

THE S.A. IN THE EASTERN REGIONS OF GERMANY, 1925-1934

by Richard J. Bessel
St. Peter's College, Oxford

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Oxford

Hilary Term 1980

ABSTRACT

This is a study of political violence in the Nazi rise and seizure of power at local and regional levels. Its subject is the SA in the former eastern regions of Germany - East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia and the Border Province of Posen and West Prussia. The thesis is organised thematically, but within a rough chronological framework, and falls essentially into four parts. The first offers background, by examining social, economic and political conditions in eastern Germany during the Weimar Republic and then discussing the rise of the Nazi movement there. The second concerns the SA itself - its composition, the nature of membership in the organisation, its relationship to other components of the Nazi movement and to the Reichswehr. The third, the core of this study, is a detailed analysis of SA violence and terror, both in the rise of the Nazi movement and the seizure of power. Finally, the fourth deals with the SA after the seizure of power, the failure of the SA to find a new political role, and the purge in 1934.

In conclusion it is argued that the violence of the storm troopers, while ideally suited to attacking the Nazis' political opponents, eventually undermined the position of the SA. After the seizure of power, the SA no longer served a useful purpose for the Nazi leadership, and it fell easy victim to the SS during the purge.

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ABSTRACT

When Adolf Hitler became Reich Chancellor on 30 January 1933, he was the leader of the largest political movement ever seen in Germany. It was a movement which encompassed both a huge party organisation and paramilitary formations with combined memberships numbering in the hundreds of thousands. By 1933 the larger of these formations, the SA, had become the most powerful paramilitary organisation in Germany, and the ease with which the Nazis were able to crush their opponents, particularly those on the left, was due in large measure to the violent political activism of the storm troopers in the SA. This thesis is an attempt to investigate the processes by which the Nazi movement, through the use of political violence, grew and seized power at the local and regional levels, enabling Hitler to transform a minority position in a coalition government so quickly into the 'Third Reich'.

In recent years the Nazi Party has been studied in a number of areas. Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been paid to the SA and its role in the Nazi seizure of power, especially on a regional level. For this reason it was decided to focus upon the history of the Nazi storm troopers in a particular part of Germany, but one which had not been investigated closely by historians. While the Nazi rise in central and, especially, western parts of the country has been chronicled often, this is not true for the former eastern regions of Germany - East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia and the Border Province of Posen and West Prussia. Therefore it ap-

peared that a detailed, thematic study of the SA and the Nazi advance in eastern Germany would offer a good framework within which to examine the role of political violence in the Nazi seizure of power.

During the Weimar Republic, the eastern Prussian provinces formed a distinctly separate region of Germany. They were among the poorest and economically most backward areas of the country, and felt particularly acutely the effects of the defeat in the First World War. With the post-War settlements, territory was lost, borders threatened and economic life disrupted. The fragile structure of Weimar democracy showed even fewer signs of health in the eastern regions of Germany than it had in the rest of the country. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, when the economic crisis and the rise of Nazism combined to destroy the Weimar Republic, eastern Germany quickly succumbed to the rising tide of political radicalism. Except in the Upper Silesian industrial region, where the Communist Party had great support, and in the Catholic enclaves in East Prussia, the Border Province and Silesia, the Nazi movement attracted significantly more support in eastern Germany before 1933 than in the country as a whole.

The violence which marked the disintegration of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi seizure of power at the local and regional levels was largely the work of the SA. The SA carried the burden of Nazi propaganda activities - the protection of the endless succession of rallies, the sale of newspapers, the distribution of leaflets, the disruption of the meetings of political opponents, and, particularly in eastern Germany, the perpetration of acts of terror against the opposition - and

when the Nazis seized power in 1933, it was the SA which destroyed the trade union organisations, terrorised the political opposition and raised the swastika flag on city and town halls throughout Germany.

In this thesis the history of the SA in eastern Germany is approached thematically, but within a rough chronological framework. The thesis falls essentially into four parts. The first offers a background for the study of the SA, by examining the social, economic and political conditions in eastern Germany during the Weimar Republic and then discussing the rise of the Nazi movement in general in the eastern Prussian provinces. The second concerns the SA itself - its composition, the nature of membership in the organisation, its relationship to the other components of the Nazi movement and to the Reichswehr. The third, which is the core of this study, is a detailed analysis of SA violence and terror, both in the rise of the Nazi movement and in the seizure of power. Finally, the fourth deals with the SA after the seizure of power had been completed - with the failure of the SA to find a new political role and with the purge in 1934. Thus it is hoped to show, on the one hand, the nature and significance of political terror and violence in the rise of the Nazi movement and, on the other, the limitations of such violence for the establishment of a power base within the dictatorial political system which resulted.

In conclusion it is argued that the violence of the storm troopers, while it had been ideally suited to attacking, demoralising and suppressing the political opponents of the Nazis, eventually undermined the position of the SA. The SA

attracted to its ranks men who were incapable of calculating the political ramifications of their violent activities, except at the most immediate level. Their violence was not motivated by clear ideological concerns - that is, the storm troopers were not proletarian crusaders for 'socialism' struggling against a predominantly middle-class Nazi Party bureaucracy. Rather, the violence was the product of a frustrated and disillusioned younger generation, whose anger and hatred was channelled with devastating effect by the NSDAP against the Left, the Jews and other political targets of the Nazis. For these reasons the SA served no useful purpose to the Nazi leadership once its political opponents had been suppressed or driven underground; it became less and less popular with the population at large; and it offered an easy target for the SS in 1934, when its leadership was murdered and its ranks purged.

In 1933 the SA performed a key role in one of the most important political events in modern history, the Nazi seizure of power. In the eastern Prussian provinces, as elsewhere in Germany, the storm troopers in the SA paved the way for the Nazi dictatorship. Motivated by hatred, frustration and a crude Nazi ideology, the SA proved extremely effective in destroying the remnants of the Weimar political system. However, the storm troopers were unable to profit from their service to the Nazi leadership; it was the fate of the SA to remain a tool in the hands of the Nazi leaders, to be used when needed and to be discarded when no longer required. In the end, the only lasting achievement of the SA was to have brought to power a group of political gangsters whose policies led to the utter destruction of eastern Germany.

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PREFACE

This study is an investigation of the role of political violence in the rise of the Nazi movement and the seizure of power. It is based on research into events at local and regional levels in the former eastern Prussian provinces. Thus the Nazi movement in some regions may be dealt with more closely than in others. This is due partly to the differential availability of source material, and partly to the fact that material has been chosen more to illuminate points about the general theme of the study than to maintain a balance among the various provinces discussed.

The materials on which this work is based are largely the records of regional police authorities and of the Nazi Party itself, to be found in national and regional archives in Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany. Due to the recent history of the regions discussed, which now form parts of the German Democratic Republic, Poland and the Soviet Union, source material has been scattered widely and much was destroyed during the Second World War. Most useful for this study were materials deposited in regional state archives in Poland, and in the Staatliches Archivlager in Göttingen, where some documents from the former state archive in Königsberg were deposited.¹ These have been supplemented by evidence dealing with the rise of the Nazi movement in the archives of the Federal Republic and West Berlin, particularly the

1. Since the time these materials were consulted, they have been transferred to the Geheimes Staatsarchiv in West Berlin.

Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, the Geheimes Staatsarchiv in Berlin and the Berlin Document Center. Unfortunately, attempts to gain access to the archives of the German Democratic Republic were unsuccessful. Although there is certainly much in the Deutsches Zentralarchiv (Potsdam and Merseburg) which would be of great importance for this study, I was informed by officials of the State Archive Administration in Potsdam that, for the time being, these materials were not available. When they become available I hope to extend my research to Potsdam and Merseburg, to fill gaps which necessarily arise in this study. The USSR Academy of Sciences reported that there were no documents from East Prussia concerning the subject of this thesis in Soviet archives.

In addition to materials deposited in national and regional archives, contemporary printed sources were very useful. Especially valuable were newspapers from the eastern Prussian provinces to be found in the University Library in Wrocław, the Municipal Library in Szczecin, the state archive in Gliwice, the library of the Ośrodek Badań Naukowych (Centre of Scientific Research) in Olsztyn, the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin and the Staatliches Archivlager in Göttingen.

ABBREVIATIONS

Political Parties and other Organisations

ADGB	Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei
DVFB	Deutschvölkische Freiheitsbewegung
DVFP	Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei
HJ	Hitlerjugend
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
NSBO	Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorgani- sation
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
NSDFB	Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpfer- bund
NSFB	Nationalsozialistische Freiheitsbewegung
NSKD	Nationalsozialistische Kampfbewegung Deutsch- lands
SA	Sturmabteilung
SD	Sicherheitsdienst
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SS	Schutzstaffel
USchLA	Untersuchungs- und Schlichtungsausschuß

Archives and Documents Collections

BA	Bundesarchiv (Koblenz)
BA/MA	Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv (Freiburg i. Br.)

BDC	Berlin Document Center
DZAM	Deutsches Zentralarchiv Merseburg
GStA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv preußischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin)
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Munich)
NAM	National Archives Microfilm Collection
OT Gliwice	Wojewódzkie archiwum państwowe w Katowicach, Oddział terenowy w Gliwicach
PAP Bytom	Powiatowe archiwum państwowe w Bytomiu
StAG	Staatliches Archivlager Göttingen
WAP Katowice	Wojewódzkie archiwum państwowe w Katowicach
WAP Olsztyn	Wojewódzkie archiwum państwowe w Olsztynie
WAP Opole	Wojewódzkie archiwum państwowe w Opolu
WAP Poznań	Archiwum państwowe miasta Poznania i województwa Poznanskiego
WAP Szczecin	Wojewódzkie archiwum państwowe w Szczecinie
WAP Wrocław	Wojewódzkie archiwum państwowe w Wrocławiu

Newspapers

<u>AZ</u>	<u>Arbeiter-Zeitung</u> (Breslau)
<u>BUA</u>	<u>Breslauer 8 Uhr-Abendblatt</u>
<u>KV</u>	<u>Königsberger Volkszeitung</u>
<u>NSST</u>	<u>National-Sozialistische Schlesische Tageszeitung</u> (Breslau; until 31 June 1931, <u>Schlesische Tageszeitung</u>)
<u>OVS</u>	<u>Oberschlesische Volksstimme</u> (Gleiwitz)
<u>OK</u>	<u>Oppelner Kurier</u>
<u>PT</u>	<u>Pommersche Tagespost</u> (Stettin)
<u>PZ</u>	<u>Pommersche Zeitung</u> (Stettin)
<u>SB</u>	<u>Schlesische Bergwacht</u> (Waldenburg)
<u>ST</u>	<u>Schlesische Tagespost</u> (Breslau)

<u>SZ</u>	<u>Schlesische Zeitung</u> (Breslau)
<u>VB</u>	<u>Völkischer Beobachter</u>
<u>VBS</u>	<u>Volks-Bote</u> (Stettin)
<u>VWB</u>	<u>Volkswacht</u> (Breslau)
<u>VWS</u>	<u>Volkswacht</u> (Stettin)

Periodicals

<u>RGBl</u>	<u>Reichsgesetzblatt</u>
<u>StDR</u>	<u>Statistik des Deutschen Reichs</u>
<u>StJDR</u>	<u>Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich</u>
<u>VfZ</u>	<u>Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte</u>
<u>ZfG</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft</u>

Other

AOPG	Akten des Obersten Parteigerichts
GRUSA	Grundsätzliche Anordnung der SA
OPO	Oberpräsidium Oppeln
OPS	Oberpräsidium Schneidemühl
OS	Oberschlesien
Reg. Bez.	Regierungsbezirk
RM	Reichsmark
RO	Rejencja Opolska (Regierung Oppeln)
RP	Rejencja w Piłę (Regierung Schneidemühl)
RS	Regierung Stettin, Präsidial Abteilung Polizei
SABE	SA Befehl
TMWC	Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal

INTRODUCTION

'Things now have gone so far, that the citizen who is peaceful and loyal to the state is defenceless and is subject completely to the terror of elements hostile to the state.'¹ This was the conclusion reached by an Upper Silesian newspaper supporting the Catholic Centre Party (Zentrum), following a night-time attack by Nazi storm troopers upon members of the Kreuzschar, the defence organisation of the Zentrum, in Ratibor in August 1931. The comment is remarkable not least because Upper Silesia was among those regions in Germany where the Nazi movement was, in relative terms, least successful in attracting support. The Centre Party continued to receive more votes than the NSDAP in the province until 1933, and in the Upper Silesian industrial cities the Nazis also faced a strong Communist Party. Yet by the summer of 1931, before the NSDAP reached its pre-1933 peak in terms of electoral support and party membership, Nazi terror tactics had made normal political activity extremely difficult for the most popular party in the province.

This is all the more noteworthy since it was not the Zentrum but the left-wing political representatives of the working class, the Communist and Social Democratic Parties and the socialist trade unions, which formed the main targets of the violence of the Nazi storm troopers. Even more than for the Centre Party, for the Left the violent attacks of the Nazi activists presented a major challenge. For the KPD the growth

1. OVS, 10 Aug. 1931, 'Zweites Blatt'.

of the Nazi movement and the escalation of Nazi violence was of decisive importance from 1929 onwards in the formation of its political tactics.¹ For the SPD the growth of Nazi violence presented a threat to the entire political activity of the Party; by early 1931 the 'Terror Defence Bureau' of the SPD in Berlin, established to monitor the mounting political violence against Social Democrats, was pleading to the Reich Interior Minister for protection against the Nazis, painting a graphic picture of the 'insults, threats, injuries, in some cases fatal' and the 'provocation, challenges and assaults at rallies, on the streets, after rallies, at demonstrations or after demonstrations' reported throughout Germany.² The rise of the Nazi movement signified not only a fundamental shift in party-political loyalties and voting behaviour during the final years of the Weimar Republic; it also meant a dramatic increase in political violence in Germany, violence which helped greatly to undermine the existing political system.

The political violence which was so significant in the rise of the Nazi movement was of crucial importance in 1933, when the NSDAP leadership gained power and presided over the suppression of the political opposition, the eradication of the remnants of Weimar democracy and the formation of the 'Third Reich'. The victory of the Nazi movement in 1933 and the failure of its opponents, particularly on the left, to

1. See Eve Rosenhaft, 'Gewalt in der Politik: Zum Problem des "Sozialen Militarismus"', in Militär und Militarismus in der Weimarer Republik, ed. Klaus-Jürgen Müller and Eckardt Opitz (Düsseldorf, 1978), esp. pp. 253-7.

2. BA, R 43 I/2683, ff. 297-303: Terror-Abwehrstelle beim Parteivorstand der SPD to Reichsminister Gröner, Berlin, 1 Feb. 1931.

prevent the Nazis from achieving power formed one of the major turning points in the history of modern Europe. The manner in which this 'unparalleled defeat of the German proletariat',¹ came about at the local and regional levels was in very large measure a consequence of the violent political activism of the Nazi storm troopers in the SA.

The events which led to the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Reich Chancellor on 30 January 1933 and the nationwide consolidation of the Nazi dictatorship during the following months have been the subjects of numerous detailed historical analyses.² In addition, in recent years the rise of the Nazi movement at local and regional levels has been charted in a number of studies: of Braunschweig,³ Pomerania,⁴ Hamburg,⁵

1. Leon Trotsky, 'The German Catastrophe: The Responsibility of the Leadership' (from 28 May 1933), in Leon Trotsky, The Struggle against Fascism in Germany (Harmondsworth, 1975), p. 397.

2. See, for example, Alan Bullock, Hitler. A Study in Tyranny (Harmondsworth, 1962); Karl Dietrich Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie (4th edn., Villingen, 1964); Karl Dietrich Bracher, Wolfgang Sauer and Gerhard Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung. Studien zur Errichtung des totalitären Herrschaftssystems in Deutschland 1933/34 (2nd edn., Cologne and Opladen, 1962); Das Ende der Parteien 1933, ed. Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey (Düsseldorf, 1960); Von Weimar zu Hitler 1930-1933, ed. Gotthard Jasper (Cologne and Berlin, 1968); Karl Dietrich Bracher, The German Dictatorship. The Origins, Structure and Consequences of National Socialism (Harmondsworth, 1973); Die Zerstörung der Weimarer Republik, ed. Reinhard Kühnl and Gerd Hardach (Cologne, 1977); Volker Hentschel, Weimars letzte Monate. Hitler und der Untergang der Republik (Düsseldorf, 1978).

3. Ernst-August Roloff, Bürgertum und Nationalsozialismus 1930-1933. Braunschweigs Weg ins Dritte Reich (Hannover, 1961).

4. Bogusław Drewniak, Początki ruchu hitlerowskiego na Pomorzu Zachodnim 1923-1934 (Poznań, 1962).

5. Werner Jochmann, Nationalsozialismus und Revolution. Ursprung und Geschichte der NSDAP in Hamburg 1922-33. Dokumente (Frankfurt/Main, 1963).

Northeim,¹ Lower Saxony,² Hesse,³ Bavaria,⁴ Danzig,⁵ the Ruhr,⁶ Baden,⁷ and Franconia.⁸ Yet although virtually all historians who have investigated the Nazi struggle for power have noted the importance of political violence and the role played by the SA - and in a number of cases have discussed the organisation of the SA in some detail⁹ - they have tended to focus chiefly on the Nazi Party itself, its organisation and its development. Relatively little research has centered upon the storm troopers, and the analyses which have taken the SA as their focus generally have dealt with it on a nationwide level.¹⁰

1. William Sheridan Allen, The Nazi Seizure of Power. The Experience of a Single German Town 1930-1935 (Chicago, 1965).

2. Jeremy Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921-1933 (London, 1971).

3. Eberhart Schön, Die Entstehung des Nationalsozialismus in Hessen (Meisenheim am Glan, 1972).

4. Geoffrey Pridham, Hitler's Rise to Power. The Nazi Movement in Bavaria, 1923-1933 (London, 1973); Falk Wiesemann, Die Vorgeschichte der nationalsozialistischen Machtübernahme in Bayern 1932/33 (Berlin, 1975).

5. Herbert S. Levine, Hitler's Free City: A History of the Nazi Party in Danzig, 1925-1939 (Chicago, 1973).

6. Wilfried Böhnke, Die NSDAP im Ruhrgebiet 1920-1933 (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1974).

7. Johnpeter Horst Grill, 'The Nazi Party in Baden, 1920-1945' (Univ. of Michigan Ph.D. thesis 1975).

8. Rainer Hambrecht, Der Aufstieg der NSDAP in Mittel- und Oberfranken (1925-1933) (Nuremberg, 1976).

9. See, for example, Drewniak, op. cit., pp. 61-71; Noakes, op. cit., pp. 182-7; Schön, op. cit., pp. 116-42; Hambrecht, op. cit., pp. 317-27.

10. Heinrich Bennecke, Hitler und die SA (Munich and Vienna, 1962); Andreas Werner, 'SA und NSDAP. SA: "Wehrverband", "Parteitruppe" oder "Revolutionsarmee"? Studien zur Geschichte der SA und der NSDAP 1920 bis 1933' (Univ. Erlangen Phil. Diss. 1964); Charles Bloch, Die SA und die Krise des NS-Regimes 1934 (Frankfurt/Main, 1970); Conan Fischer, 'The Occupational Background of the SA's Rank and File Membership during the Depression Years, 1929 to mid-1934', in The Shaping of the Nazi State, ed. Peter D. Stachura (London, 1978).

While there has been one study of the SA in a single city, Nuremberg,¹ as well as a recent attempt to correlate the incidence of political violence with Reichstag election results in 1930 and 1932,² there has been no detailed investigation of the SA and the problem of political violence at the regional level or in the German countryside.

This thesis is about political violence and its role in the growth of the Nazi movement and the acquisition of power in 1933, and consists of a discussion of the Nazi storm troopers' organisation in the former eastern regions of Germany. For the purposes of this study the eastern regions are defined as the Prussian provinces of East Prussia, Pomerania, Upper and Lower Silesia, and the Border Province of Posen and West Prussia; however, since the Nazi organisations in the Border Province formed subdivisions of those in Brandenburg, where their development was influenced greatly by the proximity of Berlin, these will be examined in rather less detail.

This study differs from other regional analyses of the Nazi movement in a number of respects. First, its focus is not upon the NSDAP but the SA. Second, unlike many regional studies of the Nazi movement, it does not stop with the seizure of power in 1933 but continues through to the elimination in 1934 of the SA as an important factor influencing political

1. Eric G. Reiche, 'The Development of the SA in Nuremberg, 1922 to 1934' (Univ. of Delaware Ph.D. thesis 1972). See also E.G. Reiche, 'From "Spontaneous" to Legal Terror: SA, Police, and the Judiciary in Nürnberg, 1933-34', European Studies Review, ix (1979).

2. Dee Richard Wernette, 'Political Violence and German Elections: 1930 and July 1932' (Univ. of Michigan Ph.D. thesis 1974). Unfortunately, Wernette's examination of political violence consists essentially of the tabulation of information extracted from a single newspaper.

developments. Third, it concerns a region of Germany which has received relatively little attention from historians in the West. Whereas during the interwar period and soon after the Second World War a considerable amount was written about the eastern Prussian provinces, particularly with regard to their peculiar economic and political position within the German Reich, during the past two decades there has been remarkably little detailed research into the history of eastern Germany during the 1920s and 1930s. With a few notable exceptions — such as Hans Raupach's essay on the uneven development of eastern Germany,¹ Dieter Hertz-Eichenrode's analysis of politics in rural East Prussia during the Weimar period,² and Wilhelm Matull's history of the working-class movement in eastern Germany³ — most of the recent investigations into the political and economic history of eastern Germany during the interwar period have been done either by Polish researchers⁴

1. Hans Raupach, 'Der interregionale Wohlfahrtsausgleich als Problem der Politik des Deutschen Reiches', in Die Staats- und Wirtschaftskrise des Deutschen Reiches 1929/32, ed. Werner Conze and Hans Raupach (Stuttgart, 1967).

2. Dieter Hertz-Eichenrode, Politik und Landwirtschaft in Ostpreußen 1919 bis 1930. Untersuchung eines Strukturproblems in der Weimarer Republik (Cologne and Opladen, 1969).

3. Wilhelm Matull, Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung. Abriß ihrer Geschichte, Leistung und Opfer (Würzburg, 1973).

4. See, for example, Drewniak, op. cit.; Andrzej Czarnik, Ruch hitlerowski na Pomorzu Zachodnim 1933-1939 (Poznań, 1969); Franciszek Hawranek, Niemiecka socjaldemokracja w prowincji górnośląskiej w latach 1929-1933 (Wrocław, 1971); Bogusław Olszewski, 'Osthilfe' interwencjonizm państwowy w rolnictwie śląskim w latach 1919-1939 (Wrocław, 1974); Edward Mendel, Stosunki społeczne i polityczne w Opolu w latach 1919-1933 (Warsaw and Wrocław, 1975); Tadeusz Minczakiewicz, Stosunki społeczne na Śląsku Opolskim w latach 1922-1933 (Wrocław, 1976).

or by East German historians of working-class political movements.¹ With this thesis it is hoped simultaneously to provide a detailed analysis of the social and political history of the SA at local and regional levels, to examine the role of political violence in the rise of the Nazi movement, and to fill a gap in the literature concerning eastern Germany between the wars.

During the Weimar period the political atmosphere in the eastern Prussian provinces was determined very largely by the post-War border changes. Scarcely a political statement could be made in the East without reference to the territorial losses and the 'bleeding frontier'.² For the inhabitants of the eastern regions, even more than for the rest of the German population, the events which followed military defeat in 1918 must have seemed the worst of their nightmares come true. The collapse of the monarchy and the establishment of revolutionary workers' and soldiers' councils were followed by Polish uprisings, the loss of most of the provinces of Posen and West Prussia to the new Polish state³ and a peace settlement which

1. See, for example, Günther Schmerbach, 'Der Kampf der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands gegen Faschismus und Kriegsgefahr im Bezirk Oberschlesien 1932/33' (Univ. Jena Phil. Diss. 1957); Karl-Heinz Jahnke, 'Die Geschichte der revolutionären Arbeiterbewegung in Stralsund von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gründung der SED (1891-1946)' (Univ. Greifswald Phil. Diss. 1960); Werner Lamprecht, 'Der Kampf der Stettiner Parteiorganisation der KPD gegen die faschistische Diktatur (1933-1945)' (Univ. Greifswald Phil. Diss. 1965).

2. See, for example, G. Schneider, 'Die grenzpolitische Bedeutung Oberschlesiens als Provinz', in Zehn Jahre Provinz Oberschlesien, ed. Presse-, Statistisches und Verkehrsamt der Provinzverwaltung von Oberschlesien (Ratibor, 1929), p. 10.

3. See Robert G.L. Waite, Vanguard of Nazism. The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany 1918-1923 (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 94-7; Matull, op. cit., pp. 501-4.

THE EASTERN REGIONS OF GERMANY DURING THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC



led to further transfers of territory along Germany's eastern frontiers.¹ Additional border changes were to be determined by referenda, in the southern portion of East Prussia together with the remainder of West Prussia east of the Vistula and in much of Upper Silesia including the entire industrial region. While the referendum in East Prussia produced an overwhelming victory for the Germans,² in Upper Silesia the sympathies of the population were much more sharply divided. After a narrow referendum decision favouring Germany, three Polish uprisings and considerable bloodshed, when the new border finally was drawn Germany lost the eastern third of Upper Silesia, including much of the region's industrial resources.³

The post-War chaos in the eastern regions had serious repercussions in later years. The role of the Freikorps in the bloodshed in the East convinced many Germans that these bands of right-wing freebooters were the true defenders of

1. In East Prussia the district around Soldau, in the south of the province, was ceded to Poland, and to the north the Memelland was placed initially under Allied administration and occupied by Lithuanian troops in early 1923. Poland was granted a 'corridor' to the sea consisting of territory of the pre-War province of West Prussia, and Danzig and the surrounding countryside became a 'Free City'.

2. For accounts of the referendum in East Prussia see Gotthold Rhode, 'Staatliche Entwicklung und Grenzziehung', in Die Ostgebiete des Deutschen Reiches, ed. Gotthold Rhode (3rd edn., Würzburg, 1956), pp. 122-3; Kurt Forstreuter, 'Ostpreußen', in Die deutschen Ostgebiete zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik (Studien zum Deutschtum im Osten, iii, Cologne and Graz, 1966), p. 18; Hertz-Eichenrode, op. cit., pp. 13-15; Matull, op. cit., p. 333.

3. For accounts of the post-War events in Upper Silesia see Karl Bergerhoff, Die Schwarze Schar in O/S. Ein historischer Abschnitt aus Oberschlesiens Schreckenstagen (Gleiwitz, 1932); Karl Hoeser, Oberschlesien in der Aufstandszeit 1918-1921. Erinnerungen und Dokumente (Berlin, 1938); Waite, op. cit., pp. 227-32; Ernst Birke, 'Schlesien', in Die deutschen Ostgebiete zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik, pp. 150-186; Matull, op. cit., pp. 193-214.

the nation, and the Freikorps campaigns proved an important training ground for many men who later became leading figures in the Nazi movement in the eastern provinces.¹ A further consequence of the border changes was the subsequent immigration into Germany of roughly 750,000 refugees from the newly Polish territories. These refugees settled largely in the eastern provinces, and helped to provide a reservoir of right-wing and anti-Polish sentiment.² Most importantly, the harvest for Germany from the events of the immediate post-War period was a pervasive feeling of bitterness and betrayal. The post-War changes left a deep mark on the political life of eastern Germany, and revanchism and animosity toward Poland developed into an unquestioned political axiom.

In addition, the border changes exacerbated long-standing economic problems and came to be seen as the root cause of the relative poverty of the eastern Prussian provinces vis-à-vis the rest of the country. That the eastern regions would be doomed economically until the Versailles Treaty was revised was regarded as self-evident, and it was accepted almost without question that 'the gravest distress would end with one stroke if the injustice of the drawing of the frontiers in the East were made good'.³ The truth of the matter was rather

1. See Waite, op. cit., pp. 285-96. For details of the various right-wing organisations active in the struggle against the Poles, see Karol Fiedor, Antypolskie organizacje w Niemczech 1918-1933 (Wrocław, 1973).

2. For statistics of the refugees and where they re-settled, see Heinz Rogmann, Die Bevölkerungsentwicklung im preußischen Osten in den letzten hundert Jahren (Berlin, 1937), pp. 120-2.

3. Die Not der preußischen Ostprovinzen, ed. Landeshauptleute der Provinzen Ostpreußen, Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen, Pommern, Brandenburg, Niederschlesien und Oberschlesien (Königsberg, 1930), p. 30.

different, however. Eastern Germany's economic difficulties were deeply rooted in the area's peculiar economic structure. Since the industrialisation drive in the nineteenth century, the eastern regions had fallen behind the rest of the country in terms of their economic development. Although the East contained a number of industrial concentrations, the development of industry had been hindered by a lack of abundant natural resources and by the considerable distances to the important markets to the west. The failure of the eastern provinces to attract industrial investment meant that they offered relatively fewer job opportunities outside the agricultural sector. The dependence upon agriculture, with its chronically low wage levels, meant that considerably lower wage rates prevailed in the East; in terms of per capita income, the eastern Prussian provinces lagged significantly behind the rest of the country.¹ This in turn hampered the development of large markets for industrial goods, which might have attracted industrial investment, and led to large-scale emigration from the predominantly rural East to the factories of Berlin and the Ruhr. From 1870 until the First World War, internal migration absorbed virtually the entire natural population increase in the eastern provinces.²

During the Weimar period, as before the War, eastern Germany formed a distinctly poorer section of the Reich. The patterns of economic development which had been established

1. Knut Borchardt, 'The Industrial Revolution in Germany 1700-1914', in The Fontana Economic History of Europe. The Emergence of Industrial Societies - 1, ed. Carlo M. Cipolla (Glasgow, 1973), p. 139.

2. See Rogmann, op. cit., pp. 128, 244-5; Raupach, 'Der interregionale Wohlfahrtsausgleich', p. 15; Borchardt, loc. cit., p. 123.

as the industrial economy expanded rapidly after 1870 were inherited by Weimar Germany. In addition, the new political configurations of the post-War world — the loss to Germany of her old eastern territories and the establishment of small eastern European states with high tariff barriers — pushed the eastern Prussian provinces even further toward the periphery of German economic life.

The central feature of eastern Germany's economic plight during the Weimar period was its relatively underdeveloped industrial base. The eastern Prussian provinces were much less urbanised than the rest of the country, and industry accounted for a relatively small portion of their economy. In almost every important industrial branch, eastern Germany accounted for a smaller proportion of the total German output than it did of the country's population.¹ Industrial investment in the East was limited largely to those industries which needed to be near specific natural resources, such as the Upper Silesian coal-mining and smelting complex, the Silesian paper industry, or food-processing industries. Industries which required high capital investment and which had greater choice about where they could locate — such as the chemical or motor-vehicle industries — chose to invest in the central and western regions of Germany. Altogether, eastern Germany lagged significantly behind in investment in the more progressive sectors of industry, investment which was necessary to lift incomes to levels prevailing elsewhere in the Reich.

1. Rudolf Neumann, 'Die ostdeutsche Wirtschaft', in Die Ostgebiete des Deutschen Reiches, ed. Rhode, p. 166. The figures used refer to Germany east of the Oder-Neiße, and give the value of eastern German industrial production in 1936. However, since there was little investment in Germany during the economic crisis, these figures can be regarded as reasonably indicative of the relative importance of eastern German industry during the 1920s and early 1930s.

The other key element of the economic difficulties of the eastern regions was the obverse of the failure to industrialise sufficiently, namely their disproportionate dependence upon agriculture. This meant that eastern Germany was particularly severely affected by the crisis which enveloped German agriculture during the 1920s. The intensification of agricultural production on a worldwide scale after the War, together with the deflation of the German economy, led to a sharp fall in farm prices during the late 1920s and early 1930s.¹ Despite tariff supports, the prices paid to German farmers fell by an average of 36 per cent between 1925 and 1932, and in 1932/3 farm income was only 62 per cent of what it had been in 1928/9.² Many farmers faced an enormous and increasing burden of debt at high rates of interest, while the prices they received for their produce and the value of their property were falling swiftly.³ Agriculture in the eastern provinces was particularly hard hit by this combination, especially since eastern German farmers were much more heavily in debt than their western counterparts.⁴ Farmers in the East had to cope with often poorer soil and a shorter growing season than farmers in the South and West, and the

1. For tables of the agricultural prices during the Weimar period, see Dieter Gessner, Agrarverbände in der Weimarer Republik. Wirtschaftliche und soziale Voraussetzungen agrarkonservativer Politik vor 1933 (Düsseldorf, 1976), p. 86.

