th June 1934. When they arrived, Hitler had them arrested and shot. Hitler burst into Rohm's room and screamed 'You are under arrest you pig!'



Other notable executions during the Night of the Long Knives:

- Gregor Strasser, the Socialist supporting Nazi who was removed from power at Bamberg in 1926
- Ex Chancellor, Von Schleicher (from The Deal)
- 400 people including 150 senior members of the SA
- Vice Chancellor Von Papen escaped by not being in his office when the SS arrived, but his staff and secretary were all shot, **it was clear that Von Papen no longer controlled Hitler**

“They salute with both hands now”



3rd July 1934, British Press

What is this source implying? W W W W W

“They salute with both hands now”

This (British) David Low cartoon from 3 July 1934 shows Hitler (with a smoking gun) and Goering (shown as Thor, the God of War) glowering at - not the traditional Nazi salute - but terrified SA men with their hands up. Some SA men already lie dead on the ground. The caption reads: 'They salute with both hands now'. Low was fiercely anti-Nazi, and portrays Hitler as a brazen murderer keeping his men in check by naked fear. Goebbels is shown as Hitler's poodle.

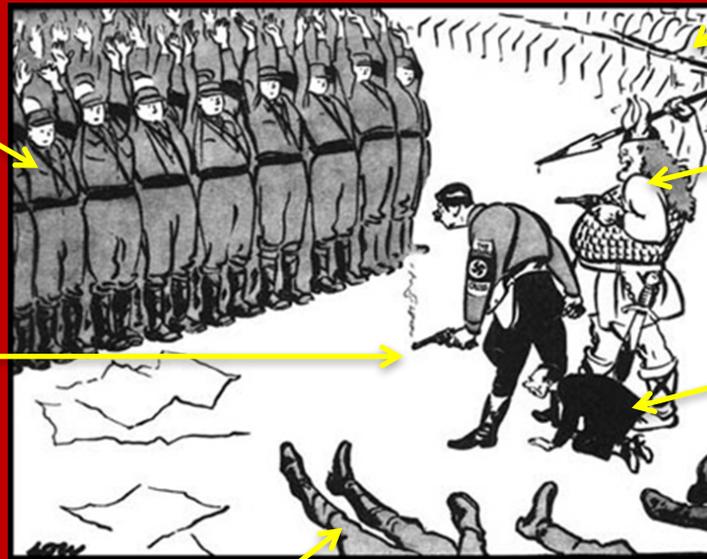
Stick in the cartoon and explain what is happening.



“They salute with both hands now”

The SA

German Army



Goering – God of War

Goebbels –
Hitler’s lap dog

Smoking Gun

3rd July 1934, British Press

Rohm & other SA leaders

Not positive to Nazis

4 days after NofTLK

On 2nd August 1934

Hindenburg died



Hitler made himself
President

And renamed himself
FUHRER (leader)

*I swear by God this holy oath, that I will render unconditional obedience to **Adolf Hitler**, Fuhrer of the German Reich and People, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready as a brave soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath.*

German Army Oath