2. Dieter Petzina, 'Hauptprobleme der deutschen Wirtschaftspolitik 1932/33', VfZ, xv (1967), 31.

3. The prices of farms fell especially precipitously between 1928 and 1932. See Gessner, op. cit., p. 89.

4. Hans Gladosch, 'Untersuchungen über die Notwendigkeit, Maßnahmen und Ergebnisse der Osthilfe in Oberschlesien' (Univ. Heidelberg Phil. Diss. 1933), pp. 10-12.

larger size of eastern German agricultural holdings meant a greater need for mechanisation and a consequently high level of indebtedness. Not only the level of debt, but the rates of interest as well were higher in the East, which was regarded as a high-risk area by the financial community.¹

The crisis enveloping eastern German agriculture led successive Reich and Prussian governments to enact far-reaching aid programmes involving subsidised credit facilities and funding for the improvement of the infrastructure of the area.² However, these aid programmes did not effect basic structural changes which might fundamentally have altered the situation, and met with failure both in economic and political terms. Eastern German farmers tried to cope with their predicament through a reduction of an already meagre standard of living, but many succumbed to the financial pressures as the numbers of bankruptcies and forced auctions of farm properties grew to alarming proportions, particularly in East Prussia.³ Small

1. See Forstreuter, 'Ostpreußen', p. 28.

2. For detailed descriptions of the aid programmes to eastern Germany, see Heinrich Niehaus, 'Die Osthilfe', in Die deutschen Ostgebiete zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik, pp. 187-211; Bruno Buchta, Die Junker und die Weimarer Republik. Charakter und Bedeutung der Osthilfe in den Jahren 1928-1931 (Berlin, 1959); Gerhard Schulz, 'Staatliche Stützungsmaßnahmen in den deutschen Ostgebieten', in Staat Wirtschaft und Politik in der Weimarer Republik. Festschrift für Heinrich Brüning, ed. Ferdinand A. Hermens and Theodor Schieder (Berlin, 1967), pp. 141-204; Heinrich Muth, 'Agrarpolitik und Parteipolitik im Frühjahr 1932', in Staat Wirtschaft und Politik, ed. Hermens and Schieder, pp. 317-60; Hertz-Eichenrode, Politik und Landwirtschaft, pp. 159-337; Karol Fiedor, 'The Character of State Assistance to the German Eastern Provinces in the Years 1919-1933', Polish Western Affairs, xii (1971), 309-26; Olszewski, 'Osthilfe' in terwencjonizm; Hans-Peter Ehni, Bollwerk Preußen? Preußen-Regierung, Reich-Länder-Problem und Sozialdemokratie 1928-1932 (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1975), pp. 56-76; Richard Bessel, 'Eastern Germany as a Structural Problem in the Weimar Republic', Social History, iii (1978), 210-13.

3. StJDR 1932, pp. 376-7.

farmers were hit as well as large, and the result of the growing spectre of insolvency and ruin was an increasing desperation among German farmers during the last years of the Weimar Republic, a desperation which cut them loose from their traditional political moorings.¹

The chronically depressed condition and relative backwardness of the eastern regions led to the continuation during the 1920s of the pre-War east-to-west migration patterns.² Although the emigration from the East undoubtedly diminished once the full effects of the economic crisis were felt, it was nonetheless remarkable that it persisted in the face of serious unemployment in Germany's urban centres. The economics of regional disparity and uneven development was translated into human misery.

The relative economic backwardness and the consequent social structures of the eastern Prussian provinces naturally affected their political development during the Weimar period. However, the effect of the economic and social peculiarities of the eastern regions was not to cause exclusively regional issues to dominate their political life, despite the political controversy generated by the subsidy programmes. To be sure, the economic difficulties of the East, the demands for special treatment, the revanchist attitudes toward the post-War borders and the uncompromising hostility to Poland were given greater

1. For discussions of how the NSDAP took advantage of the desperation of the farmers, see Horst Gies, 'NSDAP und landwirtschaftliche Organisationen in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik', VfZ, xv (1967), 341-76; J.E. Farquharson, The Plough and the Swastika. The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany 1928-1945 (London and Beverly Hills, 1976), pp. 1-42.

2. See Rogmann, Die Bevölkerungsentwicklung, pp. 244-5.

emphasis by politicians in the East than in the West. The proximity of the 'bleeding frontier' gave eastern German politics an especially strident nationalistic tone; with the sole exception of the KPD, all the major political parties, from the SPD to the NSDAP, favoured some manner of border revision and tried to identify with the national cause.¹ Nevertheless, despite the more extreme tone of the political debate, national rather than regional issues dominated politics in eastern Germany. Even the regional issues which aroused great concern were seen primarily in terms of national politics: national policy was regarded as necessary to redress the economic balance and essential if the post-War settlements were to be reversed. The key to the question of how the peculiar economic and social structures of eastern Germany affected political life during the Weimar period was not that regional concerns formed the dominant political issues, but that the regional structures largely governed how the population responded politically to issues of national concern.

Political affiliation in Weimar Germany remained very much a function of the place of individuals within the economic system, as well as of religion. Thus regional economic and social structures, rather than the fears and resentments engendered by the 'bleeding frontier', were most important in determining patterns of political support in the East. The political behaviour of particular social groups did not differ significantly between eastern and western Germany: Protestant

1. For an example of how the SPD sought to identify itself with the national struggle along the border, see E. Janotta, 'Sozialdemokratie und Provinz Oberschlesien', in Zehn Jahre Provinz Oberschlesien, p. 6.

farming communities, Catholic market towns, industrial regions and administrative centres produced similar voting patterns in eastern Germany as in the rest of the country. The crucial difference was that in the East the social and economic basis of political support for Weimar democracy was especially weak. The disproportionately large number of people dependent upon agriculture, the absence of a developed and prosperous industrial base and the relatively low level of urbanisation meant that, at least in the Protestant areas of eastern Germany, the potential support for the 'Weimar parties' was relatively small and that for the right-wing opponents of the Republic correspondingly large. Thus the economic backwardness of the East was reflected in greater political instability.

The political instability of the eastern regions became painfully apparent in the final years of the Weimar Republic, when the Nazi movement suddenly succeeded in attracting mass support. With the startling success of the NSDAP in the eastern Prussian provinces from 1929 onward, Nazism became a mass movement on a truly national scale. The overwhelming nature of the Nazi successes in the Protestant regions of eastern Germany was indicative of the extent to which, given the proper circumstances, the economic and social structures in the East were especially conducive to the rise of the Nazi movement.

The Nazi success was an expression not only of the propensity of certain social groups to favour right-wing politics, but also of the revolt of these groups against the conservative Right which hitherto had represented them.¹ While

1. See Heinrich August Winkler, Mittelstand Demokratie und Nationalsozialismus. Die politische Entwicklung von Handwerk und Kleinhandel in der Weimarer Republik (Cologne, 1972).

the potential backing for the Right in the eastern regions remained a function of their social structures, the events at the end of the Weimar period provided the political climate necessary to translate this potential into active support for the NSDAP. The glaring failure of the subsidy programmes, with which the conservative Right had been closely identified, stirred great resentment and anger. Together with the general effects of the economic crisis, this helped fuel the reaction of the Protestant, non-working-class electorate against the conservative political leadership in the eastern German countryside. Particularly revealing were the spectacular victories of the NSDAP in the elections of the Prussian agricultural chambers (Landwirtschaftskammer) in late 1931, especially in East Prussia, Pomerania and Lower Silesia.¹ The advance of the Nazi Party had meant that in many a rural community in eastern Germany the political hegemony of the large landowners appeared to be over.

The regional peculiarities of the eastern Prussian provinces, as well as the dimensions of the revolt of the traditional supporters of the conservative Right, were reflected in the election results in these regions during the Weimar period. With the important exception of Upper Silesia, voting followed a roughly similar pattern in all the eastern regions. In contrast to the Reich as a whole, the conservative Right was very strong. Thus the DNVP polled significantly better in all the eastern German election districts than in the Reich as a whole until the Weimar system crumbled. During the 1920s the DNVP had been the strongest political party in East Prussia

1. Gessner, Agrarverbände in der Weimarer Republik, pp. 248-9.

and Pomerania, and in Lower and Middle Silesia was second only to a relatively strong Social Democratic Party. Even in Upper Silesia the DNVP found sufficient support to exceed the national average. On the other hand, largely due to the low level of urbanisation and the relatively underdeveloped infrastructure of trades and services, the 'middle parties' - the DVP, the DDP and special interest parties - were rather weaker in the East than in the rest of the Reich. And, as a result of the lower level of industrialisation in the eastern regions, the KPD and the SPD, taken together, found somewhat less support in the East than in the country as a whole.

This combination proved extremely vulnerable to the Nazi onslaught. Once the NSDAP had established itself as a political party on a national level, it quickly captured an especially strong position in the East and received there in 1930 and 1932 some of its best election results in the entire country. If the typical Nazi voter was a rural or small-town Protestant, engaged in farming or a small business, then he was much more in evidence in the eastern regions than elsewhere in the Reich.

A striking exception to the general pattern of political affiliation in the eastern regions was Upper Silesia. In a sense, Upper Silesia was the exception which proved the rule. The two crucial factors which set Upper Silesia apart from the other eastern German election districts were that its population was largely Catholic and that it was, in part, heavily industrialised. Thus the Centre Party dominated the middle ground of political life in Upper Silesia, while the KPD enjoyed considerable support in the industrial areas.

Reichstag election results (%) in the eastern German election districts, and in the Reich (December 1924 - July 1932)¹

7 December 1924	(Völk- isch)							
Election district	NSDAP	DNVP	DVP	Small parties	Zen- trum	DDP	SPD	KPD
East Prussia	6.2	39.2	9.0	4.7	8.0	4.0	20.8	8.1
Frankfurt/Oder	3.2	38.3	10.8	4.4	6.3	4.7	27.9	4.4
Pomerania	4.2	49.1	6.5	5.0	1.0	3.8	24.6	5.8
Breslau	1.4	28.8	7.7	3.6	19.0	4.6	31.9	3.0
Liegnitz	1.5	28.9	8.3	8.3	8.9	8.0	32.8	3.3
Oppeln	1.5	21.8	2.8	11.7	41.0	2.2	6.8	12.2
Reich	3.0	20.5	10.1	7.7	17.4	6.3	26.0	9.0

20 May 1928								
Election district	NSDAP	DNVP	DVP	Small parties	Zen- trum	DDP	SPD	KPD
East Prussia	0.8	31.4	9.8	10.5	7.4	3.8	26.8	9.5
Frankfurt/Oder	1.0	29.6	8.4	11.5	6.0	4.4	33.1	6.0
Pomerania	1.5	41.5	5.5	11.7	1.0	4.0	30.2	6.1
Breslau	1.0	22.9	6.0	9.1	15.8	2.9	37.8	4.5
Liegnitz	1.2	24.5	6.6	11.5	7.9	6.3	37.8	4.2
Oppeln	1.0	17.0	2.7	12.4	40.0	1.6	12.6	12.7
Reich	2.6	14.2	8.7	14.1	15.2	4.8	29.8	10.6

14 September 1930								
Election district	NSDAP	DNVP	DVP	Small parties	Zen- trum	DDP	SPD	KPD
East Prussia	22.5	19.6	5.4	9.2	7.9	2.5	21.1	11.8
Frankfurt/Oder	22.7	13.2	3.1	15.6	5.8	3.0	26.6	9.3
Pomerania	24.3	24.8	3.3	10.5	1.1	2.5	24.7	8.8
Breslau	24.2	8.9	2.7	9.2	16.0	1.9	29.3	7.8
Liegnitz	20.9	8.6	3.5	16.2	7.8	5.0	32.0	6.1
Oppeln	9.5	15.3	1.4	11.7	35.2	1.1	9.3	16.6
Reich	18.3	7.0	4.5	14.0	14.8	3.8	24.5	13.1

31 July 1932								
Election district	NSDAP	DNVP	DVP	Small parties	Zen- trum	Staats- partei	SPD	KPD
East Prussia	47.1	9.5	0.8	1.7	7.7	0.6	19.7	12.9
Frankfurt/Oder	48.1	9.2	1.0	1.6	6.3	0.7	23.5	9.6
Pomerania	48.0	15.8	0.9	2.3	1.5	0.8	21.0	10.7
Breslau	43.5	5.6	0.5	1.6	14.7	0.5	24.4	8.8
Liegnitz	48.0	6.9	0.8	2.2	7.2	1.0	26.3	7.6
Oppeln	29.2	6.9	0.3	3.0	34.7	0.2	8.7	17.0
Reich	37.3	5.9	1.2	3.0	15.7	1.0	21.6	14.3

1. Wilhelm Dittmann, Das politische Deutschland vor Hitler (Zürich and New York, 1945); Alfred Milatz, Wähler und Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik (Bonn, 1965).

Yet although voting patterns in Upper Silesia differed dramatically from those in the other eastern regions, one thing remained the same: it was not primarily regional concerns, but the economic and social peculiarities of the region which determined patterns of political support. It would seem that in Upper Silesia, as in the other eastern provinces, confessional, social and economic factors, rather than purely geographical ones, had the greatest effect in determining patterns of political life.

The Nazis, guided by their aggressively nationalistic political perspective, themselves believed that the bitterness caused by the post-War frontiers and the economic difficulties of eastern Germany drove people to support Hitler.¹ The truth of the matter is more complex, however. Certainly many eastern Germans were bitter and had become convinced that the area's economic problems were insoluble within the context of the Weimar system; and certainly many of these embittered people supported the Nazi movement and saw in it a last chance for improvement. Yet the Nazis found fanatic supporters in other, less threatened and more prosperous regions of Germany as well. The eastern Prussian provinces did not differ from the rest of Weimar Germany in that the issues which dominated their political life were fundamentally different; it was the peculiar economic development of eastern Germany that had led to greater concentrations of those social groups most prone to support the Nazi movement, and left the East particularly vulnerable to Nazism.

1. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.64.b.: letter to the NSDAP Crtsgroupe in Neidenburg, Schweidnitz, 19 March 1932.

Chapter I

THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM IN EASTERN GERMANY TO 1933

(i) The Beginnings of the Nazi Movement in the Eastern Prussian Provinces

The Nazi movement had a late and uncertain start in eastern Germany. With their relatively low population densities and the great distances separating them from the headquarters and early strongholds of the NSDAP in the South and West, the eastern Prussian provinces were among the last areas of the Reich to be organised effectively by the Nazi Party. Before the Munich Putsch the development of the Nazi movement was centered mainly in Bavaria, and the northward expansion of the NSDAP was limited further by the hostility of the Prussian government, which banned the Party in 1922.¹ The first local groups of the NSDAP outside Bavaria were established during 1920 and 1921 in Mannheim, Hannover, Zwickau, Halle and Dortmund.² Thus the first Nazi cells formed in Prussia before the 1922 ban were to be found in its western provinces. In the eastern Prussian provinces, right-wing racialist (völkisch) politics were dominated initially by other groups. The NSDAP,

1. For an account of the early development of the NSDAP, see Werner Maser, Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP. Hitlers Weg bis 1924 (Frankfurt/Main and Bonn, 1965). For a discussion of the Prussian ban and its effects on the NSDAP, see Gotthard Jasper, Der Schutz der Republik. Studien zur staatlichen Sicherung der Demokratie in der Weimarer Republik 1922-1930 (Tübingen, 1963), pp. 301-4; Böhnke, Die NSDAP im Ruhrgebiet, pp. 53-4.

2. Maser, op. cit., p. 319; Böhnke, op. cit., pp. 40-1; Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, pp. 14-20.

based in Munich, remained too small and too far away to force its way onto the political stage in eastern Germany.

After the War a large number of right-wing, anti-Semitic political organisations were formed throughout eastern Germany. The proliferation and growth of these groups were aided by the presence of remnants of the Freikorps units which had been so active in the East, the strong tradition of conservative nationalism in the eastern Prussian provinces, and the fears and resentments engendered by the effects of the peace settlement on the eastern border regions. Particularly in Silesia, veterans of the Freikorps formed the nuclei of a number of right-wing groups. The early development of the völkisch Right in the Upper Silesian border city of Hindenburg followed a characteristic pattern. In 1922 five 'Selbstschutz' (self-defence) groups, a legacy of the post-War upheavals in the province, gathered together in Hindenburg 'under the swastika banner of the völkisch freedom movement', and by Easter 1923 a 'Deutsche Partei' had been formed, drawing together various competing strands of the völkisch Right in the city: the 'Deutsch-soziale Partei', the 'Großdeutsche Arbeiterpartei' and the 'Frontbann'.¹ Many of these right-wing groups were purely local phenomena, without any organisational link to regional or national groupings, but they shared a völkisch political perspective. Often the same groups would re-surface under different names in the wake of bans imposed by the Prussian government. Thus, for example, the local group in Insterburg of the 'German Völkisch Defence and Offence League' (Deutsch-völkische Schutz- und Trutzbund) founded in 1920 reacted to a

1. Hans Paschke, Chronik der Stadt Hindenburg in Oberschlesien (Berlin, 1941), p. 69.

ban in 1922 by re-emerging as the 'Völkisch-Sozialer Block', which by 1923 had grown to 400 members.¹ The various right-wing groups frequently would cooperate closely with one another, as in Insterburg, where a local group of the 'Wehrwolf' paramilitary organisation acted as a protection squad for the 'Deutschvölkische Schutz- und Trutzbund'.² Many of these groups were quite short-lived, one following the other into oblivion.³ While successive völkisch organisations appeared and disappeared, however, their membership remained behind and later formed the backbone of the Nazi movement in many communities in the eastern Prussian provinces.

These groups provided a field of early political activity for a number of people destined to become important figures in the Nazi movement in eastern Germany. For example, in Leobschütz (Upper Silesia) Georg Heidrich, who later figured prominently in the East Prussian NSDAP, was instrumental in establishing a number of völkisch groupings. In 1923 he founded a local group of the 'Deutsche Partei'; when this was banned he established a new independent group, the 'Junggermanen'; and, although his first two attempts at political organisation had met with little success, in 1924 Heidrich surfaced again to form a 'Nationalsozialistische Kampfbund' which he affiliated with Ernst Röhm's 'Frontbann' organisation.⁴ Similarly, in Ratibor,

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.51.a.: a history of the Nazi movement in Kreis Insterburg, unsigned.

2. Ibid.

3. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.76.a.: a history of the Nazi movement in Tilsit, unsigned.

4. WAP Opole, OPO/989, f. 200: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Gleiwitz, 10 Mar. 1925.

at the south-eastern tip of Upper Silesia, the future NSDAP Untergauleiter of the province, Josef-Joachim Adamczyk, was among the members of a 'Sturmabteilung' which formed in the spring of 1923 and christened itself 'Oberland'.¹

The formation of a multitude of right-wing racist groupings throughout eastern Germany after the War helped lay the groundwork for the subsequent spread of the Nazi movement. Although these völkisch organisations generally were short-lived, poorly organised and without great influence, they nevertheless indicated the potential support awaiting a well-organised and unified völkisch organisation in the eastern Prussian provinces.

It is difficult to date precisely the very beginnings of the Nazi organisation in eastern Germany. It appears doubtful that there existed a regional Nazi Party organisation worthy of the name in the East before the Munich Putsch in 1923. The first member of the NSDAP from the eastern Prussian provinces was most probably Waldemar Magunia, a nineteen-year-old baker from Königsberg who joined the Party as an individual member in Munich in 1921.² Soon thereafter, the first local Nazi Party groups in eastern Germany were established in Pomerania and Silesia. According to the Völkischer Beobachter in mid-1922, a group of the NSDAP had been formed in Stettin, and

1. Klaus Gundelach, Vom Kampf und Sieg der schlesischen SA (Breslau, 1934), p. 49. The original Bund Oberland had been among the more important groups involved in the fighting in Upper Silesia during 1921. See Waite, Vanguard of Nazism, pp. 228-9, 232.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(2): 'Die ersten politischen Marschkolonnen'. By the time of the Munich Putsch there were roughly 30 to 40 'individual' NSDAP members in Königsberg. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(1): a history of the NSDAP in Königsberg, signed by W. Stich.

before the end of the year groups were reported in Breslau, Gleiwitz, Hindenburg, Oppeln, Beuthen (Upper Silesia), Rosenberg (Upper Silesia), Kreuzburg and Petersdorf (Kreis Hirschberg).¹ Early groups also were established in the university town of Greifswald and in Pasewalk in Pomerania; by 1923, despite the ban, groups which associated themselves with the Nazi movement had been founded in Stralsund, Kuntzow, Swinemünde, Greifenhagen, Kolberg and Stolp, and together with those in Stettin, Greifswald and Pasewalk their total membership was estimated at around 300.² The first SA groups in eastern Germany appear to have been formed in late 1922 or early 1923 in Upper Silesia, first in Hindenburg and then in Ratibor.³ The nature of the activities of these early Nazi groups and their relations to the other völkisch organisations which proliferated in eastern Germany remain uncertain, and their links with the Munich Party headquarters must have been tenuous. Altogether, the distance from Munich, the lack of a firm organisational structure and the hostility of the Prussian government made coordinated political activity by the first Nazi groups in the East extremely difficult, if not impossible.

The Munich Putsch was a turning point for the incipient Nazi movement in the East. Although years later it was asserted that the Ratibor 'Sturmabteilung' 'Oberland' had armed itself and was 'ready for action' on 9 November 1923, the Putsch found no echo in eastern Germany and was followed by

1. Maser, Die Frühgeschichte der NSDAP, p. 320.

2. Herbert Gaede, Pommern (Berlin, 1940), p. 13; Drewniak, Początki ruchu hitlerowskiego, p. 17.

3. Gundelach, op. cit., pp. 47-9.

the break-up of many of the Nazi Party groups which had formed during the previous year.¹ The failure of the Putsch shattered the early efforts of the NSDAP to gain a foothold in the eastern Prussian provinces, and it was not until the re-formation of the Party in 1925 that a coherent Nazi organisation began to be built up. Thus 1925 should be regarded as the real starting point of the Nazi movement in eastern Germany, when NSDAP groups were first established which were more firmly linked to the movement's headquarters in Munich and which would maintain organisational continuity.

The party which Hitler founded in the Bavarian capital on 27 February 1925 was quite different from that which had existed before the Putsch. In order to prevent a repetition of the disastrous confrontation of 1923, the Nazi attack on the Weimar system henceforth would be carried out within the framework of formal 'legality', and a strong emphasis was placed on a unified and centralised organisation and unconditional allegiance to Hitler. The organisational confusion of the pre-Putsch period was to be avoided; thus NSDAP members were forbidden to belong to other political or paramilitary groups, as frequently had been the case before November 1923.² The re-establishment of a central leadership for the SA, however, did not come until late summer 1926, when Franz von Pfeffer was appointed its 'Supreme Leader' and began to

1. Ibid., p. 49; Mendel, Stosunki społeczne i polityczne w Opolu, pp. 94-5.

2. For accounts of the rebirth of the NSDAP in 1925, see Bullock, Hitler, pp. 120-35; Dietrich Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party 1919-1933 (Pittsburgh, 1969), pp. 53-8; Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, pp. 64-5.

formulate firm guidelines for its future development.¹

The first Nazi Party group to be established in the eastern Prussian provinces in 1925 pre-dated the re-emergence of the NSDAP in Munich on 27 February. On 25 February 1925 in Hindenburg a local group of the NSDAP was founded which, building on the base created by a succession of völkisch groups in the city, grew to 26 members by the end of the year.² Soon after the rebirth of the NSDAP in Munich, local Nazi Party groups were founded in Pomerania and East Prussia as well. In Stettin a group was established within a few days of the re-formation of the Party in Munich;³ and on 1 March Wilhelm Stich (the first local group leader), Waldemar Magunia (the first SA leader) and six of their comrades formed a group of the NSDAP in Königsberg.⁴

During the weeks that followed, regional Gau organisations of the NSDAP were founded, and by April the Gaue of Silesia, Pomerania and East Prussia had been established in rudimentary form. The first to be set up was in Silesia. On 2 March the Breslau group of the NSFB, the coalition formed in August 1924 of the remnants of the NSDAP and its völkisch allies in the DVFP, held a meeting at which it was announced

1. See below, pp. 59-61.

2. Paschke, Chronik der Stadt Hindenburg, pp. 69-70.

3. Drewniak, op. cit., p. 17.

4. The core of this Königsberg group consisted of NSDAP members from before 1923. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(2): 'Die ersten politischen Marschkolonnen'; StAG, Rep. 240/B.31.c.: 'Erste Anfänge der SA in Ostpreußen'; BA, Sammlung Schumacher/207, vol. 1, ff. 261-2: Wilhelm Stich to the Parteileitung der NSDAP, Königsberg, 10 Mar. 1925; Fritz Gause, Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg in Preußen (Cologne, 1971), iii. 111.

that the NSFB would be dissolved.¹ It then was decided to hold a final meeting on 15 March at which members would be called upon to choose between the DVFB (the reconstitution of the DVFP) and the NSDAP. Among those who declared for Hitler's organisation were Helmuth Brückner, a Breslau city assembly deputy, and Dr. Erich Rosikat, the leader of the 'Völkisch farmers' (Völkische Bauernschaften) and the 'Deutsch-soziale Partei' in Breslau. With the break-up of the völkisch coalition, the Silesian NSDAP Gau organisation was founded on 15 March, with Brückner as Gauleiter and Rosikat as Deputy Gauleiter and leader of the local Nazi Party group in Breslau; three days later Brückner travelled to Liegnitz, to found the NSDAP Untergau Lower Silesia.²

In Pomerania a Gau organisation was established in early April, under the leadership of Theodor Vahlen, a professor and former rector at the University of Greifswald. Thus the first NSDAP Gau headquarters in Pomerania was not in Stettin, the administrative centre of the province and the home of the first Pomeranian local Party group, but in the university town of

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/208, vol. 2, ff. 42-3: Helmuth Brückner to Adolf Hitler, Breslau, 6 Mar. 1925; *ibid.*, f. 44: letter to members of the NSFB, Breslau, 7 Mar. 1925. The DVFP, founded in December 1922 by breakaway members of the DNVP, had been a focus of völkisch politics in northern Germany after the Prussian government banned the NSDAP. See Albrecht Tyrell, Führer befiehl ... Selbstzeugnisse aus der 'Kampfzeit' der NSDAP (Düsseldorf, 1969), pp. 68-94; Orlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-58; Noakes, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-63.

2. Paul-Willy Jakubaschk, '8 Jahre schlesische Hitlerbewegung', in NSST, 15 Mar. 1933, pp. 1-2; Marek Maciejewski, 'Uwagi o genezie partii narodowych socjalistów i jej ideologii na Śląsku Opolskim (1925-1932)', Studia Śląskie, xxiv (1973), 190; Mirosław Cygański, Hitlerowskie organizacje dywersyjne w województwie śląskim 1931-1936 (Katowice, 1971), p. 15. Cygański mistakenly lists Rosikat as the first Gauleiter of the Silesian NSDAP, followed by Brückner in 1928. In fact, Brückner remained Gauleiter without interruption from March 1925 to the end of 1934.

Greifswald.¹ The East Prussian Gau organisation also dated from early April 1925. Here, on 5 April, after local Nazi Party groups had been established in Königsberg and Insterburg, the 'Gau Ostpreußen' held a 'foundation rally' presided over by 'Gauleiter' Wilhelm Stich.² Although according to one account a proper Gau organisation was not established in East Prussia until early 1926, when it was founded in Insterburg 'at the order of Adolf Hitler', it seems clear that there was a Nazi organisation in Königsberg in 1925 and that it probably exercised a coordinating function for the NSDAP in the province.³

It is more difficult to pinpoint the beginnings of the SA in eastern Germany than those of the NSDAP. The roots of the SA in the East lay in the traditions of right-wing political and paramilitary activity before the 1923 Putsch, and the absence of a central SA organisation until late 1926 meant that the first groups of storm troopers were formed entirely at local initiative.⁴ The newly formed Nazi Party groups

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/207, Vol. 2, f. 112: Philip Bouhler to Theodor Vahlen, Munich, 3 Apr. 1925; Gaede, op. cit., p. 13; Robert Henry Frank, 'Hitler and the National Socialist Coalition: 1924-1932' (Johns Hopkins Univ. Ph.D. thesis 1969), pp. 91-2. Vahlen became associated with the 'left wing' of the NSDAP, and was the only Gauleiter in eastern Germany to cooperate closely with the 'Nationalsozialistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft' formed by northern German Gauleiter in August 1925. See Peter Hüttenberger, Die Gauleiter. Studie zum Wandel des Machtgefüges in der NSDAP (Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 32-3.

2. See StAG, Rep. 240/B.31.c.: 'Erste Anfänge der SA in Ostpreußen'.

3. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(2): 'Die ersten politischen Marschkolonnen'.

4. See Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Macht-ergreifung, p. 838; Frank, op. cit., pp. 209-10.

needed protection squads, a fact which local NSDAP leaders recognised very quickly. The first SA groups thus either were established by local Party leaders and closely tied to local NSDAP groups, or were outgrowths of the Freikorps and other paramilitary organisations which were associated with völkisch politics and whose members placed themselves at the disposal of the NSDAP.

The beginnings of the SA in East Prussia date from May 1924, when, according to a subsequent Nazi history, it began life camouflaged as a 'patriotic protection association' (vaterländischer Schutzbund); in January 1925, it was claimed, this SA came out into the open under its own name.¹ Its leader was Waldemar Magunia. The precise character of this 'SA' is difficult to determine, especially since it pre-dated the Nazi Party organisation in the province. Most probably it served as a protection squad for the various völkisch groups active in Königsberg during 1924. Its first public appearance as an SA group did not occur until mid-May 1925, when it staged a Nazi propaganda march near Königsberg.

In Pomerania the first organisation of storm troopers grew out of a 'Frontbannabteilung' called into being in 1924 by the NSFB in Stettin.² The Stettin 'Frontbann' gathered together primarily members of the pre-Putsch Nazi movement, and with the re-establishment of the NSDAP in early 1925 became to all intents the SA of the local Nazi group. According to the leader

1. StAG, Rep. 240/B.31.c.: 'Erste Anfänge der SA in Ostpreußen'; Gause, op. cit., iii. 111.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/207, vol. 2, ff. 244-5: Willy Behnke to the Leitung der NSDAP, Stettin, 11 June 1926; *ibid.*, f. 246: Willy Behnke to the Leitung der NSDAP, Stettin, 21 June 1926.

of the Stettin 'Frontbann', Willy Behnke, the organisation placed itself at the disposal of the NSDAP to protect its meetings and distribute its propaganda, and by mid-1926 its 35 members all were enrolled in the Nazi Party and comprised 60 per cent of the total NSDAP membership in Stettin. Although the first mention of an SA per se in Pomerania dates from mid-1928,¹ the Stettin 'Frontbann' was an 'SA' in every respect but name.

In Silesia, where the NSDAP was better organised than in the other Gaue in eastern Germany, the SA was formed at the initiative of Gauleiter Brückner. Shortly before the first congress of the Silesian NSDAP, scheduled to take place in Breslau on 5 June 1925, Brückner decided that the Party needed its own protection squads. On 3 June an SA group was established in Breslau; its first leader was Paul-Willi Jakubaschk and it consisted of 65 men, roughly 85 per cent of whom were said to be war veterans.² A few days later a second SA group was formed in Brieg, and in Upper Silesia the former Freikorps leader Hans Peter von Heydebreck gathered some of his old Freikorps associates to form an SA group. Although Heydebreck was described later by Nazi historians as the first leader of the Silesian SA, the actual nature of his involvement with the organisation in its early days remains unclear, and the first SA formation in Upper Silesia closely connected with a particular NSDAP group was not founded until December 1925, when a storm section was established in Hindenburg.³

1. Drewniak, Początki ruchu hitlerowskiego, p. 47.

2. Paul-Willi Jakubaschk, Helmuth Brückner. Sein Kampf und Sieg in Schlesien (Hirschberg, 1933), pp. 59-60.

3. Paschke, Chronik der Stadt Hindenburg, pp. 69-70.

The distinction between the local NSDAP organisations and the SA groups attached to them during 1925 and 1926 was, in a sense, rather artificial. Often the two were identical, and the formal establishment of an SA group by a local Nazi Party organisation probably made little practical difference to the members involved; the meetings of the Party had to be protected in any case. Thus, for example, in 1934 a Nazi historian of the movement in Oppeln - where an NSDAP group was established in 1925 by former members of the 'Bund Oberland' and the 'Wehrwolf' - noted that during the early days 'a separation between the SA and the political leadership, such as exists today, did not exist'.¹ The differentiation between the two major branches of the Nazi movement did not come until later, when the NSDAP and the SA developed into mass organisations with well-developed separate hierarchies.

The growth of the Nazi movement in the eastern Prussian provinces between 1925 and 1928 was slow and uneven. The relative economic and political stability which Germany experienced during these years effectively prevented the NSDAP from expanding beyond the political ghetto of the völkisch movement. Far from the early strongholds of the Nazi Party, the groups in the East were largely ignored by the leadership in Munich, and without the benefit of the massive discontent which accompanied the economic crisis a few years hence they remained small and politically insignificant. Faced with the competition of other völkisch groupings and a strong and well-organised DNVP, frequently lacking effective leadership and plagued by in-

1. G. Riedel, 'Die Entwicklung der NSDAP im Kreise Oppeln', in Oppelner Heimat Kalender für Stadt und Land 1934 (Oppeln, 1934), pp. 40-2.

fighting, the eastern NSDAP Gaue made little progress until after the 1928 Reichstag elections. After an upsurge which followed the re-establishment of the Party in 1925, the activity of the NSDAP in the eastern regions tended to stagnate. Many who had joined the Party in 1925 lost interest and drifted away, and the years 1925-1928 were characterised by small NSDAP memberships in eastern Germany. When in 1928 the Nazi Party presented its own election list, independent of its völkisch rivals, for the first time in Reichstag elections, it conspicuously failed to gain support in the East,¹ although more than three years had passed since the establishment of the eastern German Gaue. The principal achievement of the Nazi movement in eastern Germany during the mid-1920s was not political success, but survival. It was here that the unifying figure of Hitler and the organisational focus provided by Munich proved so important in keeping the movement together, until economic and political crises lifted the NSDAP from relative obscurity at the turn of the decade.

Of all the eastern German Gaue, only Silesia retained the same top leadership from 1925 through 1933. From March 1925, when he founded the Silesian NSDAP Gau organisation, until December 1934, when he was removed from office, Helmuth Brückner remained at the helm of the Silesian Nazi movement.² Born in the village of Peilau in Kreis Reichenbach (Eulengebirge) in 1896, the son of a primary-school teacher, Brückner was a veteran of four years at the front in 1914-1918 and of the sub-

1. See above, p. 20.

2. BA, NS 26/156: NSDAP Gaupresseamt Schlesien to the NSDAP Hauptarchiv, Breslau, 20 Mar. 1937.

sequent struggles in Upper Silesia. He spent four years as a student at the University of Breslau after the War, and from 1925 provided a relatively stable leadership for the Silesian NSDAP. Due largely to this measure of organisational stability, following the initial burst of activity in 1925 there began a long, slow process of building up the Silesian Nazi movement and expanding its base of support. Although the growth was far from spectacular, by early 1927 Brückner could report cheerfully that the rival DVFB no longer was functioning in Silesia, leaving the NSDAP with a virtual monopoly of völkisch politics in the region.¹ Especially in the urban centres of Upper Silesia the Nazi movement was able to develop an organisational base, despite the determined opposition of the KPD. By July 1927 the Nazis felt sufficiently confident to organise an SA march through Gleiwitz as part of a regional congress (Bezirkstagung). Although the rally which followed was disrupted by Communists and resulted in a brawl requiring police intervention, the march itself was a rather impressive display for the young movement, with 135 Nazis taking part (122 in uniform), representing local NSDAP groups in Gleiwitz, Beuthen, Hindenburg, Ratibor, Oppeln, Kreuzburg and Malapane.² The persistent activity of a small core of Nazi activists, who staged meeting after meeting in an attempt to attract new adherents to the tiny movement, began slowly to draw a measure of support.

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/208, Vol. 2, f. 64: Helmuth Brückner to the Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Breslau, 15 Feb. 1927.

2. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1800, ff. 81-6: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 21 July 1927.

The development of the Nazi movement in Silesia was nevertheless far from smooth. During 1927 and 1928 a serious rift grew between the Gauleitung and the local NSDAP group in Breslau.¹ This conflict came to involve the SA - it was the first instance in which the storm troopers' organisation rebelled against the Party leadership in eastern Germany - and concerned issues which were to surface repeatedly during the following years. The unrest was sparked initially by Erich Rosikat, who as Deputy Gauleiter and leader of the Breslau NSDAP began to agitate against Brückner, who lived in Zobten (about 30 kilometers south-west of the Silesian capital) and was unable to maintain close contact with the Breslau group. This led to an open break in early 1927, when Brückner managed to force Rosikat out of the Party. There followed a succession of local Party leaders in Breslau, and by the end of the year the NSDAP in the city was split into two camps, one supporting the Gauleitung, the other opposing it. Even more than Brückner, the Gau business manager Rechenberg had aroused the anger of the Breslau group, which in December 1927 presented the Gauleiter with a list of complaints about Rechenberg's 'vindictive character', his overfondness for alcohol and alleged social contacts with Jews. A few weeks later, on 11 January 1928, Brückner responded by officially disbanding the Breslau NSDAP.²

It was at this point that the SA became involved. After Brückner dissolved the Breslau group, a general members' meeting

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/208, vol. 2, f. 64.

2. BDC, AOPG, Helmuth Brückner: Arthur Niedergesäß to Major Buch, Breslau, 20 May 1928, with an accompanying 'Denkschrift über die Ursachen zur Gründung der Nationalsozialistischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft Groß-Breslau'; *ibid.*: Helmuth Brückner to the Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Breslau, 17 June 1928.

was held in the city at which competing factions tried to gain the support of the SA. Accusations were made that Rechenberg had attempted to turn the 'Handarbeiter' in the SA against the 'Kopfarbeiter' in the local Party organisation and thus to force a split along crude class lines. Brückner sided firmly with his business manager, and re-formed the Breslau group with Rechenberg as its provisional leader, a move which Party members in the city regarded as a 'slap in the face'. The troubles in Breslau were brought to the attention of the NSDAP's 'Investigation and Arbitration Committee' (USchIA), and in April its chief, Walter Buch, travelled to Silesia and agreed with Brückner to dissolve the local Party organisation in the provincial capital once again. This precipitated an open revolt. On 2 May the Breslau Party members formed their own group, the 'National Socialist Working Group of Greater Breslau' (Nationalsozialistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Groß-Breslau), and then tried to enlist the support of the NSDAP leadership in Munich against the Silesian Gauleiter. The SA, instead of responding to Rechenberg's call to support the Gauleitung, rallied behind the Breslau rebels, accused Brückner of having slandered both the Breslau NSDAP and the SA, threatened to stop protecting meetings at which Brückner was to speak, and at one point came close to beating up their Gauleiter.¹

Soon after the break was made, however, the revolt collapsed. The rebels proved unwilling to press their revolt against the authority of Hitler, and the Munich leadership was unwilling to support breakaway groups against the Party's re-

1. Ibid.: 'Meldung', signed by Lang, 'former SA leader in Breslau', Breslau, 10 May 1928; Kurt Geyer to the USchIA der Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Breslau, 16 June 1928.

gional leaders. On 11 June Brückner expelled the leaders of the 'Arbeitsgemeinschaft' from the NSDAP, and in July the rebel group dissolved itself.¹ Although the new SA leaders installed in Breslau by Brückner after the revolt initially aroused opposition, the disbanding of the rebels' organisation effectively ended the threat to the Gauleitung. In order to rebuild the Breslau organisation, Brückner brought in the leader of the NSDAP in Upper Silesia, Kurt Kremser, who had supported the Gauleiter when repercussions of the revolt shook the Party in Beuthen.² Soon afterwards Kremser assumed command of the Silesian SA, a move which was to have important consequences during the years ahead.

The rebellion in Breslau in 1928 was in many ways typical of the more serious revolts which occurred within the Nazi movement in later years. The bitter in-fighting, the jealous guarding of prerogatives, the alliance of the SA with groups rebelling against the NSDAP hierarchy, the success of the Gauleiter in protecting his position, the unwillingness of the rebels to turn their backs on Hitler, and the utter failure of the revolt all were features repeated during the coming years. The importance of Hitler - for no one was rebelling against Hitler! - and the leverage this gave to those representing the Munich leadership formed the key to the strength of the Nazi organisation in the face of rebellion from within. Another significant aspect of this revolt was that it had no

1. Ibid.: 'Bekanntmachung', undated (probably from June 1928), signed by Helmuth Brückner; ibid.: Richard Linke to Adolf Hitler, Breslau, 28 July 1928.

2. Ibid.: Bezirksleiter Kremser to the Gauleitung Schlesien der NSDAP, Ratibor, 11 June 1928.

further effect on the development of the Silesian NSDAP, and later conflicts in Silesia had nothing to do with what happened in Breslau in 1928. The subsequent growth of the Party meant that very quickly new members, who looked to Brückner and understood little of the soon-forgotten conflict, outnumbered the older Nazis who had belonged to the organisation in early 1928 and may have supported the rebels. Finally, it is worth noting that, even in this first major revolt within the Nazi movement in eastern Germany, the SA found itself on the losing side.

Even more than in Silesia, in East Prussia the early development of the Nazi movement was marked by in-fighting. In East Prussia, however, the Nazi Party lacked the strong leadership of a man like Brückner, and internal conflict seriously limited its growth until the arrival of Erich Koch in September 1928. The initial arrangement whereby Wilhelm Stich was Gauleiter of the East Prussian Nazi organisation and Waldemar Magunia was SA leader lasted only until the spring of 1926, when Stich was forced out of the Nazi movement.¹ The vacant post of Gauleiter was offered first to Magunia, who declined, and then to Bruno Scherwitz - described as a 'front soldier and nothing but' - who accepted. In early 1927 Magunia also relinquished the leadership of the SA, handing over the command to Werner Siegfried, supervisor of a landed estate in Kreis Insterburg. However, Magunia remained Siegfried's 'deputy, chief of staff, adjutant, all in one', as well as the financial mainstay of the fledgling Nazi organisation; according to a

1. See StAG, Rep. 10/28, f. 99: 'Bericht über die Mitgliederversammlung der nationalsozialistischen deutschen Arbeiterpartei am 25. Juni 1926', Königsberg, 30 June 1926.

Nazi history of the movement in East Prussia, Magunia's bakery formed the 'financial backbone of the Party' during this period.¹ In the meantime Stich, like his counterparts in Silesia, attempted to form a breakaway 'Nationalsozialistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft', which, like the group in Silesia, soon collapsed. The rebel group never posed a serious threat to the East Prussian NSDAP, and served mainly to provide Scherwitz and Magunia the occasion to purge Nazi ranks.²

Despite this opportunity to purge the Party of rebellious elements, Scherwitz soon ran into difficulties. In the autumn of 1926 he resigned his post for a short period, and during 1927 the East Prussian Nazi organisation was rocked by internal dissension. In Königsberg a group of 30 Party members resigned, and in Insterburg the local NSDAP became increasingly restive.³ In August 1927 Scherwitz was removed as Gauleiter. Once again Magunia was offered the position, and once again he refused, preferring to become 'deputy leader of the East Prussian NSDAP'. This left the East Prussian Nazi Party without a Gauleiter for more than a year. The chaotic state of the East Prussian NSDAP was reflected in its membership figures. Never especially successful in attracting support, by early 1928

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(2): 'Die ersten politischen Marschkolonnen'.

2. StAG, Rep. 10/28, f. 128: report dated Königsberg, 13 Apr. 1927; StAG, Rep. 10/33, f. 6: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsidenten, Königsberg, 26 Jan. 1930.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/B.7.b.: NSDAP Gau Ostpreußen, 'Rundschreiben an alle Ortsgruppen und Einzelmitglieder des Gaues Ostpreußen', Königsberg, 23 Sept. 1926; *ibid.*: NSDAP Gau Ostpreußen, '2. Rundschreiben an alle Ortsgruppen und Einzelmitglieder', Königsberg, 8 Oct. 1926; StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(2): 'Die ersten politischen Marschkolonnen'.

the entire Gau East Prussia consisted of barely 200 members;¹ less than two years before, in May 1926, it had numbered 544.²

The anarchy which enveloped the East Prussian Nazi Party led to the rather remarkable intervention of the organisational chief of the NSDAP, Gregor Straßer. In March 1928 Straßer travelled to Königsberg, together with the regional commander of the SA in eastern Germany Walter Stennes, in order to meet with the East Prussian Nazis and sort out the question of the Gau leadership.³ Straßer discussed the leadership problem with the Königsberg group and offered two candidates for the position of Gauleiter: Heinrich Himmler, at that time Straßer's deputy, and Erich Koch, a former railway employee and deputy Gauleiter in the Ruhr. The choice fell to Koch, who took up the post on 3 September.⁴ A new chapter of the rapid growth of Nazi influence in the province now began.

In contrast to events in Silesia and East Prussia, the development of the Nazi organisation in Pomerania during the mid-1920s was quiet and uneventful. After an initial burst of activity in 1925, the Pomeranian NSDAP under the leadership of Gauleiter Vahlen experienced neither rapid growth nor fierce

1. The memberships of the local groups were as follows: Königsberg, 109; Insterburg, 61; Tilsit, 27; Allenstein, 20; and Artam, 16. In addition a group of 18 members was forming in Gerdauen. See *ibid.*: report of the 'Gautagung des Gaues Ostpreußen der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei am 18. März 1928 in Königsberg (Pr.)'.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/207, vol. 2, f. 14: 'Mitgliederstand des Gaues Ostpreußen der NSDAP'.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(2): report of the 'Gautagung des Gaues Ostpreußen der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei am 18. März 1928 in Königsberg (Pr.)'.

4. *Ibid.*: 'Die ersten politischen Marschkolonnen'; Gause, Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg, iii. 112.

internal wrangling.¹ In 1927 Vahlen was replaced as Gauleiter by Walther von Corswandt, a large landowner who moved the Gau headquarters from Greifswald to his estate in Cuntzow, and under von Corswandt the Pomeranian Nazi organisation continued to make little progress until the end of the decade. The quiet beginnings of the Pomeranian Nazi Party determined the development of the SA as well, which did not take firm shape under its own name until 1928, when it appeared in Stettin, a force of roughly 60 men led by Hans Lustig, a customs officer.²

From 1925 through 1928 throughout eastern Germany the NSDAP failed to extend its organisational net beyond the relatively few cities and market towns into the countryside. In the Border Province, which formed part of the NSDAP Gau 'Ostmark' and which contained no cities of appreciable size, the Nazi Party made no progress at all during this period. The significant achievement of the Nazi movement in eastern Germany was to have survived intact, enabling it at the end of the decade to enjoy a virtual monopoly of völkisch politics and making possible its dramatic growth once the effects of the economic crisis began to be felt. In this process neither internal conflicts nor their absence, the existence of a strong leadership nor a weak and rapidly changing one seemed to have a profound effect upon the general development of the Nazi movement. Regardless of the nature of the regional political leadership of the movement, it was not until almost the turn of the decade that the NSDAP began to attract a large measure of popular support in the eastern Prussian provinces.

1. Frank, 'Hitler and the National Socialist Coalition', p. 85.

2. Drewniak, Początki ruchu hitlerowskiego, p. 47.

(ii) The Development of the Nazi Movement between 1929 and 1933

Following the 1930 Reichstag elections, in which the NSDAP made a dramatic breakthrough throughout Germany, Prussian Interior Minister Carl Severing surveyed the rising fortunes of the Nazi movement and concluded:

The overall picture shows [...] a particular susceptibility of the eastern regions (East Prussia, Lower Silesia, Pomerania) for the National Socialist slogans and leads to the conclusion that the impetus of the NSDAP has passed from the South to the North and in the North is directed towards the East.¹

Although success came rather later in the eastern Prussian provinces than in the rest of Germany, when the Nazi Party began to attract mass support in the East it quickly made up for lost time. Whereas in 1928 the NSDAP was still a tiny splinter party in the eastern regions, by 1930 it had become a mass organisation spread into the eastern German countryside. This sudden transformation represented a political upheaval of unprecedented proportions.

The turning point for the Nazi movement in eastern Germany came in 1929. Between mid-1928 and the end of 1929 the NSDAP made great strides in the eastern Prussian provinces and accomplished two important things. First, it established itself as the only serious contender for the votes of the radical Right. For example, in the 1928 Reichstag elections in East Prussia, the only election district in Germany where the NSDAP received less than 1 per cent of the vote, the competing 'Völkisch-nationaler Block' attracted roughly 4 per cent; in the provincial Landtag elections in 1929, however, virtually all

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/374: 'Die Entwicklung der NSDAP in Preußen in den Jahren 1928-1930', Berlin, 11 Nov. 1930.

the electoral support for the völkisch Right in East Prussia fell to the NSDAP.¹ Second, by the end of 1929 the NSDAP had succeeded in attracting levels of support in the eastern Prussian provinces (with the exception of Upper Silesia) which were almost the same as in the rest of the country. The Nazi movement in eastern Germany had managed to overcome its slow start.

The Share of the Vote for the NSDAP in the Eastern Prussian Provinces, 1928-1930 (in %)²

Province	<u>Landtag</u> Elections 20 May 1928	<u>Provincial</u> <u>Landtag</u> Elections 17 Nov. 1929	<u>Reichstag</u> Elections 14 Sept. 1930
East Prussia	0.8	4.3	22.5
Border Province	0.7	4.7	17.0
Pomerania	1.5	4.1	24.2
Lower Silesia	1.0	5.2	22.9
Upper Silesia	1.0	2.3	9.5
Prussia	1.8	5.01	18.5
Reich	2.6(<u>Reichstag</u>)	-	18.3

By 1930 the Nazi Party had begun to achieve significantly better results in the East than in the country as a whole, and, in doing so, had drawn away large sections of the support of the DNVP and DVP.³ In the Protestant rural hinterlands of eastern Germany it scored stunning successes. Only in the Catholic areas of the Border Province, East Prussia (Ermland) and Upper Silesia did its share of the vote lag far behind its share in the country as a whole.

1. Hertz-Eichenrode, Politik und Landwirtschaft, p. 67.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/374: 'Die Entwicklung der NSDAP in Preußen in den Jahren 1928-1930', Berlin, 11 Nov. 1930; IfZ, MA 198/5, microfilm of DZAM, Rep. 77, tit. 4043, Nr. 283, f. 56: 'Wahlerfolge der NSDAP in Preußen bei den Landtagswahlen am 20. Mai 1928 und in den Provinziallandtagswahlen am 17. November 1929'.

3. See above, p. 20.

As it became apparent that the Nazi movement could find a large measure of support in rural districts, the NSDAP made increasingly successful efforts to spread into the countryside throughout the eastern Prussian provinces. In East Prussia, for example, in January 1929 the Gauleitung observed a rapid growth of the Party organisation and noted that 'especially among the farmers our Idea is meeting with approval'.¹ As the movement gained momentum during 1929 and 1930, Nazi rallies and demonstrations were staged with rising frequency in the countryside, in the periods between election campaigns as well as during them.² Considerable efforts were made specifically to attract the rural population, with Party propaganda concentrated on the attempt to win embittered farmers from the DNVP - farmers whose economic difficulties were leading them away from the traditional party-political structure and toward forms of protest such as refusal to pay taxes - and simultaneously to attract agricultural labourers.³ In addition spec-

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(1): 'Versammlungsbericht', Königsberg, 28 Jan. 1929.

2. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.2.: reports of NSDAP propaganda activities in the Reg. Bez. Allenstein; StAG, Rep. 14/B.III.2., f. 10: Landeskriminalpolizei Allenstein to the Kriminal- und Grenzkommissariate in Prostken, Dlottowen, Ortelsburg, Neidenburg and Gilgenburg, Allenstein, 14 Sept. 1929; WAP Olsztyn, Magistrat Johannsburg/217: 'Lageberichte' from 1929 and 1930; StAG, Rep. 10/17, ff. 433-9: The Regierungspräsident to the Oberpräsident, Marienwerder, 16 Apr. 1930; StAG, Rep. 240/C.74.b.: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Sensburg, 25 Mar. 1930; *ibid.*: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Sensburg, 24 Sept. 1930.

3. See StAG, Rep. 10/17, ff. 441-9: The Regierungspräsident to the Oberpräsident, Marienwerder, 18 July 1930; WAP Szczecin, RS/10, f. 102: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Demmin, 31 Jan. 1931; WAP Szczecin, RS/17, ff. 37-41: The kom. Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Greifenhagen, 1 Feb. 1931; WAP Szczecin, RS/3, ff. 57-9: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Anklam, 6 Feb. 1931; WAP Szczecin, RS/8, ff. 515-16: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Cammin, 4 Mar. 1931.

ial organisations were formed expressly for the farm population — such as the 'National Socialist Farmers' and Settlers' League' (Nationalsozialistischer Bauern- und Siedlerbund) established by the East Prussian NSDAP at the beginning of 1930, well before Richard Walther Darré began to set up his 'agrarian-political' organisation nationally.¹

From the turn of the decade, and especially after the 1930 elections, the number of Nazi Party groups and the Party membership grew phenomenally. In East Prussia Gauleiter Koch boasted in January 1930 that since he had arrived in the province the number of Party members had risen from roughly 200 to more than 8000, and the number of local groups from four to 211.² In Silesia in the autumn of 1931 Gauleiter Brückner reported that the NSDAP was growing at a rate of between 1500 and 2000 members per month.³ According to police reports, in Upper Silesia the Nazi Party began to succeed in establishing local groups in the market towns and in small farm communities during 1930, and at the end of the year there were 61 local groups with 3012 members in the province.⁴ By the end of March 1931

1. StAG, Rep. 10/31, ff. 26-7: The Oberpräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 21 Jan. 1930. For details of Darré's early efforts to form a nationwide organisation, see Gies, 'NSDAP und landwirtschaftliche Organisationen', pp. 341-6; Farquharson, The Plough and the Swastika, pp. 15-19.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/B.9.a.: 'Lagebericht der Gauleitung', Königsberg, 20 Jan. 1930.

3. BA, NS 22/1068: Helmuth Brückner to Gregor Straßer, Breslau, 3 Nov. 1931. On 1 October 1931 the membership of the NSDAP in Silesia was said to be 26,800.

4. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 191-227: 'Bericht Nr. 2 über die politische Lage im Dienstbereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien in der Zeit vom 1. Juli bis 30. September 1930', Oppeln, 20 Oct. 1930; *ibid.*, ff. 293-301: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien in der Zeit vom 1.10 bis zum 31.12.30', Oppeln, 28 Jan. 1931.

there were 115 Upper Silesian NSDAP groups with 5298 members; by the end of June there were 151 groups with 6973 members; and by the end of the year the Party groups numbered 183 with a combined membership of 9110.¹ The greatest part of this growth took place in the countryside.

The first attempts to spread the Nazi organisation into the countryside generally involved the efforts of the few urban Nazi groups (for example, in Königsberg, Stettin, Breslau or Gleiwitz) to disseminate propaganda in the surrounding regions. Urban NSDAP groups would hold rallies in country towns and villages, in order to convince a sufficient number of local residents to form their own Party cell. Until the turn of the decade progress was difficult, and the early attempts to establish rural NSDAP groups in this manner often fell flat.² The early history of the Nazi Party in Kreis Gumbinnen, East Prussia, offers a representative example of the spread of the movement into the countryside.³ Gumbinnen, a town of roughly 20,000 predominantly Protestant inhabitants, was the administrative centre of the most north-easterly of East Prussia's four

1. Ibid., ff. 367-73: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien in der Zeit vom 1.1. bis zum 31.3.1931', Oppeln, 30 Apr. 1931; ibid., ff. 421-7: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien in der Zeit vom 1. April bis zum 30. Juni 1931', Oppeln, 23 July 1931; ibid., ff. 571-7: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien für die Zeit vom 1. Oktober bis 31. Dezember 1931', Oppeln, 25 Jan. 1932.

2. See, for example, WAP Opole, OPO/990, ff. 336-9: The Oberpräsident to the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Oppeln, 29 Sept. 1929.

3. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.48.a.: 'Gumbinnen und die NSDAP. Die Entwicklung des Nationalsozialismus in unserem Kreise', by Karl Böttcher, Gumbinnen (no date).

Regierungsbezirke (administrative regions). Here the NSDAP had had a relatively early start. In 1925 a number of local right-wing sympathisers formed a 'Schlageterbund' in the town (disbanded in 1926); in the May 1928 Reichstag elections the NSDAP received 93 votes in Gumbinnen itself and another 44 in the surrounding district; in September 1928 a local Nazi Party group was formed in the town, and in the following January an SA was set up; and in November 1929 the Nazi candidates received 540 votes in the elections for the city assembly. During 1929 the Gumbinnen NSDAP made repeated attempts to establish additional Nazi groups by holding rallies in the nearby countryside, but without success, and it was not until March 1930 that the first rural Party group in the district was formed, in Ischdaggen, followed shortly by another in Niebudszen. The real advance took place in 1931, however, after the September 1930 Reichstag elections; once the NSDAP had established itself as a major political party in terms of electoral support, then its organisation spread rapidly throughout Kreis Gumbinnen. The pattern of the growth of the Nazi Party in and around Gumbinnen was typical for the spread of Nazism in much of eastern Germany: the first significant attempts to extend beyond the early urban strongholds occurred in 1929 and frequently misfired; these efforts were rewarded with success during 1930; and in 1931, in the wake of the dramatic electoral advances of the previous year, the NSDAP finally was able to saturate the rural areas with local Party groups.

Among the most important factors contributing to the growth of the Nazi movement was the drawing of support from other right-wing and conservative political organisations. The first step

in this direction was the absorption of former members of völkisch groups which had fallen by the wayside in the late 1920s. These recruits were followed by a growing number of erstwhile supporters of conservative political groups - particularly of the DNVP - who transferred their allegiance to the Nazis. As the Nazi movement grew, many local politicians who had been elected to assemblies as members of the DNVP or other conservative or völkisch groups chose to attach themselves to the NSDAP, and reports of such conversions provided welcome copy for Nazi Party newspapers.¹ Among Stahlhelm members as well there was a growing tendency, from the turn of the decade, to leave that conservative veterans' organisation for the Nazi movement.²

In rural eastern Germany the drift of supporters from the conservative Right toward the Nazi movement was particularly evident within the regional affiliates of the National Rural League (Reichslandbund). This umbrella organisation, which encompassed the largest and most influential agricultural organisations in the eastern Prussian provinces, was the target for concerted and successful efforts by the Nazis to gain support.³ As an ever larger proportion of their membership became attracted to the NSDAP, a number of regional Landbünde - for example, in Pomerania and Upper Silesia - publicly drew close to the Nazis.⁴

1. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.39.d.: text of an article from the Ostdeutscher Beobachter, 29 Sept. 1929.

2. See below, p. 64.

3. See Gies, loc. cit.; Gessner, Agrarverbände in der Weimarer Republik, pp. 241-51.

4. WAP Szczecin, RS/3, ff. 57-9: The Landrat to the Polizeipräsident in Stettin, Anklam, 6 Feb. 1931; VB, 24 Oct. 1930, p. 2.

At the same time, the growing sympathy for the NSDAP frequently made it possible for the Nazis to challenge the Landbünde directly, by presenting their own lists of candidates for elections to chambers of agriculture (Landwirtschaftskammer) with increasing success. It was indeed a telling sign of the erosion of traditional conservative politics when Arno Manthey, an independent farmer and regional SA leader, was elected chairman of the Landwirtschaftskammer in the Border Province in November 1932.¹

While the Nazi movement was growing so dramatically in eastern Germany, the top NSDAP leadership in the eastern Gaue remained relatively stable. Erich Koch in East Prussia, Helmut Brückner in Silesia and Wilhelm Kube in the Gau 'Ostmark'² all remained Gauleiter of their respective regions without interruption from the late 1920s through 1933. Only in Pomerania was there a change, when von Corswandt proved unwilling to transfer the Gau headquarters from his estate to Stettin – a move made necessary by the rapid growth of the organisation – and was replaced as Gauleiter in April 1931 by the 27-year-old lawyer Wilhelm Karpenstein.³ The stability of the

1. WAP Poznań, OPS/368, f. 498: Landwirtschaftskammer für die Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 3 Dec. 1932. See also Gessner, op. cit., p. 249.

2. Kube, who was active in the DNVP in the early 1920s and became a Reichstag deputy of the NSFB in 1924, was expelled in 1927 from the Reich leadership of the DVFB and joined the NSDAP in 1928. He became Gauleiter of the 'Ostmark' in September 1928. See Hüttenberger, Die Gauleiter, pp. 215-16.

3. Ibid., pp. 222-3; BA, Sammlung Schumacher/207, Vol. 2, f. 386: Adolf Hitler, 'Anordnung', Munich, 1 Apr. 1931; *ibid.*, f. 387: Walther von Corswandt, Cuntzow, 4 Mar. 1931; BA, NS 26/152, f. 484: Gaupresseamt to the Hauptarchiv der NSDAP, Stettin, 27 Jan. 1937.

leadership of the eastern German Gaue was of considerable help in allowing the NSDAP to cope effectively with the explosive growth of its membership as it attracted support in the countryside. Conversely, the growth of the movement made the positions of the Gauleiter more stable and secure, by providing evidence of the success of their propaganda efforts and by offering greater inducement to Nazi leaders to remain at their posts as the acquisition of power seemed to be getting nearer.

The growth of the NSDAP was accompanied by the establishment of a number of subordinate Nazi organisations, in addition to the SA and SS. By 1931 the NSDAP in the eastern Prussian provinces had a well-developed network of Party publications, and daily Nazi newspapers appeared in each of the three major east German cities: the Pommersche Zeitung in Stettin, the Preußische Zeitung in Königsberg, and the Schlesische Tageszeitung (from June 1931 the Nationalsozialistische Schlesische Tageszeitung) in Breslau. As the Nazi movement grew and the Party sought to attract support among factory workers, regional organisations of the Nazi factory cell organisation, the NSBO, were established in the East. Particularly important in rural eastern Germany were the efforts to set up Darré's 'agrarian-political department' (agrarpolitisches Apparat) on a regional basis. Special 'agricultural advisors' (landwirtschaftliche Fachberater) were appointed in each Gau, and by the end of 1930 the 'Ostmark', Pomerania and Silesia numbered among the 15 Gaue where an 'agrarian-political office' was functioning at the local as well as the regional level.¹ In addition, in a num-

1. BA, NS 26/951: R. Walther Darré to the landwirtschaftliche Fachberater der Gauleitungen, Munich, 20 Nov. 1930; BA, NS 26/949: undated report (c. Dec. 1930).

ber of places other special Nazi organisations were created to cultivate support among specific sections of the population. In East Prussia, for example, in 1932 the Gauleitung formed an 'Association of German Cattle-Traders, Gau East Prussia' in order to combat Jewish cattle dealers;¹ and in the Upper Silesian industrial region, also in 1932, the Nazis formed a 'Committee of National Socialist Police Officers'.²

By early 1931 the Nazi Party Gau in eastern Germany possessed well-developed organisational structures with large staffs of Gau Sachberater - specialist advisors who were to supervise the movement's propaganda activities in specific policy areas.³ In East Prussia, where Gauleiter Koch made special efforts to build his organisation, by the beginning of 1931 the Gau had - in addition to the Gauleiter, his deputy and the Gau treasurer - a press spokesman, a director of Gau propaganda, an NSBO leader, and specialists in each of the following areas: youth, law, local government, employment law, Mittelstand policy, agrarian policy, financial and economic policy, and culture and race. A further post was created for social policy, but this was vacant in early 1931. As elsewhere in Germany, in the eastern Prussian provinces the NSDAP grew during the early 1930s into a large party with an increasingly specialised structure and a growing number of subordinate organisations to deal with the particular interests of the various

1. StAG, Rep. 240/B.29.c.: 'Boykottfälle'.

2. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, ff. 939-41: The komm. Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 14 Nov. 1932.

3. See, for example, the lists of the Gau organisations and advisors in East Prussia and Silesia in BA, NS 22/1065, and BA, NS 22/1068.

social groups which formed the Nazi movement.¹

Of the many subordinate Nazi organisations, probably the most important to the development of the SA (the SS excepted) was the Hitler Youth. When the SA was re-organised during the mid-1920s, the Nazi youth movement first had been envisaged as the 'youth section' of the SA.² Although the Hitler Youth in fact developed independently of the SA, the SA nonetheless exercised considerable influence on its activities, especially from 1931. For most of the pre-1933 period the Hitler Youth remained formally subordinate to the Munich SA leadership, its participation in marches and demonstrations was subject to the supervision of the SA, and its regional subdivisions were made to correspond geographically to those of the SA rather than necessarily to those of the Party.³ Most importantly, the Hitler Youth tended to serve as a youth wing of the SA, providing an organisational home for adolescents and young men until they passed their eighteenth birthdays and could join the SA outright. In terms of their activities, the difference between a 17-year-old member of the Hitler Youth and a 19-year-old SA member was often slight, and it was common for the older HJ members to join the storm troopers at rallies and marches.⁴

1. For a detailed description of this development in Lower Saxony, see Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, pp. 156-200.

2. IfZ, Fa 107, ff. 33-5: GRUSA II, Munich, 31 May 1927; Peter D. Stachura, Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic (Santa Barbara and Oxford, 1975), pp. 25-7. According to the 1927 scheme, which was never realised, the SA was to consist of three sections: for men, women and youth.

3. Ibid., pp. 25-38; 133-6.

4. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1800, f. 1021: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 14 June 1930; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 293-301.

Indeed, the Hitler Youth generally demonstrated in public together with the SA, appearing as an independent organisation only at the larger Nazi rallies.

The beginnings of the Hitler Youth in eastern Germany date from early 1927, when the Nazi youth organisation began to extend far beyond its early strongholds in Saxony.¹ It nevertheless remained rather small until 1933; at the beginning of 1931 the entire HJ numbered only about 14,000 members, and in January 1933 roughly 55,000.² Although during the early 1930s the Hitler Youth had greater success with recruitment in central, northern and eastern Germany than in the South and West of the country, in absolute terms it remained small in the eastern Prussian provinces. In January 1931 the Hitler Youth had 500 members in the Breslau region (Middle Silesia), 202 in Lower Silesia, 103 in Upper Silesia, 528 in East Prussia and 547 in Pomerania; one year later it numbered 1586 in the Breslau region, 954 in Lower Silesia, 712 in Upper Silesia, 1730 in East Prussia and 1591 in Pomerania.³ While on its own such a relatively small organisation could play only a limited role in the Nazi struggle for power, the Hitler Youth buttressed local and regional SA groups, joined them in marches and demonstrations, and provided a kind of nursery for future storm troopers.

As in the rest of Germany, in the eastern Prussian pro-

1. Stachura, Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic, pp. 30-1, 185, 261-2.

2. Ibid., pp. 179-85, 267-9.

3. Ibid., pp. 267-9; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 293-301. Separate figures for the Border Province are not available, as these were included in the figures reported from the 'Ostmark'.

vinces the NSDAP used the 18 months following the 1930 Reichstag elections to bombard the population with propaganda and to create an organisational network which penetrated into virtually every town and village. Thus the Nazi Party in eastern Germany was well equipped to face the unprecedented series of elections in 1932. Within eight months, from March through November 1932, the population of Prussia was subjected to five major campaigns: for the two Reich Presidential elections in March and April, the Prussian Landtag election in April, and the two Reichstag elections in July and November. The results demonstrated that the NSDAP unquestionably had developed into the largest political party in Germany, and had built up an organisation capable of staging tens of thousands of political rallies and saturating the country with propaganda. At the same time, however, they showed the limits of what the Nazis could achieve through electoral politics, for the NSDAP exhausted its reserves of electoral support in 1932 without achieving power. In the eastern regions the patterns of voting remained similar to those of 1930. In all the eastern election districts, with the important exception of Upper Silesia, the Nazis attracted in 1932 a consistently higher level of support than in the country as a whole. Among the most striking aspects of the Nazi success in the East was the backing Hitler received against Hindenburg for the Reich Presidency. As Heinrich Brüning noted, 'the Hindenburg myth, which was still alive in the West and South of Germany, was already dead in the East'.¹ Even in the first Presidential election, in March, Hitler outpolled Hindenburg by nearly two to one in Kreis Neidenburg, the site of the

1. Heinrich Brüning, Memoiren 1918-1934 (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 242-3.

famous Battle of Tannenberg which had established the aged president's reputation as the saviour of East Prussia.¹ Indeed, the eastern election districts provided the Nazis with some of their best returns in all Germany, and in the July Reichstag elections the NSDAP received only slightly less than 50 per cent of the vote in all the eastern regions except Upper Silesia.

The Share of the Vote for the NSDAP in the Eastern Prussian Provinces, Reichstag Elections, 1932-1933 (in %)²

Province	31 July 1932	6 Nov. 1932	5 Mar. 1933
East Prussia	47.1	39.7	56.5
Border Province	46.2	42.5	53.6
Pomerania	47.9	43.1	55.2
Lower Silesia	45.3	41.1	51.7
Upper Silesia	29.3	26.8	43.2
Reich	37.3	33.1	43.9

The downturn in support for the NSDAP in the autumn of 1932 was felt in the eastern regions no less than in the rest of the country. Nazi electoral backing fell in all the eastern Prussian provinces, and most precipitously in East Prussia. The decline in the Nazi vote coincided with a severe crisis within the movement, as the financial position of the NSDAP became desperate and the membership of many local Party groups (and, with it, dues receipts) fell rapidly. By no means untypical were the sagging fortunes of the NSDAP in Lötzen, East Prussia, where the membership tumbled from 315 in October to only 185 in December.³ The fall in Nazi fortunes threatened

1. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.64.b.: Gauleitung Schlesien to the Ortsgruppe der NSDAP Neidenburg, Schweidnitz, 19 Mar. 1932.

2. StDR, ccccxiv (Die Wahlen zum Reichstag am 31. Juli und 6. November 1932 und am 5. März 1933) (Berlin, 1935), 8, 9, 43, 45-8, 76-7, 111, 113-16, 142-3, 166, 172-80.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.59.b.: 'Vierteljährliche Organisationsmeldungen' from 21 Oct. 1932 and 31 Dec. 1932.

to break apart the impressive organisational structure built up during the previous years, as morale among the Party faithful plummeted.¹

The crisis which enveloped the Nazi movement during the final months of 1932 was overcome at a stroke with the appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor on 30 January 1933. The support which had drifted away from the NSDAP during late 1932 swiftly returned once the Nazis achieved political power. In the eastern Prussian provinces the recovery of the NSDAP was even more dramatic than in the country as a whole; only in Lower Silesia was the increase in the share of Nazi votes between November 1932 and March 1933 less than the national average (and there only marginally so). The sudden success of the movement brought thousands of new members into the NSDAP and its affiliated organisations. Local Party groups, which only a few weeks before had been losing members at an alarming rate, found their membership figures growing by leaps and bounds. A typical example was the group in the village of Waldfließ, Kreis Lötzen: in the summer of 1932 it had had 33 members; by October the number had fallen to 21, and by the end of the year only 17 members were left; by the end of May 1933, however, the figure had jumped to 98.² By the summer of 1933, in most local groups the new, post-January members outnumbered the veterans who had joined before Hitler became Chancellor.

1. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.54.b.: 'Chronik der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Roßgarten, Kreis Königsberg/Pr.'. For a more detailed discussion of the crisis in late 1932, and especially the role played by the SA, see below, pp. 213-19.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.61.a.: 'Vierteljährliche Organisationsmeldungen' for the period July 1932-May 1933.

The success in 1933 brought considerable dividends to the NSDAP leadership in the eastern regions, as it did throughout Germany. With the exception of Karpenstein in Pomerania, each of the Nazi Gauleiter in the eastern Prussian provinces managed to get himself installed as provincial Oberpräsident in 1933: Brückner in Lower Silesia, Koch in East Prussia, and Kube in Brandenburg.¹ At the local level as well the Party's leaders and functionaries scrambled for positions in government. Within a matter of weeks the NSDAP in eastern Germany was transformed from a disintegrating political party into a rapidly growing organisation enjoying the spoils of power.

(iii) The Growth of the SA to 1933

The growth of the SA in the eastern Prussian provinces before 1933 was determined essentially by the progress of the Nazi movement as a whole. From its beginnings in 1925 until the breakthrough in 1929-1930 the SA remained small and limited to the movement's early urban strongholds, but from about 1930 it grew swiftly and spread throughout the eastern German countryside. By mid-1931 the SA, which three years before had numbered only a few hundred men throughout the eastern Prussian provinces, had become the most powerful political army in eastern Germany.

As noted above, the beginnings of the SA in eastern Ger-

1. In Pomerania, Dr. Karl von Halfern, Oberpräsident since June 1930, remained at his post until October 1933. He was not replaced until July 1934, when Franz Schwede-Coburg, Karpenstein's successor as Gauleiter, became Oberpräsident. See Robert Thévoz, Hans Branig and Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 im Spiegel von Gestapo-Lageberichten und Sachakten (Darstellung) (Cologne and Berlin, 1974), pp. 45, 289.

many dated from 1925, when the newly formed groups of the Nazi Party began to organise units to protect their meetings and distribute propaganda. Since the formation of the first SA groups pre-dated the establishment of a centrally structured, separate SA organisation in Munich, their first ties were to the local and regional Nazi Party groups rather than to an SA hierarchy. In fact, the re-establishment of an SA organisation on a nationwide level was among the last steps Hitler took while rebuilding the Nazi movement in the mid-1920s. Having drawn his conclusions from the unsuccessful Putsch, Hitler recognised that, in order to avoid a repetition of the disastrous confrontation of 1923, it was necessary strictly to control the development of the SA and to limit it to political tasks determined by the NSDAP. In his announcement re-establishing the NSDAP in February 1925, Hitler specified that the SA was to be reconstructed 'according to the basic principles in effect until February 1923'¹ - that is, the SA was to remain a political army and the propaganda troop of the Party, and it would not be allowed to develop into an armed 'Wehrverband' as had happened during 1923. In May 1925 the Munich Party leadership spelled out further guidelines for the development of the SA, urging local leaders to build up SA units. However, it was not until late summer 1926 - 18 months after the NSDAP had been re-established - that a 'Supreme SA-Leader' was appointed and the framework for a

1. VB, 26 Feb. 1925, p. 2. The text of Hitler's 'Basic guidelines for the re-activation of the National Socialist German Workers' Party' is published in Tyrell, Führer befehl, pp. 105-7. See also Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (213/217 edn., Munich, 1926), pp. 619-20.

nationwide organisation was created.¹

Beginning in September 1926 the new 'Supreme SA-Leader' Franz Felix Pfeffer von Salomon (known generally as Franz von Pfeffer) - a former Freikorps leader, NSDAP Gauleiter in Westphalia during 1925 and 1926 and for a short period co-Gauleiter in the NSDAP Gau Ruhr - outlined a clearly defined, unified and hierarchical structure for the SA. He ordered the separation of the SA from the local Nazi Party organisations and in a long series of 'SA Orders' (SABE) and 'Basic SA Directives' (GRUSA) set forth organisational guidelines and disciplinary procedures, delineated the political duties of the SA and the relations between the SA and the Party itself, and provided norms for SA uniforms and insignia.² The most important element of this new structure was the degree of independence from Party officials given to SA leaders. Although Party leaders could assign duties to the SA, it was left to the SA leaders to determine how these were to be carried out, and indeed whether the SA could carry them out.³ At the same time, an organisational structure was developed which, in addition to being independent of the Party hierarchy at all but the top level, was very well suited to rapid expansion - with the various SA units expected to split, amoeba-

1. See Werner, 'SA und NSDAP', p. 320; Bennecke, Hitler und die SA, pp. 119-32; Joseph Nyomarkay, Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party (Minneapolis, 1967), pp. 110-13; Wolfgang Horn, Führerideologie und Parteiorganisation in der NSDAP (1919-1933) (Düsseldorf, 1972), pp. 226-30.

2. For a detailed discussion of the organisation of the SA, as was developed by von Pfeffer, see Werner, op. cit., pp. 356-403.

3. See Bennecke, op. cit., pp. 131-2, 247-8; Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, p. 182.

like, whenever they grew to sufficient size.¹ On paper at least, von Pfeffer had laid foundations which greatly facilitated the rapid expansion the SA was to experience in the years ahead.

At first von Pfeffer's organisational guidelines were largely ignored in practice. Until almost the turn of the decade, the rather isolated Nazi groups in the eastern Prussian provinces were too small meaningfully to apply the new guidelines. SA units rarely achieved the strengths prescribed on von Pfeffer's organisational charts, and the local SA units remained more closely connected to the Party groups from which they had sprung than to regional SA leaders. As long as the SA in the eastern German Gaue numbered only a few hundred members who were concentrated in the larger cities, the question of a well-developed and self-contained SA organisation on a regional level was largely academic. Thus the development of the SA as a separate organisation within the Nazi movement was essentially a consequence of the growth of the movement as a whole, beginning in 1929 and 1930. Only once the membership of the SA began to grow significantly did its regional organisation assume importance in eastern Germany. It was at this point that the structures outlined by von Pfeffer became a

1. The organisational structure was fixed as follows:
6-12 men = 1 'Gruppe' (later revised to 3-12 men)
5-8 'Gruppen' = 1 'Trupp'
2-4 'Trupps' = 1 'Sturm'
2-5 'Stürme' = 1 'Standarte'
2-5 'Standarten' = 1 'Brigade'
All the 'Brigaden' within a Gau formed a 'Gausturm'.
All the 'Gaustürme' together formed the SA.
See IfZ, Fa 107, ff. 19-20: SABB 6, Munich, 6 Nov. 1926; *ibid.*, f. 27: SABB 14, Munich, 14 Nov. 1926; *ibid.*, ff. 37-8: GRUSA IA, Munich, 4 June 1927.

reality and the contradictions inherent in that structure (in the quasi-independent position of the SA vis-à-vis the Party) became a source of considerable friction.

Of the eastern regions, the growth of the SA is best documented for Upper Silesia. Although the Nazi movement received a lower level of support in Upper Silesia than it did in the other eastern Prussian provinces, nevertheless its growth followed essentially the same pattern as elsewhere in eastern Germany. While a smaller proportion of the population supported the NSDAP or became active members of the Party and the SA, the factors which led men to become Nazi storm troopers were the same, and the growth of the SA occurred at roughly the same time, in Upper Silesia as elsewhere in the East. Thus a closer examination of the growth of the Upper Silesian SA should make clearer the main outlines of the development of the SA throughout eastern Germany.

Although the Upper Silesian industrial region had been an early centre of the Nazi movement in eastern Germany, during the mid-1920s the SA in Upper Silesia remained small. According to the first tally by regional authorities of the strength of the SA in the province, in February 1927, both the SA and the NSDAP were limited to rather tiny groups in the cities.¹ In Hindenburg there was an 'SA' of roughly 20 men; in Gleiwitz, where a 'Sportabteilung' of ten men had fizzled out in December 1926, there was a 'Schutzstaffel' with ten members; in Oppeln there was a Nazi Party group which later in the year was reported to have a 'Saalschutz' of ten

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1800, ff. 29-65: reports from district officials throughout Upper Silesia concerning the size of local Nazi groups, dated late February 1927.

men;¹ and in Ratibor there was a 'Sportabteilung' with 40 members under the leadership of Kurt Kremser.² By January 1928 these groups had grown somewhat: in the industrial region, the Hindenburg SA group numbered 80 men, and additional SA units had been established in Beuthen (20 members) and Gleiwitz (seven members); and elsewhere in the province, the Oppeln group had increased to 45 men, the Ratibor SA maintained its membership of 40 and a new group was established in Kreuzburg with 12 members.³ Thus at the beginning of 1928 the Upper Silesian SA numbered altogether 204 men, hardly an impressive figure in a province with approximately 1.5 million inhabitants. The following year saw little progress; in the wake of the internal conflicts which rocked the Silesian Gau-leitung in 1928 SA membership seems to have reached a low ebb; by April 1929 the Oppeln SA 'Sturm' had declined from 45 members to 19 and the Ratibor 'Sturm' from 40 to between 20 and 25.⁴ The Nazi movement, including the SA, had, as yet, largely failed to gain a foothold in the Upper Silesian countryside.

The fortunes of the Upper Silesian Nazi movement changed in mid-1929, as the Party membership began to pick up.⁵ During

1. Ibid., f. 171: The Oberbürgermeister to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 27 Oct. 1927.

2. In October a 'Schutzstaffel' with 17 members was reported in Ratibor as well. See *ibid.*, f. 139: The Oberbürgermeister to the Regierungspräsident, Ratibor, 6 Oct. 1927.

3. Ibid., ff. 198-9: 'Nachweisung der Schutzstaffeln und Sportabteilungen der NSDAP in der Provinz Oberschlesien nach dem Stande vom Januar 1928'.

4. Ibid., f. 491: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 26 Apr. 1929.

5. See BA, NS 22/1068: 'Beschaffenheitsbericht Mitte März bis Pfingsten 29', Schweidnitz, 14 May 1929; BA, Sammlung Schumacher/208, vol. 2, f. 73.

the second half of 1929 the SA was given a special boost when the NSDAP waged a joint campaign with the DNVP and the Stahlhelm against the Young Plan. Not only did the alliance with the conservatives give the Nazis additional exposure; it also brought members of the DNVP and the Stahlhelm into close contact with the NSDAP and the SA, making it possible for the SA to attract new recruits from the veterans' organisation.¹ The result was a noticeable upturn in the activities of the Nazis. In the first quarter of 1930 the police noted the strenuous efforts of the Upper Silesian Nazi organisation to establish new Party groups and strengthen the SA, and reported the size of the SA units in the region as follows: Oppeln, 68; Kreuzburg, 18; Hindenburg, 45; Ratibor, 52; Gleiwitz, 28; and Beuthen, 37.² While the SA was still rather small and limited basically to the cities, the general trend was an upward one.

It was from mid-1930 that the SA experienced its most significant growth. The upswing which had begun modestly in 1929 accelerated during 1930, and by the time of the September Reichstag elections there were 1857 members in the NSDAP in Upper Silesia and probably more than 500 in the SA.³ Not only had the SA grown in the cities - in Hindenburg it numbered 80

1. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1829, ff. 3-75: 'Lagebericht für die politische Bewegung im Präsidialbezirk Oppeln für die Zeit vom 1. Okt. bis 31. Dez. 1929', Oppeln, 7 Jan. 1930.

2. Ibid., ff. 523-73: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Dienstbereich des Polizeipräsidiums Gleiwitz für die Zeit vom 1. Januar bis 31. März 1930', Gleiwitz, 11 Apr. 1930.

3. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1802, ff. 283-9: 'Nachweisung über die Organisation der NSDAP'. The number of men in the groups listed was 457, but this seems not to have covered the entire SA membership.

members, in Ratibor 84 and in Oppeln 87 - but, even more important, it had begun to make large inroads into the countryside, with SA units having been founded in numerous small towns. The Reichstag elections provided a further impetus for the growth of the NSDAP and the SA; according to police reports, at the beginning of October the Upper Silesian SA numbered 705 men in 25 separate groups.¹ Following the success in the Reichstag elections the Nazi organisations mushroomed, and by June 1931 the Upper Silesian SA had grown to 2427 storm troopers in 60 groups.² By the end of 1931 it numbered 3706 men in 116 groups - more than seven times the figure before the September 1930 elections.³ It was this growth, coming in the wake of the dramatic election victory of 1930, which allowed the Nazi movement to spread its organisational net throughout the province and transformed the SA into a truly mass organisation. By the winter of 1931/32 there was no longer a corner of the province which remained beyond the reach of the Nazi movement and its storm troopers. What is more, by the end of 1931 the SA far outnumbered its most determined opponent in Upper Silesia, the 'Fighting League against Fascism' (Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus, formed by the KPD in October 1930), which in December 1931 numbered roughly 2200

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 293-301.

2. Ibid., ff. 421-31.

3. Ibid., ff. 571-7. This figure was corroborated by Upper Silesian SA leader Andreas von Flotow, who revealed in December 1931 that the SA numbered roughly 3500 men in the province. See BDC, SA-Akte, Andreas von Flotow: 'Sonderbericht über die Lage der Provinz Oberschlesien im Dezember 1931'. According to the Munich headquarters, the SA in Upper Silesia numbered 4295 men in December 1931 (and 4675 in January 1932). See BA, Sammlung Schumacher/415: 'Stand der SA nach dem Stande der letzten Stärkemeldung (15.2.32)', Munich, 27 Feb. 1932.

members in the province. While both the KPD and the Kampf-bund had grown steadily in Upper Silesia during 1931, they had not kept pace with the NSDAP and the SA.

Toward the end of 1931 the tremendous growth of the Nazi movement in Upper Silesia slackened. The immediate cause of the slowdown was a purge of 'undesired elements' which the NSDAP and SA were compelled to undertake in late 1931 - itself a consequence of the very rapid growth the movement had experienced.¹ Nevertheless, during the first four months of 1932 - months which saw the two Reich Presidential elections and the elections for the Prussian Landtag - the Nazi movement again grew dramatically. The hectic election campaigning was accompanied by renewed efforts to establish NSDAP and SA groups; according to police estimates, in April the Upper Silesian NSDAP had grown to 10,417 members in 228 groups (up from 9110 members in 174 groups four months before), and on 13 April, when it was banned by the Reich government, the SA numbered approximately 6500 men.² The spring elections signalled a turning point, however. With the storm troopers disbanded between April and June, Party membership stagnated, and when the SA re-appeared in the summer months it too failed to grow further.³ After the July Reichstag elections the aim was no

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 571-7.

2. Ibid., ff. 645-53: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien für die Zeit vom 1. Januar bis 30. April 1932', Oppeln, 10 May 1932.

3. Ibid., ff. 723-31: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien für die Zeit vom 1. Mai bis 30. Juni 1932', Oppeln, 1 Aug. 1932; *ibid.*, ff. 791-9: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien für die Zeit vom 1. Juli bis 10. November 1932' Oppeln, 11 Nov. 1932.

longer large-scale growth, but to hold on to the members recruited during the previous three years. Following the November Reichstag elections, in which the Nazi Party lost 23,000 votes in Upper Silesia, the movement began to lose active supporters, and the police registered a moderate drop in SA membership between November 1932 and January 1933.¹ Disheartened by the apparently ebbing political fortunes of the movement, the membership of the Upper Silesian SA fell for the first time since it had become a mass organisation. It appears that by the summer of 1932 the Nazi movement had reached the limits of its possible growth within the context of a pluralistic society. The only thing which could renew this growth, and indeed prevent the decomposition of the movement, was access to political power and its spoils.

The basic pattern of the growth of the SA in Upper Silesia was replicated in the other eastern Prussian provinces — in particular the importance of late 1930 and 1931 as the time of the crucial breakthrough into the countryside. In the East Prussian Regierungsbezirk Königsberg, for example, the storm troopers' organisation grew from roughly 250 men in April 1929 to 917 in September 1930 and to 4450 in June 1931.² Whereas most of the SA men in the Regierungsbezirk came from the city of Königsberg in 1929, and nearly 30 per cent (265 of the 917)

1. Ibid., ff. 853-69: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien für die Zeit vom 6. November 1932 bis Mitte Januar 1933', Oppeln, 26 Jan. 1933.

2. StAG, Rep. 10/29, f. 37: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 11 Apr. 1929; StAG, Rep. 10/30, ff. 109-16: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 1 Oct. 1930; ibid., ff. 145-7: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 29 June 1931.

came from the provincial capital in the autumn of 1930, in June 1931 only 7.3 per cent (323) of the 4450 SA men in the Regierungsbezirk came from Königsberg itself. The remainder came from the surrounding countryside. The development of the SA into a mass organisation in eastern Germany was clearly the result of its success in the countryside, and this success occurred at roughly the same time throughout the eastern Prussian provinces: in the wake of the 1930 elections. The spread of the Nazi organisation into the countryside and the success of the movement in attracting activists into the SA came about in large measure as a consequence of electoral victory. Electoral success and the publicity it gave to the Nazi movement formed a key element in the rapid growth of the SA, which in turn made possible the dramatic increase in political violence during 1931 and 1932.

The one major respect in which the SA in Upper Silesia differed from that in the other eastern Prussian provinces was its overall size; while its growth followed a similar pattern in Upper Silesia as elsewhere, the SA nevertheless was relatively weaker in this predominantly Catholic province. Thus at the end of 1931 there were in the largely Protestant East Prussian Regierungsbezirk Allenstein approximately 3000 Nazi storm troopers,¹ only marginally less than in Upper Silesia, which had a population roughly three times as great. The size of the SA before 1933, like the extent of electoral support for the NSDAP, was affected greatly by the confessional breakdown

1. See StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 899: Kriminal- und Grenzkommisariat Allenstein to the Polizeipräsident in Königsberg, Allenstein, 14 Dec. 1931; *ibid.*, ff. 885-98: 'Zusammenstellung über die im Regierungsbezirk Allenstein vorhandene SA der NSDAP nach dem Stande vom 10. Dezember 1931'.

of the population. It was in the Protestant regions of eastern Germany that the SA - like the Nazi movement as a whole - found its greatest strength.

The Size of the SA in the Eastern Prussian Provinces,
1931-1932¹

	Upper and Lower Silesia	Pomerania	East Prussia	Border Province
January 1931	5663	3192	3399	
April 1931	5258	4555	5964	
September 1931		6650		1681
October 1931	13715	7856	9745 ⁺	
November 1931	15532	8734	10586 ⁺	
December 1931	17525	10005	11809 ⁺	
January 1932	19235	11233	13085 ⁺	
June 1932	32217		17385 ⁺	
July 1932	34508		18000 ⁺	
August 1932	36106		17835 ⁺	

⁺These figures are for the SA 'Gruppe Ostland', which included the SA in East Prussia and in Danzig. During the summer of 1932 the Danzig SA had roughly 3500 members.²

The phenomenal growth of the SA after the 1930 Reichstag elections meant that, particularly in the Protestant rural districts of eastern Germany, the storm troopers formed easily the most powerful organisation involved in the rising tide of political violence in the final months of the Weimar Republic. This dominant position was well illustrated by the political develop-

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/415: 'Stärke der SA & SS nach dem Stande vom 1.4.1931', Munich, 18 May 1931; *ibid.*: 'Aufstellung über die Stärke der SA und deren Anwachsen in einem Monat gemäß der Stärkemeldungen für Dezember 1931 (15.11.-15.12.31)', Munich, 1 Feb. 1932; *ibid.*: 'Stand der SA nach dem Stande der letzten Stärkemeldungen (15.2.32)', Munich, 27 Feb. 1932; BA, NS 26/307: The Oberster SA-Führer, Munich, 11 Jan. 1932; WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 221-37: 'Standorte, Führer und Stärken der Sturmabteilungen (SA) der NSDAP im Gausturm Pommern nach dem Stande von etwa September 1931'; WAP Poznań, OPS/166, ff. 356-7: 'Gliederung der SA in der Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen. Stand: 19.9.1931'.

2. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105060-2: The Führer der Standarte 5 to the Oberster SA-Führer, Danzig, 24 Sept. 1932.

ment in the East Prussian Kreis Lötzen, an overwhelmingly Protestant district in south-eastern East Prussia where the Nazi movement received considerable support. As throughout the south-eastern corner of the province, in Kreis Lötzen the SA grew rapidly in late 1930 and 1931; by February 1931 it already numbered some 310 men in the district.¹ In December 1932, on the eve of the Nazi takeover, the Landrat in Lötzen surveyed the relative strengths of the political groups in the district and reported the following: the largest political party by a wide margin was the NSDAP, with 836 members, and the SA had a membership of 490; on the other hand, the Reichsbanner had only 96 members, the SPD 202, the Lötzen branch of the ADGB 83 members, the KPD 113, the DNVP 101, the DVP 34, the Staatspartei 13, and the Stahlhelm 283 members.² The Nazi Party membership was greater than the combined totals of all other political groups in Kreis Lötzen, and the SA was far and away the most powerful political army — something particularly impressive since the fortunes of the Nazi movement were at a low ebb toward the end of 1932. This political configuration was mirrored throughout most of the Protestant countryside in East Prussia, and indeed throughout most of eastern Germany, and had a devastating effect upon the ability of the Nazis' opponents to offer effective resistance to the Hitler movement.

The rapid expansion of the SA coincided with the appointment of Ernst Röhm as SA 'Chief of Staff' at the beginning of

1. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., ff. 318-9: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Lötzen, 10 Feb. 1931.

2. WAP Olsztyn, Landratsamt Lötzen/242, ff. 12-51: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Lötzen, 3 Dec. 1932.

1931.¹ An energetic organiser, Röhm quickly set about to re-structure the SA from the bottom up.² Nevertheless, in practice the strengths of SA units often did not match those prescribed in the new guidelines; in September 1931, for example, in the Border Province SA-Stürme ranged from 50 to 280 members while some Trupps had as many as 70-90 members and others as few as ten, and in Pomerania the size of Stürme varied from 20 men in one case to 300 in another.³ Röhm's structure, like that of von Pfeffer, was not applied rigidly but rather used flexibly, in a manner suited to a rapidly expanding organisation.

The growth which the SA experienced was a matter not only of increasing size but also of increasing organisational complexity. As SA membership in the eastern Prussian provinces multiplied, a number of specialised formations were established in addition to the SA proper. Among these was the 'SA-Reserve'

1. For discussion of von Pfeffer's resignation in the summer of 1930, see IfZ, Fa 107, f. 58: Adolf Hitler to the SA and SS, Munich, 2 Sept. 1930; Bennecke, Hitler und die SA, pp. 147-9; Werner, 'SA und NSDAP', pp. 470-85; Nyomarkay, Charisma and Factionalism, pp. 116-17; Frank, 'Hitler and the National Socialist Coalition', pp. 360-98.

2. The new structure was as follows:

4-12 SA men	= 1 'Schar'	
3-6 'Scharen'	= 1 'Trupp'	= 20-60 men
2 or more 'Trupps'	= 1 'Sturm'	= 70-100 men
3 or more 'Stürme'	= 1 'Sturmbann'	= 250-600 men
2 or more 'Sturmbannen'	= 1 'Standarte'	= 1200-3000 men
all 'Standarten' in a particular region	= 1 'Untergruppe'	
'Untergruppen' joined together	= 1 'Gruppe'	= about 15,000 men

See WAP Poznań, OPS/166, f. 195: The Regierungspräsident, Frankfurt/Oder, 28 Apr. 1931; *ibid.*, f. 196: The staatl. Polizeidirektor to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 8 May 1931; IfZ, Fa 107, ff. 205-9: excerpts from a Nazi history of the SA, undated.

3. WAP Poznań, OPS/166, ff. 356-7; WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 221-37.

formed in 1929 as the SA had just started to expand significantly. The purpose of the Reserve was to bring into SA activities older Party members 'who are not up to the continuous physical demands of the SA, but who nevertheless in special circumstances want to involve themselves like the active SA'.¹ The minimum age for members was 40; younger male members of the NSDAP were expected to join the SA itself. However, due to the youthfulness of the Nazi Party membership as a whole, the Reserve never amounted to more than a fraction of the active SA, and it played only a small part in SA activities.²

In addition to the SA-Reserve, a large number of other special formations, each with a particular function, was established as the SA grew. In order to provide the necessary martial music for Nazi rallies and marches, special 'SA-Kapellen' (SA bands) were formed, with due consideration given to storm troopers who had had similar musical experience during their military service.³ SA men with access to motor vehicles often were organised into 'SA-Motorstürme'; storm troopers who had medical training were brought together to form an SA 'Sa-

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.33.a.: 'Nachrichtenblatt des Bezirks Groß Königsbergs Pr. der Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Arbeiterpartei', Königsberg, 11 May 1929.

2. For example, in Stettin in September 1931 the SA had 485 members altogether, of whom only 128 were in the Reserve. See WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 87-91: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 15 Sept. 1931. In his study of the Nuremberg SA, Eric Reiche noted the same pattern; in May 1930 the Nuremberg SA numbered 350 men, and the Reserve an additional 70. See Reiche, 'The Development of the SA in Nuremberg', p. 125.

3. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.73.c.: The Gaugeschäftsführer to the Ortsgruppe Rößel, Königsberg, 15 Sept. 1931; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, ff. 11-12: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Oppeln, 6 Sept. 1932.

nitätsdienst' (medical service), in order to care for their injured comrades; special 'SA-Reiterabteilungen' were formed by members who owned horses; and in some coastal towns, for example in Stettin, SA 'Marinestürme' were created.¹ In 1931 SA training schools were established in the eastern Prussian provinces, providing lower-ranking SA officers with military-style exercises and teaching them military skills it was believed they would need.² During 1932 special SA 'Propagandastürme' were formed in both Pomerania and Silesia; consisting primarily of unemployed storm troopers, these formations traversed the countryside spreading Nazi propaganda from village to village.³ As the political violence and terror mounted in 1932 yet more special formations were created to cope with especially dangerous tasks. Early in 1932 many SA Stürme in East Prussia set up select 'Schutzabteilungen' (protection sections), consisting of only the most trusted storm troopers; their duties involved the protection of Nazi supporters against the 'red terror' and the gathering of information about the activities of the left-wing opposition.⁴ Finally, toward the

1. See WAP Szczecin, RS/212 II, ff. 17-61: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 11 Apr. 1932; StAG, Rep. 10/30, f. 283: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 23 Dec. 1932.

2. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 394: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident in Allenstein, Königsberg, 25 Mar. 1931; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, ff. 477-84: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident in Oppeln, Breslau, 9 Dec. 1931; Frank, op. cit., p. 428.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 245-51: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 24 Feb. 1932; *ibid.*, ff. 257-8: The Regierungspräsident to the Landräte des Bezirks, Stettin, 21 Apr. 1932.

4. StAG, Rep. 10/30, f. 271: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 26 Mar. 1932.

end of 1932 in Silesia, where the SA leadership was convinced that the Nazi movement would gain power only by means of an SA Putsch, special 'Bereitschaftsstürme' (stand-by Stürme) were prepared for the bloody confrontation believed imminent.¹

The main problem posed by the sudden expansion of the SA was that it necessarily weakened the bonds between local SA and Party groups and heightened the possibility of conflict between the two branches of the movement. Whereas the small groups of storm troopers during the mid-1920s generally had close relations with the Party groups from which they sprang, once the movement grew the regional and national SA organisations became progressively more important for the SA group and the local NSDAP correspondingly less. Where SA units once may have looked to local Party groups for a lead, from 1930 onward they looked increasingly toward the SA hierarchy for instruction and backing in case of dispute. Thus the growth of the movement led to the forming within the SA of a separate identity vis-à-vis the 'civilian' NSDAP. With the vast increase in the membership of the SA and the concomitant expansion of its organisation, conflicting loyalties developed within the movement which were to cause considerable difficulties for the Nazi leadership.

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, ff. 1037-8: The komm. Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 21 Dec. 1932. See also below, p. 218.

Chapter II

THE S.A. AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

To determine the social composition of a political movement is a complex and difficult process. Available information about the membership of the Nazi movement is, despite the voluminous literature of recent years and the mass of documentation in archives, peculiarly limited. Although considerable data are accessible listing the occupations of members of the movement at different times, this material provides only a rough indication of who these people were, why they supported the Nazi movement, and what the connection was between the 'who?' and the 'why?'.

To preface an investigation of the social composition of the SA in this way is necessary for two reasons. First, it indicates some of the limitations of many analyses of the composition of the Nazi movement, including this one. Second, it helps explain the juxtaposition of an investigation of the SA's composition with a discussion of life in the organisation. This juxtaposition is made because an understanding of the latter is important in approaching the former. Thus, the discussions of the composition and the activities of the storm troopers together are intended to provide a picture of the SA as a social phenomenon - of the position of the SA in the society in which it operated.

(i) The Social Composition of the SA in Eastern Germany

The question of the social composition of the membership of the Nazi movement for years has occupied a central place in the discussion of the rise of National Socialism. Of particular concern has been the extent to which the movement succeeded in fulfilling its oft-mentioned mission of winning the working classes for German nationalism. As far as the NSDAP itself is concerned, there exists today little doubt that it was very largely a party of the middle classes and that, relative to the population as a whole, it attracted a rather low proportion of workers. According to its own official membership statistics, 26.3 per cent of those who had joined by 14 September 1930 and 31.5 per cent of those who had joined by 30 January 1933 described themselves as workers, whereas in 1925 45.1 per cent of the employed German population were classified as workers.¹ In a table, probably compiled by the NSDAP for internal use, tabulating the occupations of recipients of the first 386,000 Party membership cards (that is, of members who joined between 1925 and the end of 1930), only 8.4 per cent of the total were classified as 'workers' (presumably unskilled); on the other hand, shopkeepers and artisans were extremely well represented.² More recent statistical compilations of the NSDAP - by Michael Kater for the Nazi Party as a whole, and by Lawrence Stokes for the NSDAP in the town of Eutin in Holstein - have presented a basically similar pic-

1. Partei-Statistik, ed. Reichsorganisationsleiter der NSDAP (1935), i, 70-1; Martin Broszat, Der Staat Hitlers (Munich, 1969), p. 51.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/376. This table is reproduced, in reduced form, in Tyrell, Führer befiehl.

ture.¹

In the eastern Prussian provinces the social composition of the NSDAP was roughly the same as in the Reich as a whole. While the Nazi Party was successful in attracting some support from virtually all classes of society, in the eastern regions it remained primarily an organisation of the Mittelstand.² Since eastern Germany was more rural than the rest of the Reich, the NSDAP in the eastern Gaue contained relatively more farmers and fewer workers than the Nazi Party nationwide. Furthermore, since the eastern provinces contained fewer sizable administrative and commercial centres than the central and western regions of Germany, in the East the Party had a rather smaller proportion of civil servants and white-collar workers among its membership. Nevertheless, despite the structural peculiarities of the eastern Prussian provinces, there, as elsewhere, the NSDAP was essentially an organisation of the middle classes: of white-collar workers, shopkeepers, civil servants and farmers.

The question of the social composition of the SA has been more difficult to answer with certainty. The Nazi organisation made less effort systematically to document the composition of

1. Michael H. Kater, 'Sozialer Wandel in der NSDAP im Zuge der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung', in Faschismus als soziale Bewegung. Deutschland und Italien im Vergleich, ed. Wolfgang Schieder (Hamburg, 1976), pp. 29-32; Lawrence D. Stokes, 'The Social Composition of the Nazi Party in Eutin, 1925-32', International Review of Social History, xxii (1978), 1-32.

2. See Partei-Statistik, i, 146, 148. Since the NSDAP in the Border Province formed part of the 'Gau Ostmark', separate figures were not compiled for it by the Reichsleitung. There is, however, an analysis of the structure of the NSDAP in the province (compiled by the police in late 1931), in which the occupations of the local Party leadership are listed. See WAP Poznań, OPS/166, ff. 331-5: 'Gliederung der NSDAP im Lkp.-Bezirk Schneidemühl. Stand 1.10.1931'.

the SA than of the NSDAP itself, and the often rather casual nature of SA membership made record-keeping problematic. Nevertheless, there has been a number of attempts to examine statistically the backgrounds of the storm troopers. On the eve of Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor, the Nazi Party published a statistical breakdown of the 593 SA leaders, from Sturmführer upward, in the 'Gruppe Nordmark' (Schleswig-Holstein).¹ These figures showed that the SA leadership consisted primarily of young men and contained a small proportion of workers, while most of the SA leaders came from groups of the Mittelstand. Statistical evidence about the Berlin SA, compiled by the Berlin police from 1824 record cards seized in raids of homes and offices of SA leaders in early 1931, yielded rather different results: the Berlin SA also consisted of young men - almost 90 per cent of the membership was under 30 - but workers, most of whom were skilled, formed roughly half the membership.²

Recent research has tended to confirm that the SA did attract a significant number of workers to its ranks. In his work on the Nuremberg SA, Eric Reiche has offered a statistical analysis which indicates that one third of the storm troopers in that city were workers, mostly skilled.³ In a quantitative study of autobiographical sketches of early Nazis collected by Theodor Abel during the 1930s, Peter Merkl has noted that 42 per cent of the SA members, as opposed to 33.1 per cent of the

1. Der SA-Mann, 7 Jan. 1933, p. 4.

2. BA, R 43 I/2682, ff. 645-7: The Polizeipräsident to the Minister des Innern, Berlin, 2 Mar. 1931.

3. Reiche, 'The Development of the SA in Nuremberg', p. 256.

sample altogether, could be classified as 'blue-collar workers'.¹ Statistics published by Michael Kater also suggest that there was a fair number of workers in the SA, particularly in rural Bavaria, although his evidence about the SA membership in Munich and Frankfurt/Main suggests that there were surprisingly few working-class storm troopers in these cities.² In his quantitative analysis of the Nazi movement in Eutin before 1933, Lawrence Stokes extrapolates from information about 54 members of the SA in the town in 1929 that 'the "proletarian" character of the SA in Eutin seems indisputable'.³ Finally, Conan Fischer has offered a heavily documented statistical study which, despite methodological, statistical and conceptual shortcomings, indicates that workers did make up a large proportion of the SA membership, certainly greater than of the membership of the NSDAP as a whole.⁴

Nevertheless, relatively little is known about who these 'workers' in the SA were and how they lived. Thus statistical evidence on the composition of the SA must be approached with caution, since the categories used are often necessarily ill-

1. Peter H. Merkl, Political Violence under the Swastika. 581 Early Nazis (Princeton, 1975), p. 595.

2. Michael H. Kater, 'Ansätze zu einer Soziologie der SA bis zur Röhm-Krise', in Soziale Bewegung und politische Verfassung, ed. Ulrich Engelhardt, Volker Sellin and Horst Stuke (Stuttgart, 1976), pp. 801-2.

3. Stokes, loc. cit., p. 27.

4. Fischer, 'The Occupational Background of the SA'. Among the problems with Fischer's work are that his statistical 'sample' is in fact not a sample at all, and that his analysis of the pre-1933 SA is based largely on materials describing storm troopers in Munich in 1931. For a critique of Fischer's work, see Richard Bessel and Mathilde Jamin, 'Nazis, Workers and the Uses of Quantitative Evidence', Social History, iv (1979), 111-16.

defined and imprecise. One aspect of the difficulties involved in trying to classify the SA membership was suggested unintentionally by Heinrich Bennecke, a former SA leader in Saxony, who described the SA in Leipzig and Dresden thus:

In terms of occupation the SA consisted of roughly 40 per cent white-collar and corresponding occupations and 60 per cent workers. Nevertheless it must be kept in mind with such a rough estimate that the greater part of these workers came from artisan and middle-class families [Handwerker- und Bürgerfamilien] and because of the consequences of the inflation and the economic conditions of the time had not received the training which otherwise they would have obtained.¹

The question of who came from a working-class background and who from a middle-class background is far from clear, and involves a set of social and economic relationships which it is probably impossible to reconstruct.

Since the Nazi organisation itself made little effort to record the composition of the SA membership before 1933, the most important source of information about the occupational backgrounds of the storm troopers is the police. The Prussian Ministry of the Interior displayed particular interest in tracing the composition of the SA, and in August 1930 distributed to the regional authorities a confidential memorandum requesting a 'precise survey of the organisation of the storm sections' together with details about their leaders, their strengths, the financing of the SA and the NSDAP, and information about the social backgrounds and age breakdown of the storm troopers.²

1. BA, Kleine Erwerbungen/569: Heinrich Bennecke, 'Die SA in Sachsen vor der "Machtübernahme"', p. 25.

2. Copies of this memorandum were found among files from Oppeln and Königsberg. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1801, ff. 69-70; StAG, Rep. 10/30, f. 106: The Preußische Minister des Innern to the Ober- and Regierungspräsidenten and the Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Berlin, 20 Aug. 1930.

Accompanying this request, apparently to serve as a model for reports to follow, were an organisational chart of the Silesian SA and tables of the social composition and age distribution of the SA 'in an eastern district' (presumably Silesia as well):

- 34.6% Farmers, young farmers and agricultural supervisors
- 27.8% Artisans and artisans' apprentices
- 12.3% Salaried employees and apprentices
- 9.6% Industrial workers
- 7.6% Agricultural workers
- 5.6% Members of technical and miscellaneous professions
- 2.5% Civil servants and white-collar workers in public service

- 11.5% up to 20 years
- 58.5% from 20 to 30 years
- 24.7% from 30 to 40 years
- 5.3% over 40 years

This rough breakdown suggests the main features of the SA in much of eastern Germany: the vast majority of the storm troopers were under 30; farmers, farmers' sons, artisans and their apprentices formed the largest contingents among the SA membership; and relatively few workers found their way into the SA.

Responses to the Prussian Interior Ministry's request for information about the SA have been located only for East Prussia. While the SA in large industrial regions and Catholic areas, such as Upper Silesia, may have looked quite different, the picture presented by the East Prussian materials seems representative of the SA in much of eastern Germany. The surviving statistical analyses by the police describe the SA in the East Prussian Regierungsbezirke Königsberg and Allenstein during 1930 and 1931. Included in these reports are tabulations of the crude occupational backgrounds and age distribution of more than 6500 SA men, in the provincial capital Königsberg as well as in some of the most rural regions of the country, recorded at the time when the East Prussian SA was experiencing its most rapid growth.

The SA in the Regierungsbezirk Königsberg, October 1930¹

Total strength: 917 men

31.4% Farmers, young farmers and agricultural supervisors
26.5% Artisans and artisans' apprentices
18.5% Salaried employees and apprentices
2.2% Industrial workers
9.4% Agricultural workers
6% Members of technical and miscellaneous professions
2% Retired civil servants and white-collar workers in public service
4% Students
16.1% up to 20 years
65.3% from 20 to 30 years
15.4% from 30 to 40 years
3.2% over 40 years

The SA in the Regierungsbezirk Königsberg, June 1931²

Total strength: about 4450 men

35% Farmers, young farmers and agricultural supervisors
28.8% Artisans and artisans' apprentices
17.2% Salaried employees and apprentices
11.7% Industrial and agricultural workers
4.3% Retired civil servants and white-collar workers in public service
3% Students
28.4% up to 20 years
56.6% from 20 to 30 years
11% from 30 to 40 years
4% over 40 years

The SA in the Regierungsbezirk Allenstein, June 1931³

Total strength: 2144 men

44.9% Farmers, young farmers and agricultural supervisors
33.3% Artisans and artisans' apprentices
10.8% Salaried employees and apprentices
7.7% Agricultural workers
3.1% Retired civil servants and white-collar workers in public service
28.4% up to 20 years
56.2% from 20 to 30 years
11.3% from 30 to 40 years
4.1% over 40 years

1. Ibid., f. 109: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 1 Oct. 1930.

2. Ibid., f. 145: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 29 June 1931.

3. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 556: The Regierungspräsident to the Polizeipräsident in Königsberg, Allenstein, 19 June 1931.

The statistics compiled by the East Prussian police indicate that the SA failed to make significant inroads into either the urban or rural proletariat in the province. The apparent absence of urban, industrial workers among the storm troopers is particularly striking. In October 1930, when nearly 30 per cent (265 of 917) of the SA men in the Regierungsbezirk Königsberg came from the provincial capital, only slightly more than 2 per cent of the SA membership were described as industrial workers, although the city was the most important industrial centre in East Prussia. In the Regierungsbezirk Allenstein, which encompassed some of the areas in Germany most dependent upon agriculture and contained many large estates employing agricultural labourers, these labourers formed only about 8 per cent of the SA membership in 1931; by way of contrast, according to the 1933 census, 31.2 per cent of the employed labour force in the Regierungsbezirk (35.4 per cent including the unemployed) were classified as workers.¹ Although some people placed in the 'artisan' category in the police statistics probably would have been classified as workers in the census figures, nevertheless the low proportion of workers among the East Prussian SA membership seems clear.

The greatest numbers of storm troopers seem to have come from the various groups of the Mittelstand: artisans, farmers, salaried employees and their apprentices. Particularly characteristic of the East Prussian SA was the disproportionally large number of artisans and their apprentices in the organisation. Whereas in the Regierungsbezirk Königsberg 28.8 per cent of the

1. StDR, ccccliv (Volks-, Berufs- und Betriebszählung vom 16. Juni 1933. Die berufliche und soziale Gliederung der Bevölkerung in den Ländern und Landesteilen)(Berlin, 1936), ii, 42-3.

SA members were placed by the police in the artisan category in 1931, according to the 1933 census figures only 18.8 per cent of the working population in the region were employed in 'industry and crafts' in all capacities together.¹ In the Regierungsbezirk Allenstein, while one third of the SA membership was classified as 'artisans and artisans' apprentices', according to the 1933 census only 13.9 per cent of the working population in the region were employed in 'industry and crafts'.² Salaried employees and their apprentices were also well represented in the SA, although not so well as were the artisans. In both the Regierungsbezirke Königsberg and Allenstein the percentage of salaried employees in the SA exceeded the proportion among the working population of all those employed in 'trade and transport' combined.³ These clear features of the SA membership, together with the fact that the vast majority of the storm troopers were under the age of 30, strongly suggests that the East Prussian SA was to a large degree an organisation of sons of the Mittelstand during the early 1930s.

Not surprisingly for so rural a province as East Prussia, 'farmers, young farmers and agricultural supervisors' formed the largest category of SA members. Even in the Regierungsbezirk Königsberg in 1930, when the SA in the region was still concentrated largely in and around the provincial capital, this group formed nearly one third of the SA. While the large numbers of 'family assistants' - that is, wives and daughters - working in agriculture make meaningful comparison with the census figures

1. Ibid., 40-1.

2. Ibid., 42-3

3. Ibid., 40-3.

difficult, it should be noted that the SA was probably less popular among farmers themselves than among their sons. In the first place, as one East Prussian district NSDAP leader noted after the November 1932 election setback, 'our farmer is by no means a revolutionary'.¹ Furthermore, for a person with full-time responsibility for a farm, including the need to look after crops and feed animals at regular intervals, the frequent travel around the countryside and the active political commitment demanded of SA members may have made membership in the organisation impossible. Thus the SA appears to have attracted first and foremost the younger members of the farming community - who probably were underemployed on their fathers' farms (at a time when the possibility of finding work in the cities had disappeared), who had sufficient time to devote to SA activities, and who did see themselves as 'revolutionary'. That it was primarily the sons of farmers who joined the SA seems to be confirmed by three detailed reports from Kreis Johannisburg, in the Regierungsbezirk Allenstein, which described the membership of the individual SA groups in the district during 1931.² According to these reports the farmers' sons clearly outnumbered the farmers, by a factor approaching four to one.

Another revealing aspect of the detailed data from Kreis Johannisburg is the extent to which they indicate what sorts of men banded together to form a small SA group. Personal contacts and friendships certainly were very important in the formation

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.68.a.: NSDAP Kreisleitung Osterode to the Gauleitung, Kraplau, 7 Nov. 1932.

2. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., ff. 313-14: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Johannisburg, 9 Feb. 1931; *ibid.*, ff. 541-3: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Johannisburg, 8 June 1931; *ibid.*, ff. 755-6: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Johannisburg, 10 Sept. 1931.

of such a group. As described in these reports, quite often sons of farmers and farm labourers were in the same group, sometimes together with a number of artisans as well. Certain categories tended to predominate in one group as opposed to another, but it nonetheless remains noteworthy that a group of roughly 15 SA men frequently would be so socially heterogeneous. This suggests that the social distances separating the artisan or his apprentice, the farmer's son and the farm labourer were not very great in many rural communities, and points to the effects of physical isolation upon the rapid growth of the Nazi movement in eastern Germany. In his study of the Nazi rise in Schleswig-Holstein, Rudolf Heberle observed that the NSDAP achieved its greatest election successes in small communities which were relatively isolated, far from urban centres and from public transport.¹ In such localities, Heberle argued, pressures against a pluralism of political opinion were greater than in communities having closer contact with the outside world. This observation is particularly relevant to the eastern Prussian provinces, which contained some of the most remote communities in the entire country. It was in the outlying Protestant regions of eastern Germany, for example in the south-eastern corner of East Prussia, that the NSDAP achieved some of its best elections results and that the SA proved especially successful in attracting members and in gaining a dominant position vis-à-vis its political opponents. Thus the success of the SA in these isolated communities, and the heterogeneity of its membership, reflected the fact that in many such villages

1. Rudolf Heberle, Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus. Eine soziologische Untersuchung der politischen Willensbildung in Schleswig-Holstein 1918 bis 1932 (Stuttgart, 1963), p. 44.

by the end of the Weimar period the Nazis enjoyed the support of virtually the entire population.

In the SA, where the concept of leadership (the so-called 'leadership principle') played so important a role, the social composition of the leadership assumes a particular significance. Information about the leaders, especially at the lower levels, can provide important insights into the composition of the organisation as a whole, since the lower-level leaders (Schar-, Trupp- and Sturmführer) rose from the ranks rather than being appointed from above. Thus, at the lower levels at least, there often would be little social distance between the SA leaders and the men they led.

Data collected by the police in East Prussia indicate that the leadership shared the Mittelstand character of the general SA membership but in a more exaggerated form.¹ Of the 177 Schar-, Trupp- and Sturmführer in the Regierungsbezirke Königsberg and Allenstein for whom occupations were given in the police lists of June 1931, only 11 were listed as 'workers' and an additional one was an agricultural labourer (Instmann); of these, eight were Scharführer, leaders at the lowest level. As with the overall statistics, middle-class occupations predominated, with independent farmers, small businessmen and artisans forming the largest contingents. Unlike in the general statistics, however, farmers were more numerous than their sons, and owners of small businesses were more strongly represented, particularly at the Sturm- and Truppführer levels. That the SA leaders tended to have more solid occupations reflected the fact that they often

1. Organisational analyses, including the strengths of SA units and the names and occupations of their leaders, were coupled to the statistical reports from October 1930 and June 1931. See StAG, Rep. 10/30, ff. 111-16, 146-66.

would use their businesses to support their group, to pay for members' uniforms, transportation costs, rent for group headquarters and so forth. Thus the success of a local SA leader could depend upon his ability to subsidise his group, something requiring a financial security which wage labourers and the unemployed were unlikely to possess.

During the summer of 1931 the police in Pomerania also collected information about the organisational structure and leadership of the SA. In July a rather incomplete list, containing data about 20 Sturmführer and the five Standartenführer in the province, was prepared.¹ As in East Prussia, it was occupations such as 'businessman', 'agent', 'bookkeeper' and 'pharmacy-owner' which predominated, and the five Pomeranian Standartenführer were employed as follows: one was a bank clerk (who was removed from the SA due to drunkenness), another a cavalry captain (Rittmeister), two were independent farmers, and the last was a building contractor (who left the SA to join Stennes' breakaway organisation²). In September a more complete list, with the occupations of 54 Pomeranian Sturmführer, was compiled.³ Here too the absence of workers among the local SA leadership is striking; only two of the Sturmführer were described as workers, and middle-class occupations clearly predominated. Especially significant was the number of Sturmführer who apparently had their own independent businesses (for example, 'inn-

1. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 77-85: The Polizeipräsident to the Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Stettin, 2 July 1931.

2. See below, pp. 146-53.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 221-37: 'Standarte, Führer und Stärken der Sturmabteilungen (SA) der NSDAP im Gausturm Pommern nach dem Stande von etwa September 1931'.

keeper', 'well-builder', 'estate-owner', 'cattle dealer'), as well as the number who occupied supervisory positions (for example, 'agricultural supervisor', the manager of an unnamed branch store, a former police major, a 'livestock-breeding inspector' and various master craftsmen). Clearly financial wherewithal played an important role in enabling an individual to become a successful SA leader at the local level, and the SA was an organisation which drew primarily upon the middle classes for leaders.

Evidence documenting the composition of the SA comparable to that from East Prussia or even Pomerania unfortunately is lacking for the other eastern Prussian provinces. For Upper Silesia there are only a few incomplete lists of SA leaders from 1930, and for Lower Silesia and the Border Province evidence is completely unavailable. Thus the important question of whether the social composition of the storm troopers in eastern Germany's few industrial centres differed significantly from the picture outlined above cannot be answered satisfactorily. Extremely scanty evidence from eastern Germany's major centre of heavy industry, Upper Silesia, suggests that the SA was not necessarily successful in attracting the working class. Although very few local SA leaders were listed in Upper Silesian police reports in 1930, the occupations of those who were tended to fall into the same categories as in East Prussia and Pomerania. In early 1930 six Sturmführer were recorded in Upper Silesia: a painter, a saddle-maker, a tailor, a local government officer, a businessman and a fitter.¹ In September 1930 the police listed 12 local SA leaders: an engineer, a commercial traveller, a jour-

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1829, ff. 569-73.

neyman smith, a businessman, a carpenter, a freelance actor, a miner, a local government officer, a management trainee, a plumber and two fitters.¹ Although such evidence offers too meagre a basis to describe the SA in the Upper Silesian industrial region - especially as descriptions of the rank and file are totally lacking - , it does suggest that, in terms of its lower-level leadership at least, the SA appealed to similar groups in industrial Upper Silesia as in East Prussia and Pomerania.

A further important element of the composition of the SA was the backgrounds of its leaders at Gau or provincial level. Throughout eastern Germany the regional leadership of the SA possessed what might be described as middle-class backgrounds; none came from either the urban or the rural proletariat. In East Prussia the first leader of the SA had been the Königsberg baker Waldemar Magunia. His successor in 1927 was Werner Siegfried, who worked as a supervisor on a landed estate in Kreis Rastenburg. Siegfried was followed as East Prussian SA leader by Karl-Siegmund Litzmann, a former army officer (Oberleutnant), son of General Karl Litzmann, and a landowner who directed the SA from his estate in Kreis Insterburg. The SA leadership in the Border Province presents a similar picture. The overall leader of the SA in the 'Ostmark' was Siegfried Kasche, a 'businessman' who had been to Gymnasium and then worked as a farmer, a bank clerk, in the glass industry and in the textile trade.² Kasche's 'Chief of Staff' from April 1931 was Alfred Lindemann,

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1802, ff. 283-9: 'Nachweisung über die Organisation der NSDAP', Oppeln, 13 Sept. 1930.

2. Das Deutsche Reich von 1918 bis heute, ed. Cuno Horkenbach (Berlin, 1930), p. 693.

until that time Standartenführer in Meseritz, who likewise was a 'businessman'.¹ The leader of the SA in the Border Province itself was Arno Manthey, an independent farmer in Kreis Flatow. In Pomerania and Silesia as well the SA leadership tended to be drawn from the Mittelstand and owners of agricultural property. Hans Lustig, for example, who led the Pomeranian SA until the Stennes affair in 1931, had been a customs official.² His counterpart in Silesia, Kurt Kremser, was described by the police as a 'businessman'.³ Andreas von Flotow, who led the Upper Silesian SA during 1931 and early 1932 and the Pomeranian SA for a short period during 1932, was a landowner. Altogether, this hardly seems a leadership designed to appeal to a largely working-class rank and file.

Another significant feature of the backgrounds of the SA leaders in the eastern regions was the importance of their military careers. Military experience involving more than just the normal wartime service had been a central element in the lives of many, if not most, of the eastern German SA leadership. For example, after leaving Gymnasium Siegfried Kasche continued his education with the Kadettenkorps Potsdam and Lichterfelde, and he went on to participate in the conflicts in the Baltic countries after the First World War. Arno Manthey had been active immediately after the War in the fighting against Polish insurgents in the Netze district and the region around Bromberg.

1. WAP Poznań, OPS/166, f. 196: The staatl. Polizeidirektor to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 8 May 1931.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 55-61: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 6 May 1931.

3. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1800, f. 29: The Oberbürgermeister to the Regierungspräsident, Ratibor, 19 Mar. 1929.

Hans Peter von Heydebreck, the leader of the Pomeranian SA from mid-1933 until he was killed in 1934, was among the most widely known of the Freikorps leaders. Hans Hayn, Edmund Heines' 'Chief of Staff' with the Silesian SA, had belonged to several Freikorps units in eastern Germany, was a member of the Schlageter sabotage group in the Ruhr and of the Black Reichswehr, and participated in the aborted Küstrin Putsch.¹ Hans Ramshorn, leader of the Upper Silesian SA from mid-1932 until his murder in 1934, had joined the Königliches Preußisches Kadettenkorps at the age of ten, became an army officer before his seventeenth birthday, served in Freikorps units in the post-War struggles in Thorn and the Baltic, and participated in the suppression of the Ruhr uprising in 1920.² Many SA leaders had spent much of their lives in uniform; unwilling to integrate themselves into normal civilian life, they sought to remain 'soldiers' in a succession of right-wing paramilitary groups during the 1920s and finally found a home in the SA.

The most notorious example of the 'political soldiers' who led the SA was Edmund Heines, who commanded the Silesian SA from mid-1931 until he was shot in 1934. Although Heines had been described in police reports as a 'businessman', virtually his entire adult life was spent either in military service or in right-wing paramilitary organisations.³ Heines was

1. See Waite, Vanguard of Nazism, p. 289.

2. Ibid., p. 292.

3. See WAP Szczecin, RS/207, ff. 55-69: 'Auszug aus dem Personalakt des Kaufmanns Edmund Heines, geb. 21.7.97 in München', Munich, 25 Jan. 1928. This report, which was prepared for the 'Feme' trial in Stettin in 1928, is published in Drewniak, Początki ruchu hitlerowskiego, pp. 266-70. See also BA, NS 267/1348: The Polizeipräsident to the Polizeipräsident in Bielefeld, Berlin, 15 May 1931.

born in Munich, where he attended Gymnasium until volunteering for military service in 1915, before his eighteenth birthday. He became a Leutnant der Reserve in 1918, and after the War he joined the Freikorps Roßbach. As a Freikorps member he took part in the Baltic campaigns of 1919, the suppression of the Ruhr uprising in 1920, and the suppression of the Polish uprising in Upper Silesia in 1921. In 1922 he joined the NSDAP and became an SA leader in Munich, and in 1923 he participated in the attempted Nazi Putsch. During the mid-1920s Heines spent most of his time in the active service of various right-wing groups - the Roßbach Gruppe, the Bund Oberland, and the Munich SA (from which he was expelled for a time in 1927) - and his career was chequered with violent incidents and repeated arrests. In 1928 he was found guilty for his part in the killing in 1920 of a fellow member of the Freikorps Roßbach suspected of betraying the group (the much publicised 'Feme' murder). He was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment, later reduced to five years of which he served little more than one. Throughout his career Heines' only experience as a 'businessman' had been as the owner of a small firm, the 'Sportversand Schill', which sold uniforms and other materials to paramilitary groups and went bankrupt in September 1926.

But for his pronounced homosexual tendencies, Heines was perhaps an archetypal example of the 'political soldier' of the radical Right during the Weimar Republic. His sole vocation had been violence from the time he left Gymnasium until he was murdered at Stadelheim in 1934. Rather than representing particular class interests in politics, Heines and SA leaders like him seem more accurately described as exponents of a military spirit and

violence almost for its own sake in domestic political life. Nevertheless, it remains significant that these political desperados had decidedly middle-class backgrounds. Although the violent political culture exemplified by Heines was not a clear expression of social or class interests, its origins appear to have been located in a particular social and class milieu.

Although the social composition of the SA leadership contributed greatly toward shaping the character of the organization as a whole, there were nonetheless important differences between the leadership and the rank-and-file. First, for the regional leadership participation in the SA was not merely a matter of political conviction; it was a career. The regional SA leaders were no longer primarily 'businessmen', 'farmers' or whatever; they were full-time Nazi activists who earned their livings from their political activities. Second, the regional SA leadership displayed a certain homogeneity which was not entirely representative of the membership, or even the lower-level leadership, as a whole. Third, while the leadership almost uniformly shared experience at the front and in various military formations, the rank-and-file membership was too young to have had the opportunity to serve in the German armed forces. While participation in the SA meant a continuation of a military life for the leadership, for the rank-and-file membership it formed a substitute for life in a 'real' military uniform. This no doubt influenced the relations between the leaders and the led, gaining for SA leaders respect for having fought at the front, and helps explain the wide appeal in the SA of military-style exercises.

The general discussion of the composition of the SA should take into account the concern of the Nazi movement to draw members from the working classes. Among the eastern German Nazi leaders, Erich Koch was especially keen to claim success in attracting working-class support. In a report from January 1930, outlining the rapid growth of the East Prussian Nazi movement, he asserted that the NSDAP in the province was gaining 1000 new members per month and that 60 per cent of these were workers.¹ Although such claims appear exaggerated in the light of the police statistics on the East Prussian SA, they were echoed by many Nazi leaders. For example, in a propaganda leaflet written in the early 1930s, an SA-Sturmführer in Podejuch, near Stettin, declared:

We National Socialists are absolutely convinced that the honest and upright supporters of the Communist Party will come to us entirely of their own volition. We can observe this daily. The worker who comes to us of his own volition has recognised that Adolf Hitler is the true leader of the workers.²

According to the propaganda chief of the NSDAP in Insterburg in early 1931, new members were flocking to the local Nazi organisation and among these were 'extremely valuable Volksge-
nossen, for the most part workers who have abandoned the left-wing camp'.³ And from Upper Silesia Hans Ramshorn wrote in September 1932 that 'the SA recruits its members from among workers and the poorest strata of the population'.⁴

1. StAG, Rep. 240/B.9.a.: 'Lagebericht der Gauleitung', Königsberg, 20 Jan. 1930.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/225, f. 39: an appeal to join the SA by Ernst Gensch, Podejuch.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.33.c.: 'Tätigkeitsbericht für Monat März 1931', Insterburg, 1 Apr. 1931.

4. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105186-90: The Führer der Untergruppe O-S to Ernst Röhm, Oppeln, 22 Sept. 1932.

Such assertions are buttressed by some evidence that the SA in eastern Germany was not completely unsuccessful in attracting proletarians into its ranks. Not only do the available police statistics show a certain, if rather small, number of workers among the SA membership, but particularly in larger cities the SA obviously did attract destitute elements. In Stettin, for example, young men who loitered on the city's skid row, the 'Bollwerk' along the river near the main rail station, formed the membership of one SA group.¹ In particular, the establishment throughout the eastern regions in 1930 and 1931 of SA barracks (SA-Heime), which catered largely to unemployed and destitute SA men, provided an attraction for potential proletarian recruits.²

Nevertheless, the SA barracks contained only a small fraction of the storm troopers in eastern Germany, and the assertions of Nazi leaders often served to underpin the propaganda of the movement as well as their own reputations. Certainly workers were welcomed into the SA, all the more so since they offered 'proof' that National Socialism indeed did appeal to all strata of society. Yet the self-conscious assertions that Hitler was 'the true leader of the workers' and attempts to draw workers into the SA seem to betray a relative lack of success which the SA had in attracting working-class members, at least in the eastern regions. In Rosenberg, in the Regierungsbezirk Westpreußen in East Prussia, the leader of the local NSDAP complained in late 1930 to the Gauleitung about an incident in which

1. WAP Szczecin, RS/17, ff. 19-23: The kom. Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Greifenhagen, 20 Dec. 1930.

2. See below, pp. 112-21.

the local SA leader had insulted a newly-recruited, working-class storm trooper; the Party leader lamented the damage such behaviour caused the movement and noted that 'it is in any case difficult enough to attract workers into our SA' without episodes of that kind occurring.¹ It seems likely that this sentiment, rather than the boasting of Erich Koch, indicated the real relationship of the SA to the working classes in eastern Germany.

Despite the apparent underrepresentation of workers among the SA membership in eastern Germany, it seems clear that many storm troopers came from the vast army of the unemployed. Nazi leaders repeatedly testified to the large number of unemployed among the SA. For example, in November 1930 the local Nazi leadership in Pillkallen, East Prussia, claimed that 80 per cent of the SA in the district were unemployed;² in Breslau the SA leadership asserted in September 1932 that 60 per cent of the SA in the city had been 'unemployed for years';³ and according to a Nazi history of the Silesian SA the entire SA in Gleiwitz had been without work before 1933.⁴ At the same time

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.81.c.: Bernhard Schlie to Erich Koch, Rosenberg, 17 Dec. 1930.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.69.b.: 'Tätigkeitsbericht', Kussen, Kr. Pillkallen, 26 Nov. 1930.

3. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105182-3: The Führer der Standarte 11 to the Chef des Stabes, Breslau, 22 Sept. 1932.

4. Gundelach, Vom Kampf und Sieg der schlesischen SA, p. 137. For evidence of unemployment among SA members in other regions, see BA, Kleine Erwerbungen/569: Bennecke, 'Die SA in Sachsen vor der "Machtübernahme"', pp. 52-3; Reiche, 'The Development of the SA in Nuremberg', pp. 144-5; Böhnke, Die NSDAP im Ruhrgebiet, pp. 154, 158; Fischer, 'The Occupational Background of the SA', pp. 147-9. See also Timothy W. Mason, Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich. Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft (Opladen, 1977), pp. 66-7.

there existed considerable underemployment among the storm troopers, especially among young men from family farms. And added to these economic factors contributing to the growth of the SA there was a related demographic one: those age groups which suffered the highest unemployment rates and to which the vast majority of the SA membership belonged - the people born just prior to the War - formed a disproportionally large part of the population.¹

A key aspect of the question of working-class participation in the SA is the problem of what precisely constituted the 'working class'. Different observers often used different criteria. For example, according to the police statistics of early 1931, in Kreis Lötzen in East Prussia only 14 per cent of the SA - 28 out of 200 men - were described as workers, all of whom were agricultural labourers; on the other hand, 39 per cent were classified as 'artisans and artisans' apprentices' and 34 per cent as 'farmers, young farmers and agricultural supervisors'.² Yet in 1935 the leader of the NSDAP in Widminnen, Kreis Lötzen, wrote in a history of the local Nazi movement that 'while the voters for the NSDAP came primarily from bourgeois circles, the SA men were mostly sons of workers or else their fathers were petty officials'.³ Whereas the police statistics indicated that few workers joined the SA in Kreis Lötzen, the Widminnen NSDAP leader asserted that the SA 'impressed the work-

1. See the age distribution graphs in Schlag nach! Wissenswerte Tatsachen aus allen Gebieten (2nd edn., Leipzig, 1939), p. 191; Statistisches Handbuch für die Provinz Ostpreußen, p. 37.

2. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., ff. 318-19: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Lötzen, 10 Feb. 1931.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.61.b.(1): 'Die Geschichte der Bewegung der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Widminnen Kr. Lötzen Gau Ostpreußen aufgestellt von Ortsgruppenleiter Ernst Baehr 1935'.

ers, and among these primarily the youth'. The reasons for this discrepancy probably lie in differing definitions of 'worker' and differing motives for reporting; while the police had little interest in stressing any particular aspect of their statistics, the Nazi Party leader may have been at pains to demonstrate that his organisation had been successful in attracting young workers to the cause.

The main features of the social composition of the SA in the eastern Prussian provinces appear to have been the youth of the membership, the relative underrepresentation of workers, and the degree of social heterogeneity which characterised the organisation. The differences with regard to worker participation between this picture of the SA in eastern Germany and those offered in analyses of the storm troopers in other regions seem to have two possible causes. First, the eastern regions were overwhelmingly rural, and it was more likely in the larger cities that the SA proved successful in attracting working-class recruits. Thus the SA in eastern Germany may have been rather unrepresentative of the organisation as a whole. Second, occupational classification may have been applied quite differently; SA men placed in an 'artisan' category by the East Prussian police, for example, were perhaps described as 'workers' by the Nazis themselves or subsequent historians.

What seems clear, however, is that the SA was an organisation to which virtually all the young men involved with the Nazi movement belonged. It did not consist of any one of the various class elements which formed the movement as a whole, but rather of an age cohort. The SA encompassed those young and able-bodied Nazi sympathisers who had sufficient time and motivation to be-

come the activists of the movement. Thus it attracted a membership which differed from that of the NSDAP primarily in that it was younger and exclusively male. In terms of its social composition in the eastern regions at least, the SA seems to have reflected the composition of the Nazi movement as a whole: it was an organisation which found its greatest reservoirs of support among the sons of the Protestant Mittelstand, but which at the same time attracted some measure of backing from almost every section of society.

(ii) Life in the SA

Among the most striking aspects of the Nazi movement was the amount of time and energy which its adherents, especially the active membership of the SA, devoted to it. Without the thousands of SA men prepared to commit themselves to the service of the NSDAP, the tremendous wave of propaganda and political activism which accompanied the Nazi rise scarcely would have been possible. But what precisely did belonging to the SA mean? How did the political activism which characterised the Nazi advance shape the lives of individual SA members? What made the SA attractive to so many young men, and how did the activities of the SA fit into the political strategy of the movement as a whole?

According to the guidelines drawn up for the SA in the mid-1920s, the SA was intended primarily as a protection squad for the Nazi Party and its membership was to be responsible for all those tasks which involved the threat of violence:

As a disciplined organisation of [NSDAP] members, the SA is called upon above all to enforce the security of cur

mass meetings as stewards and protection squads and to block or subdue disturbances caused by Marxist terror attacks. The SA shall also, if necessary, take charge of the protection of individual Party members on the street and in the factory. Its members shall also carry out those propaganda tasks which involve physical danger. These are: enlightenment in the factories, in workshops, the sale of newspapers in red districts of cities, the distribution of leaflets during elections, as well as the protection of the agitators of the movement who have been entrusted with these tasks.¹

The duties of the SA were wide-ranging and essential to the smooth operation of the NSDAP. They revolved around violence and the threat of violence, and this in turn primarily involved the challenge of the Left: the raison d'être of the SA was not, in the first instance, to act as anti-Semitic crusaders or to shape the policy of the Nazi movement, but to counter the 'red terror' and to assault the Left.

The ceaseless activity of the Nazi organisations, which has been documented for a number of regions,² also characterised the movement in the eastern Prussian provinces. In addition to the countless public rallies, there were members' meetings of the local NSDAP, 'Sprechabende' (informal gatherings where Party members invited acquaintances who had expressed interest in the movement), and large rallies outside the local district such as those at which Hitler spoke - all of which required the protection of the SA. Over and above these were the additional meetings of the SA group itself and the steady stream of propaganda tasks - the distribution of leaflets, selling of Party

1. IfZ, Fa 107, ff. 33-5: GRUSA II, Munich, 31 May 1927.

2. For accounts of Nazi propaganda activities in western and southern Germany, see Allen, The Nazi Seizure of Power, pp. 23-138; Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, pp. 142-3, 201-21; Pridham, Hitler's Rise to Power, pp. 133-8; Böhnke, Die NSDAP im Ruhrgebiet, pp. 145-54.

newspapers, disruption of opponents' meetings, staging of propaganda marches with the necessary flag-waving and musical accompaniment - which were reserved for the SA. Just the protection of the meetings of a local Nazi Party group could provide an almost unending task, and during election campaigns political rallies were nightly affairs. According to the police in Upper Silesia, concluding their description of the 'unflagging' activity of the storm troopers during the campaign for the September 1930 Reichstag elections, 'at all functions [of the NSDAP] the SA appears to be the driving force and can be regarded as the backbone of the NSDAP'.¹ In the East Prussian Kreis Heilsberg, where NSDAP and SA groups were not established until October 1930, by the winter of 1930/31 the Heilsberg SA had to protect an average of 12-14 local Party rallies per month.²

Involvement in the SA was very different from the passive membership, infrequent meetings and token payment of dues associated with belonging to so many other organisations. For the individual storm trooper, membership in the SA easily could dominate his life. Nightly rallies, frequent group meetings and training sessions, propaganda marches and the never-ending task of distributing Party literature would leave relatively little opportunity for a social life outside the SA. Especially since taverns, the main social focus in many communities, tended to become associated with the supporters of one or another political movement, for many young Nazi activists their participation in the SA was their social life.

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 191-227.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.50.b.: NSDAP Ortsgruppe Heilsberg, 'Partei-geschichte', Heilsberg, 20 June 1935.

Nevertheless, for many storm troopers membership in the SA did not necessarily involve a deep commitment to the Nazi cause. Joining an SA group could be a rather ill-defined affair, and frequently the stipulation that SA men be members of the NSDAP was ignored. In Kreis Goldap in East Prussia one SA-Sturmführer was taken to task in mid-1931 by the local NSDAP leader for having expanded his Sturm to a strength of 118 men, none of whom had joined the Party.¹ The issue at stake was the payment of Party dues: the Party organisation wanted dues paid, while the SA leader presumably found it easier to attract members if participation in SA activities did not involve the payment of initiation fees and monthly dues to the NSDAP. Similarly, in Kreis Lyck, in south-eastern East Prussia, the area Sturmbannführer felt compelled to criticise the high proportion of men in one local Sturm who had failed to become paid-up members of the NSDAP; of 60 SA men, only six had paid their initiation fees and Party dues.² In addition, the question of the formal membership of SA men in the NSDAP frequently was complicated by delays in processing Party membership applications, and in one instance SA men were prevented from joining the Party for a time because their initiation fees had been stolen by their group leader.³ De facto membership in the SA

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.37.b.: The Gaukommissar Ost to the Gau-leitung, Kiauten, 1 Aug. 1931.

2. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 677: Kriminal- und Grenzkommissariat to the Regierungspräsident, Prostken, 16 Oct. 1931. Investigations of the SA in Northeim and Nuremberg confirm the impression that SA men often did not become NSDAP members. See Allen, op. cit., p. 73; Reiche, 'The Development of the SA in Nuremberg', pp. 267-8.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.61.b.(1): 'Die Geschichte der Bewegung der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Widminnen'.

and formal membership in the Nazi organisation were not necessarily synonymous, and the character of the SA militated against it becoming so. The first task of the SA was to provide protection squads for the NSDAP, and the requirements of a properly functioning bureaucracy often took second place.

Further complicating the question of SA membership was the high turnover among the storm troopers. While the organisation attracted a stream of new recruits as SA units expanded and subdivided during the early 1930s, storm troopers also constantly were leaving SA ranks for a number of reasons: the conflicts and revolts which periodically shook the movement, the disciplining of SA members, dissatisfaction, disillusionment and waning interest. Morale reports collected by the SA leadership in September 1932 suggest the dimensions of this fluctuation. In Silesia, for example, the following changes in the membership were reported:

July 1932:	21.5% increase	7.4% decrease
August 1932:	13.8% increase	6.9% decrease ¹

Although the summer months of 1932 probably witnessed a more rapid turnover than other periods, nevertheless the magnitude of the fluctuation among the membership was remarkable: by the end of August only about two thirds of the Silesian SA had belonged to the organisation for more than two months.

On a local level, the changing fortunes of the SA in Rastenburg, East Prussia, also demonstrate the volatility of the SA membership.² In August 1929 25 men banded together in Ras-

1. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105178-81: Hans Hayn to the Oberste SA-Führung, Breslau, 22 Sept. 1932.

2. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.72.b.: Ortsgruppe Rastenburg, 'Partei-geschichte'.

tenburg to form simultaneously a local group of the NSDAP and of the SA. Yet within a month the strength of the Rastenburg SA had fallen to 12 men, led by an agricultural supervisor, Herbert Korzonnek. Its fortunes changed in the wake of the 1930 Reichstag elections, when the group grew suddenly, numbering 53 in mid-November. In June 1931, however, the membership had fallen to between 30 and 40, and the leadership was in the hands of a restaurant owner, Franz Buttgereit. In September 1931 Buttgereit was promoted to become SA-Sturmführer, and was replaced by a member of the Artamanen sect named Braun.¹ Braun apparently brought his fellow Artamanen members with him into the Rastenburg SA, which grew to between 60 and 70. However, in December 1931 Braun and the Artamanen left the SA, whose membership fell again to between 30 and 40 and which acquired a new leader, Gustav Kossack, a confectioner. In February 1932 Korzonnek again took command of the local SA, and the membership increased to between 50 and 60 men. By September 1932 it had grown to nearly 100 members and had yet another leader: August Luxat, a journeyman mason. A final tally of the membership in February 1933, immediately after Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor, noted 110 men in the Rastenburg SA, led once again by Korzonnek.

The effects upon the SA of such fluctuation were considerable. It meant that, at any given time, a large number of the storm troopers had a rather fleeting involvement with the Nazi movement, and suggests that there was a great difference between the activist core of the SA, which stuck by the organisation,

1. For a discussion of the Artamanen, see Fiedor, Antypolskie organizacje w Niemczech, pp. 167-9.

and the large number of 'sunshine soldiers' who attached themselves to the SA when it suited them. The volatility of the SA membership suggests further that to speak of a force fanatically committed to the Nazi ideology may be misguided. The constant flux meant that SA leaders could face considerable difficulties in keeping their units together, and implies that the activities of the SA were designed not merely to support the campaigns of the NSDAP but also to keep idle hands busy and to implant a sense of active involvement. On the other hand, the rapid turnover among the SA membership gave the Nazi leadership a considerable advantage in dealing with revolts among the SA, as rebellious elements could quickly be isolated, outnumbered and forgotten as the membership changed.¹

Men came to the SA via two main routes. The first was their acquaintances. The speed with which the Nazi movement grew in eastern Germany between 1929 and 1932 suggests that this phenomenon involved the political conversion of large sections of the community virtually en masse. It seems probable that groups of young men who associated with one another, who worked and drank together, would often continue their acquaintance within the context of the SA. Indeed, the SA might be regarded as a substitute for youth gangs, or perhaps more precisely their co-ordination within the framework of a political movement. The second main route to the SA was the political rally. One of the most important functions of Nazi rallies was to recruit new members, and many young men who attended at the urging of friends, out of general interest or due to boredom thus found

1. See below, pp. 145-6.

their way into the SA.¹ It would appear that young men with time to attend political rallies, especially those with contacts in the Nazi movement already, proved susceptible to enticements to join the SA.

The SA in turn played an important role in attracting young men to the Nazi movement as a whole, particularly as political fighting organisations structured along military lines held great allure in Weimar Germany.² The military-style hierarchy, disciplined marches and uniforms of the SA helped draw young men to Nazism. This was of special significance in a society where military life and values were praised highly, but in which the armed forces could not offer the nation's youth the opportunity for military service. One perceptive contemporary observer of the SA described its marches as a 'substitute for Kaiser parades' in which 'instead of His Majesty there stands Adolf Hitler'.³ Many joined the SA in order to play soldier, and the disappointment felt by storm troopers when prohibited from wearing their brown uniforms illustrates the importance of the military aspects of the SA.⁴

1. For an example of how rallies helped expand the Nazi organisation, see the report of a meeting in February 1931 in Langkischken, Kreis Goldap, which brought to the NSDAP '19 new members, 16 of them for the SA', in StAG, Rep. 240/C.47.b.: Richard Georges to the Bezirksleitung der NSDAP in Insterburg, Liauten, 24 Feb. 1931.

2. For discussion of the militarisation of Weimar politics, see especially James M. Diehl, Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany (Bloomington and London, 1977); Richard Bessel, 'Militarismus im innenpolitischen Leben der Weimarer Republik. Von den Freikorps zur SA', in Militär und Militarismus in der Weimarer Republik, ed. Müller and Opitz, pp. 193-222.

3. Friedrich Franz von Unruh, Nationalsozialismus (Frankfurt/Main, 1931), p. 19.

4. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 10/17, ff. 441-9: The Regierungspräsident to the Oberpräsident, Marienwerder, 18 July 1930.

The military character of the organisation appealed not only to SA members, but often also to the population in general. The existence of a uniformed and relatively disciplined force created the impression of a young and dynamic political movement and offered a visible contrast to the aging defenders of Weimar democracy.¹

A particularly important aspect of life in the SA was the military-style training of the storm troopers. It was common for groups to hold regular training sessions in methods of self-defence, such as jiu-jitsu.² Military training in the shape of field exercises frequently occurred as well. In early 1931, shortly before he was removed as 'Supreme SA Leader' in eastern Germany, Walther Stennes underlined the importance of military training and directed the Truppführer under his command to give military instruction at their group meetings, instruction which was to include practice with grenades and machine guns.³ Such orders were not just talk, for police searches often revealed considerable numbers of weapons in the hands of the SA.⁴ The functions of the repeated military drill, field exercises and practice with weapons were twofold in the eyes of the SA leaders. On the one hand, many in the SA felt it necessary to prepare for a civil war believed imminent, particu-

1. See Allen, The Nazi Seizure of Power, pp. 73-5.

2. See, for example, WAP Szczecin, RS/17, ff. 37-41: The kom. Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Greifenhagen, 1 Feb. 1931.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, f. 43: 'Geheimbefehl der OSAF O', Berlin, 26 Feb. 1931.

4. See, for example, WAP Opole, OPS/1020, f. 143: Preußisches Polizeiinstitut, 'Denkschrift über Vorbereitung und Kampfgrundsätze radikaler Organisationen' (1931).

larly in late 1932.¹ On the other, military exercises proved an effective method for boosting the morale of the SA men. In September 1932, for example, when the fortunes of the Nazi movement appeared at low ebb, the leader of the SA in the region to the south of Breslau noted that training with weapons provided an 'especially good means for raising the morale and fighting spirit of the SA'.²

In addition to the military exercises mentioned above, there were also special 'courses' intended primarily for lower-level SA officers (Sturm- and Truppführer). Military-style drill occupied a key place in these courses, together with ideological instruction. In East Prussia such courses were held in Lyck beginning in early 1931, and in Pomerania the SA established a 'leadership school' for the training of SA officers in the summer of 1931.³ In Silesia by mid-1931 the SA organization had set up a highly developed system of 'SA courses of instruction' (SA-Schulungslehrgänge) involving sports exercises, running, marching, the building and laying of temporary bridges over ditches, the surmounting of obstacles such as water gullies and swamplands, and instruction in warding off physical attack.⁴ For one session in March 1932 it was even planned to have a special training course in the use of snowshoes. The

1. See below, pp. 217-19.

2. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105174-7: The Führer der Untergruppe Mittelschlesien Süd to the Oberste SA-Führung, Reichenbach (Eulengeb.), 26 Sept. 1932.

3. Frank, 'Hitler and the National Socialist Coalition', p. 428. For a description of the course in East Prussia, see StAG, 14/B.I.3., f. 394: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident in Allenstein, Königsberg, 25 Mar. 1931.

4. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, ff. 477-84: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Breslau, 9 Dec. 1931.

members who took part in these courses were often unemployed; a man with a steady job would have had difficulty in obtaining two or three free weeks to participate. On one Silesian course, for example, of the 100 places available 64 were allotted to unemployed members of the SA (at a fee of 6 RM) and the other 36 to employed members (at a fee of 8 RM). The training offered by these courses often was better suited to the campaigns of the First World War than to the street battles of Weimar Germany, but practical preparation for military action was not their sole function. Like the other military aspects of SA membership, they served to boost morale and keep especially the unemployed members active and satisfied.

A further feature of membership in the SA was the amount of travel it could involve. Touring around the countryside, travelling in order to protect an important rally in a neighbouring district and marching through various towns and villages took up much of the time of an SA group. Already during the late 1920s the SA began to use mobile tactics to help the movement break out of its urban strongholds. In the summer of 1928 virtually the entire Pomeranian SA went by bicycle on 'propaganda trips' every Sunday 'in order to prepare new ground for rallies', and the SA in Königsberg travelled regularly by road and rail into rural districts in order to protect Nazi Party meetings.¹ During the following summer the Königsberg SA and SS were mobilised for Sunday 'Auto-Propaganda' into the surrounding countryside, with participation compulsory at the threat

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/207, vol. 2, f. 339: NSDAP Gau Pommern, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat August 1928'; StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(1): Prop. Obmann to the Prop. Abtl. d. NSDAP in Munich, Königsberg, 20 Aug. 1928.

of expulsion.¹ Similarly, in 1930 the SA in Elbing began to devote its Sundays to 'Landpropaganda', partly to spread the movement into rural areas, partly to avoid the surveillance of the Elbing police, and partly because violence between Nazis and Communists had become so frequent that no innkeeper in Elbing would risk the destruction of his premises by hosting a Nazi rally.²

Bringing SA men considerable distances allowed the Nazis to stage impressive demonstrations even in relatively small communities. For example, in July 1930 more than 600 storm troopers gathered in the Pomeranian town of Cammin - having converged from Wollin, Greifenberg, Naugard, Treptow a. Rega, Stettin and Pasewalk (100 kilometers distant by road) - and organised a powerful demonstration.³ Similarly, when Hitler spoke in Königsberg in July 1932, he was greeted with a march past of virtually the entire East Prussian SA.⁴ The most striking example of SA travel came in October 1931, when hundreds of storm troopers from the eastern Prussian provinces journeyed across Germany to participate in the massive demonstration in Braunschweig.⁵ For many young men in eastern Germany, membership in the SA offered a chance, perhaps the first in their entire lives,

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.33.a.: Bezirksleiter Heidrich to all Parteigenossen, SA und SS Leute, Königsberg, 15 Aug. 1929.

2. StAG, Rep. 10/17, ff. 441-9.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/8, f. 9: The Polizeiverwaltung, Cammin, 28 July 1930.

4. VB, 19 July 1932, p. 1.

5. More than 400 SA and SS men made the trip from Upper Silesia alone. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, f. 43: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 30 Oct. 1931.

to escape the isolation and boredom of their own homes and communities.

For the dedicated members of the SA, belonging to the organisation meant a high degree of activism and involvement. The SA assumed a central place in the lives of its active members, and the nature of SA membership is itself evidence that a major proportion of the storm troopers were without steady jobs. Unquestionably, the growth of the SA must be seen as a political consequence of the economic crisis. As Heinrich Bennecke noted in his analysis of the SA in Saxony, the political activity of the Nazi movement 'would not have been conceivable without the large number of unemployed members'.¹ To these may be added particularly the underemployed farm population in eastern Germany. The level of activity which characterised the SA was made possible by a crisis which left hundreds of thousands of young men adrift with little to do. For young Germans without work and without access to the armed forces in a society which held military values in high esteem, the SA offered activity, adventure, novelty and a substitute for military service.

(iii) The Role of the SA-Heime

Among the most revealing evidence of unemployment among SA members were the SA-Heime, hostels established by local groups to shelter jobless and homeless storm troopers. Yet the first attempts to see to the material needs of the membership had not been a response to poverty among SA men. Rather, the

1. BA, Kleine Erwerbungen/569: Bennecke, 'Die SA in Sachsen vor der "Machtübernahme"', pp. 52-3.

impetus was provided by the difficulties which the SA had faced in feeding the storm troopers massed at the 1927 Nuremberg Party Rally and which led von Pfeffer in 1929 to instruct SA units to provide their own kitchens at large demonstrations.¹ Nevertheless, it was the deepening of the economic crisis and the growth of the SA which made the provision of meals and beds for unfortunate SA men a necessity. As economic conditions deteriorated, offering room and board brought the local Nazi organisations young men constantly at their disposal, helped attract new recruits and provided a welcome subject for propaganda.

As in the rest of the country, in the eastern Prussian provinces SA-Heime were founded during late 1930 and 1931 in virtually all the major population centres. The first SA-Heime were set up in the larger cities; for example, the first SA hostel in East Prussia was founded in 1930 in the Nazi stronghold of Roßgarten in Königsberg.² During the course of 1931, however, SA-Heime were also established in many district and market towns. The hostels in rural regions tended to be smaller than those in the cities and were less likely to offer overnight accommodation on a permanent basis, since the problem of homelessness was less serious in rural communities. The setting up of a network of SA-Heime was particularly well documented in Upper Silesia, where they first appeared in the spring of 1931. The first hostel was established in Beuthen in March, followed by Heime in Kreuzburg (described as a 'reading home') in June

1. See Werner, 'SA und NSDAP', p. 417.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.54.b.: 'Chronik der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Roßgarten Kreis Königsberg/Pr.'.

and in Neisse and Oppeln soon thereafter.¹ By September the Upper Silesian SA also had set up hostels in Groß Strehlitz, Ratibor, Hindenburg and Rosenberg.² Thus by the end of 1931 the SA in Upper Silesia possessed a well-developed network of hostels for its members.

The SA hostels occupied an extremely important place in the activities of a local SA group. The SA-Heime and SA-Lokale (taverns where SA groups congregated) provided places for group meetings and training sessions, as well as for members to gather when they had nothing else to do. This often led to the further radicalisation of the storm troopers, as it removed them from society at large and kept them in contact primarily with other young men in similar positions.³ The Heime also brought tactical advantages to the SA. According to the Prussian Interior Ministry, which noted with alarm the proliferation of such hostels, the function of the SA-Heime was not only to provide 'unemployed members with communal board in the cheapest possible manner and to give them a place to live', but also 'to encourage attempts to keep SA groups [...] ready for action at any time'.⁴ In Upper Silesia the police noted:

The use of the SA-Heime has in practice not [...] been limited to providing room and board to Party members who are homeless or passing through and to SA comrades; the premises of the SA-Heime also serve as a domicile for regular guard details, the purpose of which is to be on

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 423-7.

2. Ibid., ff. 489-95: 'Bericht über die politische Lage im Bereich der Landespolizeistelle für die Provinz Oberschlesien für das verflossene Vierteljahr', Oppeln, 3 Nov. 1931.

3. See Bennecke, Hitler und die SA, p. 175.

4. StAG, Rep. 10/30, f. 207: The Preußische Minister des Innern (signed by Dr. Abegg), Berlin, 4 Sept. 1931.

alert to be called into action for support in political disturbances and for the protection of Party members. There is regular instruction for this purpose, as for example has been confirmed in Kreuzburg.¹

The hostels fulfilled a number of security functions: they often were shelters for SA men who would have faced considerable danger had they sought a place to stay on their own, and they provided a ready guard to protect local Party and SA headquarters from attack by opponents. At the same time, the SA-Heime and SA-Lokale also served as bases from which attacks against the Nazis' opponents were planned and carried out. For example, the Nazi historian of the movement in Roßgarten wrote that the SA hostel there 'often served as a refuge for SA comrades who were being pursued by political opponents' and asserted that 'originally the entire struggle against the red mob was organised from here'.² Similarly, the functions of the SA-Heim in Steindamm, a working-class district of Königsberg, was described by the Nazis as follows:

Here there was always room and board for unemployed Party members of the section, here there was a refuge for Party members who could not visit their flats in the evening because the Commune was lying in wait for them, here the counterblows of determined fighters were agreed upon, and from here propaganda material was taken under constant danger into the strongholds of the KPD.³

The SA hostels served almost as military camps for the storm troopers, bases from which to conduct their street battles against the organisations of the Left.

Predictably, the SA-Heime posed a considerable threat to the peace of the community. The SA-Heim in Ratibor offers a

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 489-95.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.54.b.: 'Chronik der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Roßgarten Kreis Königsberg/Pr.'.

3. Ibid.: 'Chronik der Ortsgruppe Steindamm'.

typical example. Consisting of three large rooms with 52 beds and an additional office for the Ratibor SA leadership, the hostel was set up in August 1931.¹ During its first two months it figured in numerous violent incidents, and in mid-October the police reported that 'the SA-Heim has developed increasingly into a danger for public security and order'.² On the night of 8/9 August SA men from the Ratibor Heim attacked members of the Kreuzschar; on 30 August SA men molested Kreuzschar members as they passed in formation in front of the hostel, and a brawl was prevented only by speedy police intervention; on 5 September men from the Heim had to be stopped by police from performing military-style exercises; and the storm troopers standing guard at the hostel repeatedly insulted and molested passers-by. Throughout eastern Germany the SA-Heime were powder kegs of violence, and the police responded to the danger they posed by frequently closing them down.³

Unemployment among the SA membership was central to the character of the SA-Heime. The occupants of the hostels and

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1803, f. 841: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 21 Aug. 1931. This particular hostel remained open for a few months only; because of the high rent (120 RM per month) the SA had to move to smaller quarters in December. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 22 Dec. 1931.

2. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1803, ff. 891-3: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 12 Oct. 1931.

3. In Silesia, for example, a major crackdown came in January 1932, when Heime in Gleiwitz, Hindenburg, Konstadt and Lüben were shut. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, ff. 435-6: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 11 Jan. 1932; *ibid.*, ff. 518-19: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 15 Jan. 1932; *ibid.*, ff. 709-10: letter to the Ortspolizeibehörde in Konstadt (undated, from Jan. 1932); WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, f. 469: The Landrat to Dr. Wagner, Kreuzburg, 18 Feb. 1932; SZ, 12 Jan. 1932, p. 3; *ibid.*, 14 Jan. 1932, p. 3.

the recipients of meals served in their 'emergency kitchens' consisted primarily of unemployed young men. In addition, it was the unemployed who were used to provide full-time guard duty for the hostel itself, as well as of the headquarters of the local or regional NSDAP, and the labour of the unemployed storm troopers was used for the renovation and furnishing of the Heime. In Ratibor, for example, the 52 wooden beds in the SA-Heim which opened in August 1931 had been built by unemployed members of the SA. The presence of jobless 'Party comrades' in the Heime often was cited in Nazi propaganda as evidence of the 'socialism' of the movement; special press coverage always was given to the closure of an SA hostel by police, and much play was made of how the destitute occupants thus were made homeless.¹

The SA-Heime usually were rather crude affairs. Men were lodged as cheaply as possible, and it was common for a hostel to be a converted barn or disused factory warehouse owned by a Nazi Party member. For example, in Kreuzburg in Upper Silesia a stable, the property of the propaganda chief of the local NSDAP, became an SA-Heim which provided food and lodging for eight or nine homeless and destitute SA men.² The SA men living in the hostel were expected to keep it clean and in decent repair, and in many ways the spartan life in the hostels resembled that in military barracks.³

1. See, for example, the report of the closing of the SA-Heim in Tilsit in VB, 11 Nov. 1931, p. 1.

2. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1803, f. 843: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 28 Sept. 1931; *ibid.*, f. 845: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 25 Jan. 1932.

3. See, for example, *ibid.*, f. 1073: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 10 Oct. 1931.

The role of the SA-Heime perhaps can be illustrated best by more detailed examination of specific examples. A valuable picture of the workings of such a hostel is provided by a police report on the large SA-Heim in Roßgarten in October 1931:

Former storage rooms in the rear building of Vorderroßgarten 17/19 have been fixed up for the SA-Heim. The Heim consists of one assembly room, a sitting room for the guard, a conference room, a so-called 'Standarten' room and a kitchen, from which needy SA men and other Party members are fed. The provisions are procured from voluntary contributions from National Socialist shopkeepers and farmers. At all times of day cold and warm food, coffee, tea, cocoa and milk, but no alcoholic drinks, are handed out. Six men of the so-called staff guard are lodged permanently in the sitting room. The staff guard consists of about 20 men and has to watch over the offices of the Preußische Zeitung, the Gau office [...] and the SA-Heim day and night. It also often happens that other Party members, for example from other areas, stay overnight. The 'Standarten' room is used for small conferences of the leadership. In the large assembly room there are daily meetings and exercises for the individual SA-Stürme. The SA-Heim also serves as a gathering point for SA members for marches. Also lodged here are special squads which, if necessary, are transported by the NSKK - National Socialist Motor Vehicle Corps - to protect or reinforce meetings both in the area and beyond.¹

In contrast to the Roßgarten hostel, the SA-Heim in Oppeln was rather smaller and more typical of the SA hostels in eastern Germany. The Oppeln Heim formed part of the city's 'Brown House' Nazi headquarters, which was opened in late August 1931 with great fanfare, a large demonstration, and speeches by Silesian Gauleiter Brückner, Upper Silesian Untergauleiter Adamczyk and Silesian SA leader Heines.² For the hostel the NSDAP had rented a former brewery from the firm Schultheiss-Patzenhofer, at a cost of 170 RM per month. The money for the necessary renova-

1. StAG, Rep. 10/30, ff. 226-7: The Regierungspräsident to the Pr. Minister des Innern, Königsberg, 3 Oct. 1931.

2. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1803, f. 569: clipping from ST, 24 Aug. 1931.

tion came from donations by Party members and sympathisers, and the Heim was to house especially 'SA men who have lost their jobs or have been thrown out of their families because of their political views'.¹ The hostel provided full board and lodging for about 16 unemployed SA members, who paid varying amounts (ranging from 1.50 to 8.00 RM per week) for their keep. These men were supposed to sleep in the hostel, to be ready for action at all times, and to keep the premises clean. These arrangements were short-lived, however, as the Heim was closed in October when the Nazis were accused of breaking the rental agreement by making structural changes to the building.²

The SA-Heim in the industrial city of Beuthen also had a short life, but for somewhat different reasons. The Beuthen hostel was set up in March 1931, and by mid-May 20 SA men were living in it.³ Those who could pay (that is, those who received either unemployment benefit or other financial help) were expected to contribute 10 RM per month toward their upkeep; those who had no support whatsoever were lodged for free and given monthly pocket money of between 3 and 5 RM, the costs being met by the local NSDAP. In return for their keep, the SA men in the hostel were constantly at the disposal of the local leadership of both the SA and the NSDAP, and in addition they spent time hawking newspapers for the local Party organisation. Like

1. Ibid., ff. 575-7: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 27 Aug. 1931.

2. The real reason for terminating the agreement seems to have been concern by Schultheiss that it was losing business because it rented property to the Nazis. See *ibid.*, ff. 1105-6: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 22 Oct. 1931.

3. Ibid., p. 47: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 22 May 1931.

its counterpart in Oppeln, the Beuthen SA-Heim remained open only for a few months, and it was the unusually high rent of 240 RM per month which proved the hostel's undoing. The troubles began in July, when the SA member charged with managing the hostel absconded (it was rumoured to Argentina) with the rent he had collected from the men being lodged.¹ From August the Beuthen NSDAP, which had been quite generous in its support of needy SA men, was no longer able to pay the rent; and in October the hostel was forced to close, a victim of the financial problems which affected many SA-Heime.²

Without the full-time activists in the SA-Heime, it would have been difficult for the Nazi movement either to mount so hectic a propaganda campaign or to present so powerful a challenge to the Left on Germany's streets. Yet the role of the SA-Heime should be kept in perspective. Particularly in the rural regions of the eastern Prussian provinces, the SA hostels were thinly scattered and only a small proportion of the SA membership actually were lodged in them. Even in Upper Silesia, with its large concentration of heavy industry and urban poverty, the SA-Heime housed only a tiny fraction of the total SA membership. In late 1931, when the development of the SA hostels in Upper Silesia was at its peak, the eight hostels in the province lodged at most 200 men on a permanent basis, while the Upper Silesian SA as a whole numbered 3706.³ Nevertheless, although

1. Ibid., ff. 513-14: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 7 Aug. 1931.

2. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, f. 71: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 8 Nov. 1931. See also WAP Wrocław, RO I/1830, ff. 571-7.

3. Ibid., ff. 571-7.

probably not more than 5 per cent of the SA membership lived in the hostels at any one time, their importance was rather greater than this would imply. The SA-Heime formed the focus of the activities of many SA groups, and the men who lived in them were full-time 'political soldiers' who provided a vital contribution to a movement which relied on a high level of activism for its success.

Chapter III

THE S.A. AND THE NAZI MOVEMENT

(i) SA Finances

The position of the SA within the Nazi movement centred to a considerable degree around questions of finance. Among the most important aspects of the activities of the SA was its role in financing the entire Nazi movement, and many of the day-to-day disputes between the SA and the NSDAP involved money. Thus an examination of SA finances provides an appropriate introduction to a general discussion of the place of the SA within the movement as a whole.

Before 1933, the question of finance was among the most difficult faced by virtually all local and regional Nazi organisations. While the movement's headquarters in Munich may have benefited periodically from the contributions of wealthy and influential supporters, local and regional groups were left largely to their own resources. This meant that Nazi activities at the local level had to be financed primarily from membership dues, members' donations, profit from the sale of Party newspapers and literature, and the proceeds of successful political rallies.¹ The largely middle-class composition of the NSDAP was a great advantage; members with relatively solid sources of in-

1. For a detailed analysis of the self-financing of a Nazi Gau organisation, see Horst Mazerath and Henry A. Turner, 'Die Selbstfinanzierung der NSDAP 1930-1933', Geschichte und Gesellschaft, iii (1977), 59-82. The only evidence found of support by large firms for the Nazi movement in eastern Germany was the readiness of the Borsig factory in Hindenburg to provide space for a Hitler rally free of charge. See BA, NS 22/1068: Wilhelm Hüttmann to Gregor Straßer, Oppeln, 4 July 1932.

come were more likely to pay dues regularly and contribute to the cause. Even more important as a source of income, particularly for local Nazi Party groups, were political rallies. Since admission charges invariably were levied, a good turnout could leave a local group with a healthy profit after the speaker's fee, rent for the hall and other expenses were met.¹ Thus at the local and regional levels the Nazi movement was dependent upon its own activities for the money necessary to keep it afloat.

This pattern of financing the Nazi movement held important implications for the SA. First and foremost, it made the activities of the storm troopers — particularly their services as protection squads for Party rallies and as hawkers of Party newspapers — indispensable for the financial health of the local Party organisations. The importance of the storm troopers for the financial welfare of the NSDAP gave them a certain leverage, and buttressed assertions that the SA was not merely an appendage of the Party. At the same time, however, the generally precarious financial position of the Party organisations meant that local and regional NSDAP leaders often were ill-disposed to provide extra funds for the activities of the SA, whereas they expected SA men to pay their Party dues regularly and promptly. Thus the financing of the Nazi movement gave rise to a peculiar combination of dependence and conflict which characterised the relations between the NSDAP and the SA before 1933.

1. For evidence of the financial position of the local NSDAP groups and their sources of income, see StAG, Rep. 240/C.48.c.: Ortsgruppenleiter K. Wildt, 'Kassenbericht für 1930', Niebudszen, 28 Feb. 1931; StAG, Rep. 240/C.51.a.: Ortsgruppe Insterburg, 'Kassenbericht', Insterburg, 2 Mar. 1931. See also Theodor Heuß, Hitlers Weg. Eine historisch-politische Studie über den Nationalsozialismus (Stuttgart, Berlin and Leipzig, 1932), pp. 123-4.

The financial obligations connected with membership in the SA could be considerable. Since SA men were supposed to be members of the NSDAP they were expected to pay Party dues, although the dues for storm troopers were somewhat lower than for Party members who did not belong to the movement's paramilitary formations. On the eve of Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor, for example, there were three rates of NSDAP dues: 80 Pfennig per month for members of the SA, SS and Hitler Youth who were unemployed and had no income; 1 RM for unemployed members of the SA, SS and Hitler Youth who had an income (unemployment benefit) and for other NSDAP members without any income; and 1.50 RM for all other members of the Party.¹ In addition, storm troopers were required to pay a monthly SA-insurance premium of 20 Pfennig (from March 1930, 30 Pfennig) to insure against the hazards of being SA members,² and were also expected to pay for their uniforms. If an SA man purchased the complete outfit - including brown shirt, cap, belt, dagger and brown trousers - the cost was substantial, and the sale of such clothing provided the Nazi organisation an important source of revenue.³ Many men lacked the complete uniform, however, and often pros-

1. See BA, NS 1/511: Reichsschatzmeister, 'Rundschreiben an sämtliche Gauleitungen der NSDAP', Munich, 6 Sept. 1932; *ibid.*: Reichsschatzmeister, 'Rundschreiben an sämtliche Gauleitungen der NSDAP', Munich, 17 Oct. 1932.

2. For details of the SA insurance scheme, see Werner, 'SA und NSDAP', pp. 408-14. During the 1920s this insurance business was handled by private firms, but in 1929, after disputes over rising premiums, it was taken over directly by the NSDAP; its director was Martin Bormann. See BA, NS 1/393.

3. In October 1930, for example, a brown shirt cost 6.80 RM, the cheapest brown trousers 7.50 RM, an SA cap 3.10 RM, and a shoulder strap 1.70 RM. See Illustrierter Beobachter, 11 Oct. 1930, p. 713: advertisement of the Sporthaus 'Scharnhorst', Hamburg.

perous Party members would sponsor SA men, paying their dues or buying their uniforms.¹

The funds which went to the SA organisation did not come directly from its membership, but via the NSDAP. The dues paid by Party members were divided among the local groups, the Gaue and the NSDAP Munich headquarters. Until the summer of 1930, 10 Pfennig of the monthly dues, together with some of the profit from the sale of Party literature and SA uniforms, was earmarked to cover the costs of the SA; after the 1930 SA rebellion in Berlin, a supplementary fee of 20 Pfennig for the SA was added to Party dues.² This money was handed over to the 'Supreme SA Leadership' in Munich, which distributed monthly sums to regional SA groups. The regional SA groups also received money from the appropriate NSDAP Gauleitungen.³ These regional organisations then distributed funds to their subordinate units, to the Untergruppen and Standarten. The sums involved were not large. For example, in Upper Silesia the SA-Untergruppe received a monthly allowance of 300 RM in the summer of 1932, while the SA-Standarte in Breslau received between 30 and 50 RM.⁴ In addition, the regional SA groups supplemented their income through the sale of Nazi literature and a share of the profits of the 'Sturm' cigarette factory in Dresden, an

1. See Werner, op. cit., p. 362.

2. Ibid., pp. 361-2.

3. See BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105178-81: Hans Hayn to the Oberste SA-Führung, Breslau, 22 Sept. 1932.

4. Ibid., ff- 105182-3: The Führer der Standarte 11 to the Chef des Stabes, Breslau, 22 Sept. 1932; ibid., ff. 105186-90: The Führer der Untergruppe O/S to the Chef des Stabes, Oppeln, 22 Sept. 1932.

uneven but sometimes quite significant source of revenue.¹ These funds were not intended to cover the activities of the local SA groups, but rather the administrative costs of the regional organisations: the costs of maintaining offices, legal expenses, aid for needy SA men, and monthly salaries for Gau SA leaders.² At the local level, the financing of SA activities tended to work on an ad hoc basis, as arrangements for paying for transport and so forth were to be made with the appropriate local Party group.

The SA was not permitted to seek new income at its own initiative at either the local or regional level. According to regulations laid down by the NSDAP Reich Treasurer, Franz Xaver Schwarz, the Gauleiter, together with the Gau treasurers, determined the financial affairs of the regional Nazi organisations.³ This system of financing meant that, at all levels, the SA had to look to the Party for its funding; at no time did the SA establish financial autonomy, a point crucial in its relations with the NSDAP. Despite the separate hierarchy and distinct ethos of the SA, when money became an issue, the Party (whether in the form of a local NSDAP leader or Party Treasurer Schwarz) assumed the role of a stern and suspicious paymaster.

1. In Breslau, the proceeds from 'Sturm' cigarettes netted the Standarte 50 RM in July 1932 and 595 RM in August. See *ibid.*, ff. 105182-3.

2. The monthly salary of Gau SA leaders before 1933 was roughly 300 RM. See TMWC (Nuremberg, 1947), xxi. 130: testimony of Max Jüttner, from 1 Nov. 1945. Many regional SA leaders had other sources of income, however, either as Reichstag deputies (Heines and Ramshorn) or provincial assembly deputies (Manthey), or from independent means (Litzmann).

3. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.66.e.: Georg Heidrich to Ernst Linkies, Königsberg, 30 Oct. 1930; BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105094-5: The Führer der Gruppe Ostsee to the Chef des Stabes, Stettin, 22 Sept. 1932; *ibid.*, ff. 105066-9: The Führer der Untergruppe Pommern-Ost to the Chef des Stabes, Berlin, 22 Sept. 1932.

The financial resources available were rarely sufficient to cover the costs of the frenetic propaganda activities and the administrative expenses of the SA. At a meeting of SA leaders with Schwarz in November 1930, for example, the heads of the SA in eastern Germany were virtually unanimous in their condemnation of existing financial arrangements; according to Walther Stennes, all the groups in the East except those in Magdeburg and Anhalt were experiencing serious financial difficulties.¹ Silesian SA leader Kurt Kremser argued that the SA in his region was receiving less than it was due, and requested special compensation for the additional costs arising from a recent Hitler rally in Breslau.² From Pomerania, Hans Lustig complained that the funds he received from the Gauleitung (150 RM in September and 250 RM in October) were so inadequate that in order to provide his organisation with the necessary cash he had been forced to pawn his typewriter and duplicating machine.

Election campaigning, especially in 1932, proved a great financial drain. Rent for offices and SA-Heime and the costs of transport to and from the many Nazi rallies throughout the countryside drove SA organisations into debt even where relations with the Party leadership remained reasonably good.³ Where relations were poor, as in Pomerania, the problems were extreme.

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/403: 'Bericht über Aussprache der SAF mit Herrn Reichsschatzmeister Schwarz über Finanzierung der SA', Munich, 30 Nov. 1930.

2. On 12 September, the Friday before the Reichstag elections, Hitler spoke before about 30,000 people in Breslau. See SZ, 13 Sept. 1930, p. 2.

3. See, for example, BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105174-7: Hans Hayn to the Oberste SA-Führung, Reichenbach (Eulengeb.), 26 Sept. 1932.

In eastern Pomerania during the summer of 1932 the Gauleitung had stopped payments to the SA 'Untergruppe Pommern-Ost', which found itself 'without a Pfennig'; in order to keep his organisation afloat, Untergruppenführer Rosenhagen was compelled to contribute the salary he received as a Prussian Landtag deputy.¹ In the neighbouring 'Untergruppe Pommern-West' the situation was little better. In August 1932 the Untergruppe had a total income of 1864 RM, much of which was used to help destitute SA men and to cover the costs of the special Propagandastürme roaming the countryside.² At the same time, the accumulated debt of the Untergruppe amounted to 13,496.48 RM, while the Propagandastürme had incurred additional debts of 24,525.41 RM.

Although financial difficulties greatly affected the operations of the Nazi movement and gave rise to much friction within it, nevertheless they did not restrict fundamentally the activities of the SA or the NSDAP. The Nazi Party was able to mount impressive propaganda campaigns despite the problems of insufficient funds and heavy debt. The most significant aspect of this indebtedness was not that it betrayed the poverty of the movement and its followers, but that the NSDAP and SA at local and regional levels had someone to go into debt to. Unlike their Communist opponents, SA groups found it possible to run up massive debts because people were prepared to extend them credit. The SA was able, for example, to draw on the resources of supporters such as Otto Fuchs, a member of the NSDAP in Landsberg, Kreis Preußisch Eylau (East Prussia), who in February 1931 sup-

1. Ibid., ff. 105066-9.

2. Ibid., ff. 105096-101: The Führer der Untergruppe Pommern-West to the Chef des Stabes, Stettin, 22 Sept. 1932.

plied SA uniforms to the local group at a cost of 1000 RM.¹ The SA-Heime also demonstrate the access of the Nazis to financial resources; while these hostels frequently closed down due to failure to pay rent, it is nonetheless revealing that so many people were willing to allow the SA to use their property in the first place. Similarly, the degree to which the SA used motor transport for its propaganda activities demonstrates that there were numerous Party members who owned motor vehicles and were prepared to lend them to the movement. Thus the level of debt which the NSDAP and SA faced points perhaps less to a weakness of the movement than to its strength, to the access it had to resources crucial to its propaganda campaigns.

(ii) The SA and the Nazi Party Organisation

According to the guidelines issued by von Pfeffer in 1926, the SA was to be strictly subordinated to the NSDAP. It was to form a part of the Nazi Party and the political leadership was to determine 'what shall happen with the SA'.² The SA was a 'means to an end'. It was not intended to have a substantive role in forming the policies or strategy of the movement; its proper role was envisaged as that of a loyal party army, which would carry out the tasks assigned to it by the NSDAP leadership. Nevertheless, throughout eastern Germany the relations between the SA and the NSDAP frequently were marked by friction.

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.70.b.: Otto Fuchs to the Gauleitung in Königsberg, Landsberg, 10 Dec. 1931. Fuchs was placed in considerable difficulties when, by December, he still had not been repaid.

2. IfZ, Fa 107, f. 15: SABE 2, Munich, 2 Nov. 1926.

A key factor underlying the conflicts between the SA and the NSDAP was the sense of separateness which was generated in the SA. As the SA grew there developed within it a feeling that it bore the main burden of the political struggle, that the activists in the SA were superior to the 'civilians' and 'politicians' among the NSDAP leadership, and that the storm troopers often were treated unfairly by a Party leadership which regarded the SA as the tool rather than the elite of the movement.¹ However, the immediate causes of the friction between the SA and the NSDAP tended to be personality conflicts, organisational disputes and quarrels arising from financial difficulties. These were often interrelated. When a local or regional chief of the Nazi Party could not get along with the SA leader in his area, this frequently led to disputes about who could and should give orders to whom and generally made more difficult the financing of the SA's activities. Withholding funds was a commonly used weapon of the NSDAP leadership against recalcitrant SA leaders; organisational disputes often masked personal rivalries; and personal animosities frequently were exacerbated by the difficulties which arose over finances and jurisdiction.

The rivalry between the SA and the NSDAP and the tension arising from the SA's position subordinate yet parallel to the NSDAP meant that all the eastern German Gauleiter found themselves at odds with the SA leadership at some point. The case of the Silesian SA is particularly revealing. On the whole Gauleiter Brückner had enjoyed relatively good relations with the

1. See Nyomarkay, Charisma and Factionalism, pp. 110-15; Rudolf Diels, Lucifer ante Portas. Zwischen Severing und Heydrich (Zürich (1950)), p. 153.

SA in his region. However, as the SA began to assume mass proportions, serious conflict arose between the Silesian NSDAP and SA leaders. According to Brückner, the fault lay squarely with the SA and its leader, Kurt Kremser. Writing to the Munich NSDAP headquarters in May 1930 he complained that, although hitherto there had existed a 'friction-free relationship between the Gauleitung and the SA leadership', in 1930 the SA leadership began to interfere in the affairs of the Party organisation and to agitate against it.¹ The crux of the conflict was the issue of who should command whom. In Brückner's opinion the SA was intended to be a 'keen instrument in the hand of the political leadership', whereas the SA leadership denied the right of Party leaders to order the storm troopers about.

As relations between the Silesian NSDAP and SA deteriorated, Brückner withheld funds from the SA and attempted to obtain an SA leadership more amenable to the wishes of the Gauleitung. Kremser received support from his superiors in the SA hierarchy, and in November 1930 Chief of Staff Otto Wagener defended the Silesian leader against Brückner and staunchly asserted the independence of the SA vis-à-vis the Party. According to Wagener, replacing Kremser was out of the question, and the Gau SA leader was in his view 'neither subordinate to the Gauleiter nor does he have to report to him'.² Finally Hermann Göring intervened in the conflict toward the end of 1930, after rumours had been circulated within the Nazi organisation that Kremser had a Jewish background. An investigation revealed that Kremser had no Jewish

1. BA, NS 22/1068: Helmuth Brückner to the Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Schweidnitz, 10 May 1930.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/208, vol. 2, f. 75: Otto Wagener to Helmuth Brückner, Munich, 5 Nov. 1930.

ancestry, and under Göring's aegis a peace agreement was reached between the Gauleiter and the SA leader: each would refrain from attacking the other; Brückner would forbid further rumours about Kremser's alleged Jewish background; and Kremser would co-operate with the Party leadership.¹ Nevertheless, the friction continued during the winter of 1930/31 and was not resolved completely until the end of March 1931, when Kremser supported Stennes' rebellion and was thrown out of the Nazi organisation.²

Significantly, Brückner had little difficulty with Kremser's successor, Edmund Heines. Despite his extreme brutality, flagrant law-breaking and homosexuality, Heines never directly challenged the authority of the Silesian Party leader. NSDAP leaders were far less concerned about the propriety of the SA leadership than about challenges to their own authority.

The greatest friction between the Party and the SA occurred in Pomerania, and was due in large measure to the abrasive personality of Gauleiter Wilhelm Karpenstein. As in Silesia, the relations between the SA and NSDAP in Pomerania had shown signs of strain in 1930. But it was in the spring of 1931 that the uneasy relations between the two organisations took a decisive turn, when each received a new leader. In the wake of the Stennes revolt Pomeranian SA leader Hans Lustig was replaced by Hans Friedrich, a former Stahlhelm leader from Demmin; and at almost the same time Walther von Corswandt was replaced as Gauleiter by Karpenstein.³

1. BDC, AOPG, Max Wieschalla: The USchLA Vorsitzender to Ferdinand von Hiddessen, Munich, 16 Dec. 1930.

2. See below, pp. 149-53.

3. See BA, NS 26/152, f. 484; Gaede, Pommern, pp. 13-15.

Upon his appointment, Karpenstein immediately sought to undermine Friedrich. The new Gauleiter drew support from the Party apparatus, as well as from some members of the SA who may have resented Friedrich's Stahlhelm background and sudden rise in the Nazi organisation; Friedrich, on the other hand, enjoyed the backing of the bulk of the SA and SS.¹ Within a few months Karpenstein achieved success. He first managed to remove one of Friedrich's staunchest supporters, the administrative director (Standarten-Verwalter) of the SS and Kreis-leiter of the NSDAP in Wollin, Werner Krug; and in early August the SA leadership, eager to maintain good relations with the Party, temporarily relieved Friedrich of his post. Friedrich defended his record but resigned nevertheless because, in his opinion, 'a fruitful cooperation in the interests of the movement' had been made impossible.

The friction within the Pomeranian Nazi movement continued through 1932, and when Friedrich returned to lead the SA 'Untergruppe Pommern-West' in September he described the relationship between the SA and the Party leadership in the province as 'the worst possible'.² Although Karpenstein promised cooperation, Friedrich noted that the Gauleiter 'already stood in open conflict with both other Untergruppenführer' in Pomerania. The occasion of conflict was finance. According to Andreas von Flotow, leader of the SA 'Gruppe Ostsee' (which encompassed all of Pome-

1. See BDC, SA-Akte, Hans Friedrich: Stabsleiter Krüger to the Oberster SA-Führer, Berlin, 7 Aug. 1931; *ibid.*: Hans Friedrich to the Oberster SA-Führer, Munich, 13 Aug. 1931; *ibid.*: Stabsleiter Krüger to the Chef des Stabes, Berlin, 28 Aug. 1931; *ibid.*: 'Stellungnahme zum Rechenschaftsbericht des Oberführer Friedrich'; *ibid.*: SS-Oberführer Erbprinz zu Waldeck to the Oberste SA-Führung, Munich, 18 Aug. 1931; *ibid.*: Hans Friedrich to the Chef des Stabes, Demmin, 29 Aug. 1931.

2. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105096-101.

rania), his organisation faced a steadily deteriorating financial situation, and he blamed Karpenstein for preventing the SA from receiving money it was due.¹ Despite Karpenstein's promises of a settlement of the financial arrangements between the SA and the Party, von Flotow admitted, 'I do not have the confidence in the Gauleiter that in the future relations will be much better'. The scepticism was justified. Relations between the Pomeranian NSDAP and SA did not improve, even after the victory of the Nazi movement in 1933. Friedrich, appointed to head the entire Pomeranian SA for a second time in February 1933, remained at odds with the Gauleiter and soon was compelled to relinquish his post once again. (He was replaced in September 1933 by von Heydebreck, who managed to achieve a measure of cooperation with Karpenstein.)

As in Pomerania, in East Prussia relations between the SA and the NSDAP were influenced greatly by the personality of the Gauleiter.² Koch's autocratic leadership aroused opposition not only in the SA but also within the East Prussian NSDAP itself. During 1931 a group opposed to the Gauleitung formed in Insterburg led by Georg Usadel, a Nazi Reichstag deputy since September 1930, Gau expert on 'race and culture' and a city assembly deputy and councillor in Insterburg.³ The SA was drawn into the conflict, and among the leading members of the Insterburg group was the East Prussian SA leader Litzmann.⁴ In Koch's

1. Ibid., ff. 105066-8, 105094-5.

2. See Hüttenberger, Die Gauleiter, pp. 72-3.

3. BDC, Partei-Kanzlei Korrespondenz, Georg Usadel: Erich Koch to Major Buch, Königsberg, 30 May 1931.

4. Ibid.: report of the hearing of the Gau USchLA in Königsberg on 28 May 1931.

opinion, the members of the Insterburg group were 'plotting a mutiny'. Their hope had been to force Koch and his business manager and deputy, Georg Heidrich, from their posts; if this failed the opposition group planned to resign their Party positions and join the SA, a promise which Usadel and many of his allies made good in the summer of 1931.¹

While Koch was able to fend off this threat to his position without great difficulty, he nevertheless continued to face the hostility of the East Prussian SA. He responded by making numerous allegations against the SA to his friend and ally Gregor Straßer, the NSDAP organisational chief. During late 1931 Koch spoke of a 'systematic alienation campaign on the part of the SA against the Gauleiter', accused the SA of staging rallies without consulting the Party organisation, claimed that the SA leadership was spreading false rumours about the treatment by the Gauleitung of the SA and trying to 'sow mistrust against the political leadership', and in December he categorically rejected any personal cooperation with Litzmann during the coming year.² Litzmann, on the other hand, levelled the criticism that the Gauleitung was not fulfilling its financial obligations to the SA.³ In January 1932 the police noted that in many parts of East Prussia cooperation between the NSDAP and the SA had broken down, as Party leaders failed to provide promised speakers and propaganda materials for functions

1. BA, NS 22/1065: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 23 July 1931.

2. Ibid.: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 9 Nov. 1931; ibid.: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 21 Dec. 1931.

3. Ibid.: Karl-Siegmund Litzmann to Erich Koch, 29 Dec. 1931.

organised by the SA.¹ Relations between the two branches of the Nazi movement remained poor through 1932, and reached their nadir when the SA in some districts refused to help with the autumn election campaign.²

The problems between the Gau NSDAP and SA leadership were mirrored at the local level. Among the most important sources of friction was the question of jurisdiction. Had a local Party leader the right to order the SA to protect a rally or to demand the services of storm troopers without involving the local SA chief? These questions were often hotly debated. In Glogau, for example, the fact that the leader of the town's NSDAP had met with storm troopers without SA leaders present led to a vigorous protest in January 1932 by the area Standartenführer.³ Local Party leaders who were excluded from the affairs of SA units were equally distressed. In November 1930 the district leader of the NSDAP 'Bezirk Barthen' (which encompassed the East Prussian Kreise Rastenburg, Gerdauen and Bartenstein) complained:

The SA, the pride of our movement, is at the present time no longer built on the basis of readiness for sacrifice and [is no longer] our elite; it is being degraded into a mercenary troop. The [NSDAP] Kreisleiter can no longer give instructions to the Sturmführer, the Ortsgruppenführer can no longer give instructions to the Truppführer. The SA has meetings of its leaders in which the responsible political leader is not allowed to take part. [...] Various SA leaders are proud of their new 'rights'. [...] At the present

1. StAG, Rep. 10/34, ff. 102-3: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, 5 Jan. 1932.

2. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.61.b.(1): 'Die Geschichte der Bewegung der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Widminnen'; StAG, Rep. 240/C.73.b.: W. Mayer to the Gauleitung, Bischofsburg, 9 Nov. 1932.

3. BDC, AOPG, Konrad Ritsch: The Führer der Standarte 58 to the Untergruppe NS in Liegnitz, Beuthen a.O., 21 Jan. 1932.

time the situation is the same in many places in the province. [...] A change must be brought about.¹

Such difficulties were quite common. In early 1930 an SA leader in Kreis Ortelsburg asserted that the storm troopers were required to protect meetings only when ordered to do so by their 'military' (that is, SA) leaders, and after a dispute in 1931 the Ortelsburg SA threatened to withdraw all protection from Party rallies.² In Lyck a dispute was triggered by the establishment of a hostel which the local NSDAP (which paid the rent and running costs) claimed should serve all the Nazi organisations but which the SA insisted was an SA-Heim exclusively; according to the local SA leadership, the NSDAP had no jurisdiction over the SA in this or any other regard.³ In Görlitz in late 1930 local SA leaders stated that they would have nothing to do with the Party;⁴ and in Kreis Sensburg problems arose when, in early 1931, an SA leader told assembled storm troopers after a march in Treuburg that the political leadership had no right to give them orders.⁵

Antipathy between SA and Party leaders often split local Nazi organisations into competing factions, the SA on one side and the NSDAP on the other. For example, when the leader of

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.33.b.: Gerhard Albin to Georg Heidrich, Korsche, 25 Nov. 1930.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.34.b.: Anton Arendt to the Gauleitung, Tannenhof, 3 Mar. 1930; StAG, Rep. 240/C.67.e.: Arno Lissak to Georg Heidrich, Ortelsburg, 12 Sept. 1931.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.62.b.: Erich Budday to the Gauleitung, Lyck, 11 Dec. 1931.

4. BA, NS 22/1068: letter to Gauleiter Brückner, signed by 13 local NSDAP members, Görlitz, 25 Nov. 1930.

5. StAG, Rep. 240/C.34.c.: Bezirksleiter Martini to the Gauleitung, Sensburg, 17 Feb. 1931.

the NSDAP in Beuthen in Upper Silesia attempted in mid-1931 to remove the local SA chief, with whom he had been at odds, he faced the threat of rebellion from the storm troopers.¹ In Tilsit the district NSDAP leader and the SA Sturmführer also were feuding in 1931 - the former claiming that the latter was opposing the Party organisation and the latter blaming the former for the Nazis' miserable showing in works-council elections in the Tilsit pulp factory and threatening to take matters into his own hands if the situation did not improve.² In Braunsberg (East Prussia) hostility toward NSDAP Ortsgruppenleiter Grothe led in 1931 to sharp criticism from the local SA, the dissolution of the local Party group by the Gauleitung, an attempt by the SA and Hitler Youth to re-establish the group with a leader of their own choosing, and finally to the appointment by the Gauleitung of a new local head of the NSDAP in Grothe's place.³ Such local clashes absorbed much of the time and energy of SA and NSDAP leaders.

1. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1803, f. 9: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 6 May 1931. The rebellion was short-lived, and the SA leader was forced to leave the NSDAP for a few months after being convicted of the illegal use of firearms, a breach of Party statutes. See *ibid.*, ff. 365-6: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 4 Aug. 1931; *ibid.*, ff. 377-8: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 20 July 1931; *ibid.*, f. 381: NSDAP Gau Schlesien, USchLA, to the Polizeipräsident in Gleiwitz, Schweidnitz, 18 July 1931; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, ff. 121-2: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 28 Nov. 1931; *ibid.*, f. 123: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 1 Mar. 1932.

2. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.33.d.2: Bezirksleiter Kiefert to the Gauleitung, Tilsit, 9 Mar. 1931.

3. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.34.e.: Georg Heidrich to the Bezirksleitung Ermland, Königsberg, 19 Jan. 1931; *ibid.*: Grothe to Georg Heidrich, Braunsberg, 15 Feb. 1931; StAG, Rep. 240/C.42.b.: Georg Heidrich to Herr Blaise, Königsberg, 12 Feb. 1931.

Conflict between the SA and the NSDAP before 1933 seems on the whole to have been peculiarly devoid of overt political or ideological content. Only rarely did disputes appear explicitly to involve policy. Rather they generally revolved around organisational questions: who had the right to order whom; who owed money to whom; the determination to defend perceived prerogatives; and the clash of headstrong personalities. It does not appear that supposed differences in social composition between the SA and the NSDAP somehow led to conflicts between the two organisations, as sometimes has been asserted.¹ In none of the many disputes which characterised the relations between the SA and the NSDAP in the eastern Prussian provinces were contradictory economic, social or class interests at stake. The picture of a self-consciously working-class SA confronting a largely middle-class NSDAP bureaucracy is not confirmed by detailed investigation of conflict within the Nazi movement in eastern Germany. Similarly, neither does the issue of homosexuality, which was particularly widespread among the Silesian SA leadership from 1931 onward, appear to have been a significant source of friction. The conflicts between the SA and the NSDAP stemmed essentially from the ambitions of Nazi leaders concerned to expand their own little empires and jealous of their prerogatives but unprepared to challenge Hitler or the goals of the movement as a whole.

The many disputes between the SA and the NSDAP demonstrate the powerful centrifugal forces which threatened the Nazi movement and point to the crucial role of Hitler in keeping it to-

1. See, for example, Hermann Mau, 'Die "Zweite Revolution" - Der 30. Juni 1934', VfZ, i (1953), 122; Kater, 'Ansätze zu einer Soziologie der SA', pp. 806-7.

gether. Lacking either a socially homogeneous membership or a coherent ideological focus, the movement depended greatly upon the cult of the leader for the cement which kept it from splitting apart. The frequency of conflict, both at Gau and local levels, strongly suggests that without the figure of Hitler binding the various strands of the Nazi movement, the SA might well have gone its own way.

For all the concern which the friction between the SA and the Party evoked, it nevertheless did not seriously hamper the growth or the propaganda activities of the Nazi movement. When the movement did face a grave threat in the autumn of 1932, the cause was not conflict between the SA and the NSDAP but a general downturn in electoral fortunes, financial position and morale which affected the storm troopers and the Party functionaries equally. The effectiveness of the Hitler cult, together with the growth of the Nazi organisations, provided insurance that conflict at the local and regional levels did not really threaten the survival of the movement. That Nazi leaders became so concerned about internal conflicts often was more a reflection of their own preoccupations than of the actual dangers facing the NSDAP and the SA.

(iii) The Fricke Revolt

The rebellion of the Danzig SA in 1930 marked the first major revolt against the Party leadership in eastern Germany once the Nazi movement had begun to grow to significant proportions. Although the NSDAP in Danzig led an existence separate from the Party in the Reich - in that it had to face different issues and fight different elections - nevertheless for a time

the affairs of the Danzig organisation were closely bound up with those of the East Prussian NSDAP. Nazi activists and speakers from Danzig often appeared at meetings in the East Prussian countryside and vice versa; Danzig frequently was used as a refuge by Nazis fleeing criminal prosecution in the Reich; and from late 1929 the Danzig NSDAP was placed under the provisional leadership of East Prussian Gauleiter Koch. It was soon after Koch assumed command of the small and disorganised Danzig NSDAP that Bruno Fricke arrived in the Free City. The son of a bank employee from Halberstadt, Fricke had spent the 1920s in Paraguay, where on his own initiative he had tried to organise Germans for the Nazi cause. By early 1930 he managed to become Gau business manager and leader of the SA in Danzig. As business manager he began publishing his own newsletter ('Nachrichtenblatt') for the Danzig NSDAP, and used this to issue orders requiring all Party members in the Gau between the ages of 18 and 35 to join the SA and all those over 35 to join the SA-Reserve.¹ Furthermore, as a talented Party agitator Fricke was able to extend his influence into the western districts of East Prussia, where he became a featured speaker at Nazi rallies.²

Fricke's independence, energy and ambition soon antagonised Koch. By issuing the 'Nachrichtenblatt' Fricke appeared to be contesting Koch's control of the Danzig Nazi organisation, and by extending his influence into western East Prussia he was undermining the allegiance of SA units to local NSDAP groups and thus

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: 'Nachrichtenblatt', Danzig, 1 Apr. 1930.

2. See VB, 17 Apr. 1930, p. 3; StAG, Rep. 240/C.42.b.: Grothe to the Gauleitung, Braunsberg, 6 June 1930.

further trespassing on Koch's territory. Koch retaliated swiftly. In mid-April, just a few weeks after the first issue appeared, he ordered Fricke to cease publication of the 'Nachrichtenblatt', to stop giving orders to SA units in East Prussia, and to relinquish his position either as business manager or as SA-Standartenführer.¹ In moving against the Danzig SA leader, Koch could count on the backing of at least some of the NSDAP members in the city, taking advantage of a split within the Danzig Nazi organisation between the supporters and opponents of its founder and one-time 'Gauleiter', Hans Albert Hohnfeldt.² By mid-July Koch felt in a sufficiently strong position to rid himself of Fricke, who had succeeded in arousing resentment among the Nazi 'old guard' in Danzig. Koch had little problem removing Fricke as Gau business manager, a Party post, and replaced him with Arthur Greiser; however, to oust Fricke from his position in the SA Koch had to turn to the NSDAP's investigation and arbitration panel, where he initiated proceedings to have Fricke removed as Standartenführer and expelled from the Party.³

The move against Fricke as SA leader escalated the conflict.

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: Erich Koch to Bruno Fricke, Königsberg, 19 Apr. 1930.

2. While Fricke had cultivated support among Hohnfeldt's opponents, Koch sought the backing of Hohnfeldt and his allies. See BDC, SA-Sammelliste 49, A-G, ff. 206-7: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 19 July 1930.

3. Ibid., f. 202: Erich Koch to Bruno Fricke, Königsberg, 15 July 1930; ibid., ff. 203-5: Erich Koch to Major Buch, Königsberg, 15 July 1930; ibid., ff. 208-11: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 15 July 1930; ibid., f. 214: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 19 July 1930; StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: Erich Koch to Walther Stennes, Königsberg, 15 July 1930; Levine, Hitler's Free City, p. 26.

appreciably, and brought Walther Stennes into the fray.¹ Koch regarded this as unwarranted interference, and struck back by levelling a series of accusations against Stennes and suggesting to the NSDAP Reichsleitung that the East Prussian SA be removed from Stennes' command.² As Koch saw it, the basic issue in Danzig was that the SA was 'trying to make its own policy' independently of the NSDAP leadership and that 'Fricke pursues this sabotage because he has the backing of Stennes'.³ Although Stennes proved unwilling to press the matter and risk open confrontation with the Party leadership, Fricke's supporters in Danzig rallied to his side.⁴ Fricke himself counterattacked by withdrawing the support of the SA from the Danzig Party organisation. To Koch this signified mutiny, and he prohibited the Danzig SA from appearing publicly; in addition the East Prussian Gauleiter threatened to expel any Danzig NSDAP member who, because he belonged to the SA, refused to cooperate with the Party and to disband the Gau Danzig and expel the entire SA from the Party if it did not fall into line.⁵ By resisting, Fricke had undermined his own position, and at this point the SA leadership both in Berlin and Munich conceded that, despite the 'good positive successes' he had achieved as head of the

1. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: Walther Stennes to Erich Koch, Berlin, 21 July 1930.

2. See BDC, SA-Sammelliste 49, A-G, ff. 208-11.

3. Ibid., ff. 218-19: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 30 July 1930; BA, NS 22/1065: Erich Koch to Major Buch, Königsberg, 30 July 1930.

4. See BDC, SA-Sammelliste 49, A-G, ff. 215-17: petition to Adolf Hitler, Danzig, 20 July 1930.

5. StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: Erich Koch to Walther Stennes, Königsberg, 30 July 1930; *ibid.*: Erich Koch to Wilhelm von Wnuck, Königsberg, 31 July 1930.

Danzig SA, he should be removed from his post.¹

Having managed apparently to rid himself of the troublesome SA leader, Koch called a general meeting of the Danzig SA on 21 August to consolidate his victory and rebuild the organisation.² At the meeting the small Danzig SS, which had remained loyal to Koch, was charged with checking the membership of the Nazis present and initially would not allow Fricke to enter. Fricke was supported by his SA men, however, and when the Danzig SS leader, Peters, ordered his men to move against Fricke a number refused. Having gained the upper hand, Fricke's supporters then demanded that Peters announce his resignation from the Party, and in order to avoid violence Koch advised the SS leader to comply. Following the meeting about 40 Danzig SA members, led by the chief of a local NSDAP group, proceeded to occupy the headquarters of the Danzig Nazi Party.³ Now Koch really did have a mutiny on his hands.

Faced with a rebellion of serious proportions, Gregor Straßer intervened, dissolving the Danzig Party organisation on 1 September. Fricke was thrown out of the Party with no opportunity for appeal, and Koch was given the task of building a new NSDAP in the Free City.⁴ However, the Danzig rebels re-

1. BDC, AOPG, Hans Hohnfeldt: 'USchLA-Angelegenheit Staf Fricke', Munich, 1 Aug. 1930. See also StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: Walther Stennes to Erich Koch, Berlin, 6 Aug. 1930.

2. For accounts of the meeting, see Levine, op. cit., p. 26; StAG, Rep. 240/B.31.d.: SS Sta X to RFSS Munich, Königsberg, 29 Aug. 1930; BDC, AOPG, Hans Hohnfeldt: Report by Bruno Fricke, Danzig, 22 Aug. 1930.

3. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: Wilhelm von Wnuck to Erich Koch, Danzig, 26 Aug. 1930.

4. BA, NS 22/1047: Gregor Straßer to Rechtsanwalt Friedrich, Munich, 1 Sept. 1930; StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: Erich Koch to Wilhelm von Wnuck, Königsberg, 5 Sept. 1930.

fused to disband. On 5 September the SA, SS and SA-Reserve in Danzig held a joint 'Sturmabend', and on 8 September the rebels held an NSDAP members' meeting of their own.¹ Here one speaker after another condemned Koch, who was denounced as a 'little Napoleon without a following', and the rebels set about electing their own Gau leadership with the aim of eventually placing Fricke at the head of the Danzig organisation. On 16 September the new rebel NSDAP Gau Danzig made its public appearance with one rally in Danzig, two more in the surrounding countryside, and an SA march led by Bruno Fricke.² The antipathy aroused by Koch and his Danzig allies, together with the popularity of Fricke, had combined to give the revolt a considerable measure of support.

Nevertheless the rebellion soon collapsed. With the November elections for the Danzig Volkstag approaching, Fricke offered to leave the Free City if an acceptable list of Nazi candidates were put forward.³ Then at the end of September Hitler quashed the revolt by announcing in the Völkischer Beobachter that the Danzig NSDAP had been dissolved, that Arthur Greiser had been put in charge of rebuilding the Party in the city, and that Fricke had been thrown out of the NSDAP.⁴ Hitler then sent

1. See BDC, AOPG, Hans Hohnfeldt: Sturmverwalter Reinhardt to Osaf-Ost, Danzig, 11 Sept. 1930; *ibid.*: 'Kurzer Bericht über die am 8.9.30 in Danzig einberufene Generalmitgliedsversammlung für den Gau Danzig', Danzig, 22 Sept. 1930; *ibid.*: petition to Hitler, Danzig, 8 Sept. 1930; StAG, Rep. 240/C.35.a.: petition to Gregor Straßer (undated).

2. *Ibid.*: Arthur Greiser to Erich Koch, Danzig-Langfuhr, 21 Sept. 1930.

3. BDC, AOPG, Hans Hohnfeldt: Bruno Fricke to Friedrich, Danzig, 25 Sept. 1930.

4. VB, 28/29 Sept. 1930, p. 1.

Göring to Danzig to effect a temporary agreement to enable the Party to fight the November elections, and on 15 October Albert Forster was appointed the new Gauleiter for the Free City.¹ Soon after arriving, Forster placed his friend Max Linsmayer in command of the Danzig SA, which expanded rapidly during the months that followed - from about 150 members in October 1930 to nearly ten times that number a year later. The revolt itself left not a trace, as the passions, even the memories, of the rebellion were smothered under waves of new recruits.

(iv) The Stennes Revolt in the Eastern Prussian Provinces

The second major SA revolt in eastern Germany, the rebellion of the supporters of Walther Stennes in 1931, was no more successful than the Danzig revolt in 1930. The Stennes revolt bore a number of similarities to the Fricke revolt of the previous year: it was an expression of SA resistance to the Party leadership; the rebels attracted relatively little lasting support and the rebellion was suppressed easily; and there was little consequent effect upon the development of the Nazi movement. Nevertheless, there were significant differences. Most importantly, while the effects of the Fricke revolt had been limited to the Danzig area and western districts of East Prussia, the Stennes revolt erupted in Berlin and affected the Nazi movement in a major portion of the Reich. The revolt of Stennes' supporters was a watershed, resulting in the change of the SA leadership in Silesia and Pomerania and marking the last time that the storm troopers rebelled openly against the leadership

1. See Levine, op. cit., pp. 28-35.

of the NSDAP in eastern Germany.

In a sense, the Stennes revolt was a consequence of the rapid expansion of the SA from 1929. Faced with the need to better organise the growing SA, in February 1929 von Pfeffer had named six regional leaders to represent the 'Supreme SA Command' in areas covering a number of Party Gaue. For eastern Germany - an area which included East Prussia, Danzig, Pomerania, Mecklenburg, Magdeburg-Anhalt, Brandenburg-Ostmark, Silesia and Berlin - von Pfeffer appointed as his 'Supreme SA-Leader - Deputy East' Walther Stennes, a former police captain whom he had known since 1919.¹ Stennes took seriously the need to defend the interests of the SA, if necessary against the NSDAP Gauleitungen, and consequently achieved considerable popularity within the SA and the opposite among regional Nazi Party leaders.

Stennes' concern to defend the SA involved him in two rebellions of the Berlin storm troopers, the first in the summer of 1930 and the second in the spring of 1931.² The first revolt, at the end of August 1930, came during the campaign for the September Reichstag elections, in the wake of von Pfeffer's resignation. Due to mounting discontent within the Berlin SA, the SA leadership in the city called an extraordinary meeting on 27 August. There it was decided to withdraw the services of the storm troopers from the Party until certain demands were met:

1. See Werner, 'SA und NSDAP', pp. 445-7; Tyrell, Führer befehl, pp. 227, 252.

2. For detailed accounts of the Berlin SA revolts, see Werner, op. cit., pp. 462-85, 524-31; Frank, 'Hitler and the National Socialist Coalition', pp. 360-98, 477-504; Charles Drage, The Amiable Prussian (London, 1958), pp. 72-6, 82-4; Bennecke, Hitler und die SA, pp. 148-50, 164-5; Nyomarkay, Charisma and Factionalism, pp. 116-21; Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party 1919-1933, pp. 212, 216-20; Julek Karl von Engelbrechten, Eine braune Armee entsteht. Die Geschichte der Berlin-Brandenburger SA (Munich, 1937), pp. 138-9.

that SA leaders be included on the list of Reichstag candidates, that a fixed proportion of Party dues be allocated to the SA, that the SA be made organisationally independent of the NSDAP, and that the Gauleiter be prohibited from giving orders to SA leaders or approaching SA members other than via the SA leadership. After it proved impossible to reach agreement with Goebbels, the Berlin Gauleiter, SA men occupied the Gau headquarters, driving out the five SS members on guard. Goebbels rushed to Munich for aid, and on 1 September Hitler travelled to Berlin to quell the mutiny. After first visiting a number of district SA headquarters to speak with SA men, Hitler met with Stennes; then he held a meeting before roughly 2000 storm troopers and announced that he personally would replace von Pfeffer as 'Supreme SA Leader' and that measures would be taken to relieve the financial difficulties of the SA. The intervention had the desired effect, and the SA quickly resumed protecting Party meetings and distributing Party propaganda.

After the first Berlin revolt, the SA underwent some important changes. Although Hitler nominally had assumed personal command of the SA, nevertheless he had little to do with running the organisation and left the administrative work to Otto Wagener, who continued as SA 'Chief of Staff', the post he had held under von Pfeffer. Meanwhile, Hitler offered the leadership of the SA to Ernst Röhm, who replaced Wagener on 4 January 1931 and immediately set about re-organising the SA. Röhm's plans aroused Stennes, whose position was threatened by the proposed organisational transformation.¹ In late March 1931 Röhm travelled to

1. See Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, p. 852; Bennecke, Hitler und die SA, p. 164.

Berlin to discuss the growing friction with Stennes, and from that point the conflict escalated rapidly. Although the immediate reason for the confrontation in March/April 1931 remains unclear, it is apparent that far from settling differences this meeting sharpened them. Afterwards, Stennes met with his SA leaders in Berlin and denounced Röhm and the Munich Nazi leadership. Faced with an open revolt within the SA, Hitler removed Stennes from his post at the beginning of April and expelled him from the Party.

Once Stennes' dismissal was known, SA units in Berlin again occupied the Gau headquarters, together with the offices of the Berlin NSDAP newspaper Der Angriff, surrendering these buildings only when the Gauleitung summoned the police. For a second time Goebbels fled to Munich, and Hitler published a notice in the Völkischer Beobachter announcing that anyone who supported Stennes would be expelled from the NSDAP. Together with the SA leaders who remained loyal to him, Stennes attempted to found his own 'national socialist' movement. However, the former SA leader soon found himself isolated. Hitler convinced himself that Stennes had been working for the enemies of the Nazi movement, and Göring was given the task of purging the SA in eastern Germany; in Berlin itself the purge was supervised by Edmund Heines. The position of eastern German SA commander was filled provisionally by Paul Schulz, a former army officer who, together with Berlin SS chief Kurt Dalwege, tried to prevent the rebels from influencing their old SA units. Soon thereafter Röhm dissolved Stennes' old post entirely.

As in Berlin, in eastern Germany Stennes received support from among the SA leadership. In Silesia his cause was taken

up by Kurt Kremser. After Stennes' expulsion was announced in the press, Kremser called publicly for the Silesian SA to stand up in his defence.¹ Kremser criticised 'the political leaders, who even today are of the opinion that the SA is here only in order to die', and ordered his subordinates to have no further contact with the Party leadership. Claiming that 'the path along which Captain Stennes led us was the only practicable one which was leading to the liberation of the German people from servitude', the Silesian SA leader alleged that Hitler had been misled by a sinister 'camarilla' intent on destroying the 'revolutionary SA'. According to Kremser, 'our struggle is not aimed against the person of Adolf Hitler, but rather against those around him', and he singled out the NSDAP Reich Treasurer Schwarz for special criticism.

In Pomerania rebellious SA leaders, headed by Hans Lustig, issued a similar call.² Addressing 'all comrades with whom for years we have fought shoulder to shoulder in the NSDAP', they asserted that 'the NSDAP has abandoned the revolutionary path of true National Socialism for Germany's freedom, and has been steered onto the reactionary course of a coalition party'... Stennes, on the other hand, represented the 'pure idea' of Nazism. The Pomeranian rebels then called upon the storm troopers to follow them into the new organisation being formed by Stennes, the 'National Socialist Fighting Movement of Germany' (NSKD).

Relatively few answered the call. In Pomerania, for example, of the five Standartenführer in the province only one fol-

1. See Tyrell, op. cit., pp. 342-3.

2. BA, NS 26/325: 'Erklärung und Aufruf', signed by leaders of the Pomeranian SA.

lowed Lustig by opting for Stennes' new 'movement'.¹ According to the police in Stettin, Stennes' followers managed to attract only a few of the lower-level SA officers and SA men.² The Nazi press jubilantly reported that the SA stood firm behind the Party leadership, and for once it told the truth. On 4 April reports were printed in the Völkischer Beobachter from the eastern Gaue proclaiming loyalty to Hitler and noting the expulsion of Stennes' supporters.³ From East Prussia Erich Koch wrote: 'The events concerning Captain Stennes [...] have not affected Gau East Prussia at all, since now as before the Party members of the Gau recognise Adolf Hitler as their only leader.' From Pomerania it was reported that the SA remained loyal to Munich and that the rebels had been thrown out of the movement; Stennes' claim that he had the support of the Pomeranian SA was denied emphatically. From Silesia came a similar report: the SA remained loyal to the NSDAP; Kremser had been expelled; and Gauleiter Brückner claimed that 'the old comradeship between the Silesian SA and myself has been restored'. Provisional replacements for the expelled SA leaders were appointed quickly, and Stennes' successor, Paul Schulz, travelled throughout eastern Germany, speaking to thousands of storm troopers to ensure that the rebellion was crushed effectively.⁴ Within a few weeks of the revolt, Stennes' supporters in the East had been routed completely.

1. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 77-9: The Polizeipräsident to the Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Stettin, 2 July 1931.

2. Ibid., ff. 55-61: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 6 May 1931.

3. VB, 4 Apr. 1931, 'Erstes Beiblatt'. See also SZ, 4 Apr. 1931, p. 1; PT, 3 Apr. 1931, p. 3.

4. See VB, 20 May 1931, p. 3.

Although they were isolated quickly from the NSDAP, Stennes' followers doggedly tried to build up their own organisation, hoping to win disaffected adherents of the Hitler movement. NSKD literature was printed and distributed to SA men.¹ Local groups of the NSKD were founded by former Nazi Party members and meetings were held. However, these groups remained small and their meetings and attempts to distribute literature often fell victim to NSDAP and SA violence.² Despite determined efforts - Kurt Kremser still was trying to organise Nazi dissidents in September 1932, when he became the representative in Silesia of Otto Straßer's 'Black Front',³ - Stennes' supporters were unable to pose a significant challenge to the Hitler movement in the eastern regions.

While only a handful of storm troopers rallied to Stennes' side, the replacement of rebellious SA leaders marked an important turn in Silesia and Pomerania. In Pomerania, together with Lustig and the one Standartenführer based in Swinemünde, a number of the staff of the Pomeranian SA headquarters and local leaders in Stettin were expelled;⁴ in Silesia, together with Kremser and his lieutenant Valentin Nowak, the SA leaders in Liegnitz, Neiße, Oppeln, Sprottau, Glogau, Hindenburg and Breslau had to be replaced.⁵ Particularly at top level, the replace-

1. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 55-61.

2. See, for example, WAP Wrocław, RO I/1803, f. 469: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Oppeln, 18 June 1931; Frank, 'Hitler and the National Socialist Coalition', p. 495. Frank's account is based upon an interview with Kurt Kremser in 1963.

3. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105182-3.

4. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 55-61.

5. SB, 8 Apr. 1931, p. 1; Schlesischer Beobachter, 11 Apr. 1931, p. 7; Jakubaschk, Helmuth Brückner, p. 62.

ments proved significant: in Pomerania the appointment of Hans Friedrich on 3 April 1931 began a long period of friction with the Gau leadership, and in Silesia the dismissal of Kremser brought Edmund Heines to Silesia in June, opening a new page in the history of the SA in eastern Germany.

When discussing the relationship between the SA and the Nazi Party, it is easy to stress those aspects which were disruptive. Yet despite frequent conflicts and the considerable resentment against the Party bosses which simmered in the SA, there never occurred an SA rebellion which really threatened the Nazi movement; the great majority of storm troopers proved unwilling to oppose Hitler and the Party leadership. The striking failure of the rebellious SA leaders to carry their men with them points to the peculiar insignificance of overt political ideology in determining the allegiance of the SA rank and file. It is revealing that, when Stennes' supporters in the eastern regions began to talk about a 'revolutionary SA' and the 'revolutionary path of true National Socialism', they found few storm troopers willing to back them. The picture of an SA rank and file whose social composition might make it prone to demand that the Nazi leadership take the 'socialism' of National Socialism seriously seems contradicted by the failure of men such as Lustig and Kremser to attract a following with their revolutionary phraseology. The allegiance of the SA membership was, in the first instance, neither to their own leaders nor to a 'revolutionary' Nazism, but to the movement led by Hitler. Had the storm troopers in fact been more concerned to defend such ideological positions, then perhaps in 1934 they would not have accepted the murder of their leaders so meekly.

(v) The SA and the SS

The SS, which remained nominally subordinate to the SA until 1934, kept a relatively low profile before the seizure of power. In contrast to the SA, it remained quite small, and it was not until the 1934 purge that the SS really made its mark in eastern Germany. Nevertheless, the relations between the SA and the SS before 1933 were characterised by some friction, as the two party armies competed for members, status and a secure place in the Nazi organisational hierarchy.¹ The SA was designed to attract the greatest possible number of street brawlers to the Nazi cause; the strength of the SS, on the other hand, was not size but discipline and its main task was not to conquer the streets but to form the elite guard of the movement and an internal police force, to be used against the SA if necessary.

In the eastern Prussian provinces the SS played virtually no role in the Nazi movement until the turn of the decade. Where SS units had been formed, as in Silesia, these were essentially outgrowths of local Nazi groups rather than parts of a nationwide organisation, and they differed from local SA units only in the name they had chosen for themselves.² It was not until 1930 that the SS began to grow in the eastern regions, that SS units

1. For a general account of the relations between the SA and the SS, see Michael H. Kater, 'Zum gegenseitigen Verhältnis von SA und SS in der Sozialgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus von 1925 bis 1939', Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, lxii (1975), 339-79.

2. See Mirosław Cygański, 'SS w pruskich prowincjach Śląska w latach 1929-1935', Studia Śląskie, xxv (1974), 208-9; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1800, f. 33: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 21 Mar. 1927; *ibid.*, ff. 198-9: 'Nachweisung der Schutzstaffeln und Sportabteilungen der NSDAP in der Provinz Oberschlesien nach dem Stande von Januar 1928'; Frank, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

were integrated into a national organisation and regional SS commanders for the eastern provinces were appointed by Himmler, and that friction developed between the SS and SA. Nevertheless, the development of the SS in eastern Germany remained slow, and when Röhm presented his guidelines for SS recruitment in December 1931 - guidelines aimed primarily at bringing the SS up to strength, not limiting its growth - the actual size of the SS in the East was far below target: in East Prussia it was less than half the target figure, in Silesia one third, and in Pomerania and the Border Province probably even lower.¹

Before 1933 a main source of difficulties between the SA and the SS was recruitment from the former by the latter. The storm troopers provided the best field of potential recruits for the SS, but SA leaders understandably tended to resist the poaching of their members and the consequent degeneration of the SA into a 'reservoir of second-class elements'.² Already by the end of 1930 Hitler found it necessary to make SA and SS leaders explicitly responsible for preventing conflicts among themselves, and upon taking up his post as SA Chief of Staff in 1931 Röhm was concerned to regulate satisfactorily the growth and recruitment procedures of the SS.³ Röhm wanted to see the SS expand, but in such a way that friction between the SS and

1. BA, NS 26/306: The Chef des Stabes to sämtliche Gruppenführer, RFSS, Generalinspekteur, Munich, 2 Dec. 1931. Exact figures were not given for Pomerania and the Border Province; these were included in the figures for the SS 'Ost', which stood at about one quarter of target strength.

2. See Kater, 'Zum gegenseitigen Verhältnis von SA und SS', pp. 351-2.

3. Werner, 'SA und NSDAP', p. 499; StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., ff. 232-3: The Chef des Stabes, 'SA-Befehl', Munich, 16 Jan. 1931.

the SA would be avoided. His plan envisaged that the SS would maintain a strength 10 per cent that of the SA, that the SA would supply 50 per cent of the membership of new SS units, and that neither organisation would recruit actively from the ranks of the other. Reasonable though Röhm's scheme may have been, nevertheless disputes at local and regional levels persisted, largely because the SS drew its membership primarily from within the movement.

The dependence of the SS upon the SA for new recruits can be seen in the well-documented growth of the SS in the Regierungsbezirk Königsberg.¹ The first mention of an SS unit in the Regierungsbezirk was in January 1930, when police reported the existence of an SS 'Standarte' of 11 men: the 'Standartenführer' and his deputy (both students, aged 25 and 20 respectively), a 'Truppführer', and eight further members. In June 1930 the entire SS in the Regierungsbezirk still numbered just 14 men, and by the end of the year it had grown only to 22. While the SA in the region was growing by leaps and bounds, the SS remained quite small. In June 1931, when the SA in the region had mushroomed to over 4000 members, the SS numbered 42 men; in October it numbered 48. Then, as the growth of the SA began to slow, the SS started to expand rapidly: at the end of 1931 it had 70 members, in March 1932 approximately 200, in August about 250, and by December it reached an estimated 650 (although this last figures appears to have included 135 men in the Regierungsbezirk Allenstein). This growth pattern is significant in that it did not coincide with the development of

1. See StAG, Rep. 10/29, ff. 43-135: reports from the Polizeipräsident in Königsberg to the Regierungspräsident, dated between 10 Jan. 1930 and 3 Jan. 1933.

the SA and NSDAP; the greatest expansion of the SS occurred during a period when the SA and the Nazi Party were losing members, during the crisis months of late 1932.¹ Thus it appears that the growth of the SS was not part of the general success of the Nazi movement in attracting supporters from the population at large; rather, the SS found its new recruits within Nazi ranks, which necessarily meant drawing men from the SA.

Already before the assumption of power in 1933, the SS began to develop a consciousness that it formed the elite of the Nazi movement.² In contrast with the SA, SS formations were better disciplined and tended to remain loyal to the Party organisation. There were, for example, no SS rebellions against the Party leadership. By late 1932 the difference was striking between the SA, which had engaged in uncontrolled violence during the summer and found large sections of its membership slipping away as the fortunes of the movement seemed to ebb, and the SS, which maintained both its membership and discipline while other parts of the movement appeared to be disintegrating.³ Whereas the SA tended to regard itself, in the words of one local SA leader, as a 'disguised military'⁴ - as the core of a new Nazi army - , the SS came to see itself not only as the loyal elite of the movement but also as the new Nazi police.

1. Michael Kater confirms that this pattern was true for the SS in the Reich as a whole. See 'Zum gegenseitigen Verhältnis von SA und SS', p. 349.

2. Ibid., pp. 353-7.

3. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 10/29, f. 130: The Polizeipräsident, Königsberg, 3 Jan. 1933.

4. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 197: Kriminal- und Grenzkommissariat, Ortelsburg, 6 Feb. 1931.

Already in 1932 SS members were informed that they were to become the elite police of the 'Third Reich', and that therefore only the most healthy specimens could be accepted into the organisation and instruction in police duties and the penal code would be necessary.¹ While the SA leadership's vision of the future brought it into conflict with the Nazi rulers of Germany after 1933, the self-image of the SS was much more politically astute and realistic. The aspirations of the ill-disciplined and unruly SA tended to threaten the existing order after 1933; those of the SS promised to buttress it. Therein lay the seeds of a confrontation in which the SA leadership was bound to lose.

1. StAG, Rep. 10/29, f. 113: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Königsberg, 24 Feb. 1932.

Chapter IV

THE S.A. AND THE REICHSWEHR

The policies of the Reichswehr in the eastern Prussian provinces, including its relations with the SA, were determined largely by Germany's vulnerable strategic position along the frontiers. The Reichswehr leadership regarded Poland as a serious military threat, and was convinced that the German armed forces lacked the strength to deal with the new Polish state.¹ Thus from the beginning of the Weimar Republic a basic question facing the Reichswehr was how to mobilise effective support among the civilian population to reinforce its own insufficient strength in the event of a feared Polish attack. One answer to the dilemma was the creation of a border defence organisation, the Grenzschutz, which consisted of formations of local volunteers in the border regions, led by former army officers, trained periodically by Reichswehr staff, and equipped with weapons stored in secret hiding places.² In the event of

1. Otto Ernst Schüddekopf, Das Heer und die Republik. Quellen zur Politik der Reichswehrführung 1918 bis 1933 (Hannover and Frankfurt/Main, 1955), pp. 251-4: 'Denkschrift des Reichswehrministers Groener zur wehrpolitischen Lage des Deutschen Reiches Ende 1928'. See also Waldemar Erfurth, Die Geschichte des deutschen Generalstabes 1918-1945 (Göttingen, 1957), pp. 85-6; Thilo Vogelsang, Reichswehr Staat und NSDAP (Stuttgart, 1962), pp. 16-22; Francis L. Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933 (Oxford, 1966), pp. 147-52, 268-72, 350-3; Rainer Wohlfeil and Edgar Graf von Matuschka, Reichswehr und Republik (1918-1933) (Frankfurt/Main, 1970), pp. 199-200; Edward W. Bennett, German Rearmament and the West, 1932-1933 (Princeton, 1979), pp. 27-9.

2. For a discussion of the organisation of the Grenzschutz, see Georges Castellan, Le réarmement clandestin du Reich 1930-1935 vue par le 2^e Bureau de l'Etat-Major Français (Paris, 1954), pp. 397-403. For discussion of Reichswehr planning for civilian participation in border defence, see esp. Michael Geyer, 'Aufrüstung oder Sicherheit. Reichswehr und die Krise der Machtpolitik 1924-1936' (Univ. Freiburg i. Br. Phil. Diss. 1975), pp. 92-106.

a military attack, the Grenzschutz was to support the operations of the Reichswehr and to hinder the progress of invading armies. This strategic conception, compelling the Reichswehr to seek support from the civilian population in the eastern regions, induced it to cooperate with paramilitary organisations such as the Stahlhelm and, eventually, the SA.¹

The opportunity to cooperate with the Reichswehr through the Grenzschutz brought a number of advantages to the SA. First, it allowed the storm troopers to exercise their military ambitions, at least to some extent. For an organisation which so praised military values, the chance to involve its members in real war games, to make a contribution to national defence and to gain access to weapons was hardly unwelcome. Second, involvement in the Grenzschutz helped give the SA a certain social and political respectability, bringing the organisation into closer contact not only with the Reichswehr but also the more traditional conservative Right. This aided the Nazis in their successful efforts to draw recruits from their right-wing rivals; in many a border community the Grenzschutz formations in effect constituted a local 'Harzburg Front', within which the growth of the Nazi movement could be accelerated. Third, a political organisation which stressed its patriotism and nationalism could not expect to win a large following along the eastern borders if it failed to support defence measures which enjoyed the overwhelming backing of the population. Thus for the SA there existed a practical interest - which overrode the Nazis' militant opposition to the 'Weimar system' which the armed forces were serving - in participating in the

1. Kurt Schützle, Reichswehr wider die Nation (1929-1933) (Berlin, 1963), p. 100; Erfurth, op. cit., p. 136.

defence of the eastern frontiers.

During the 1920s the Grenzschutz in the eastern Prussian provinces was composed largely of members of the Stahlhelm, which had cultivated close relations with the Reichswehr.¹ Contacts between the Reichswehr and the SA in eastern Germany did not develop until the final years of the Republic. Before that time the SA was too weak in the predominantly rural districts along the eastern borders either to play an important role in the plans of the Reichswehr or to infiltrate the Grenzschutz. This changed in 1930 and 1931, with the vast expansion of the SA. By mid-1931 a significant proportion of the young male population in the eastern regions was organised in the SA, which therefore had to be reckoned with in calculations about the defence of the frontiers. This expansion coincided with the reorganisation of the SA undertaken by Röhm when he assumed command in 1931, together with his attempts to cultivate contacts with the Reichswehr leadership. In addition, the turn of the decade marked an important change in Reichswehr planning, as the Grenzschutz was recognised formally and put on a more secure financial footing by the Reichswehr Ministry.² Thus during the 1930s there existed a combination of factors which, together with the general readiness of the eastern Ger-

1. See Volker R. Berghahn, Der Stahlhelm Bund der Frontsoldaten 1919-1935 (Düsseldorf, 1966), pp. 55-63; Alois Klotzbücher, 'Der politische Weg des Stahlhelms, Bund der Frontsoldaten, in der Weimarer Republik. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der "Nationalen Opposition" 1918-1933' (Univ. Erlangen Phil. Diss. 1964), pp. 19-22; Kurt Finker, 'Die militaristischen Wehrverbände in der Weimarer Republik und ihre Rolle bei der Unterdrückung der Arbeiterklasse und bei der Vorbereitung eines neuen imperialistischen Krieges (1924-1929)' (Pädagogische Hochschule Potsdam Phil. Habil. 1964), pp. 171-9; Hertz-Eichenrode, Politik und Landwirtschaft, pp. 74-5.

2. See Vogelsang, op. cit., p. 157.

man population to cooperate with the Grenzschutz, favoured the involvement of the SA in border defence formations. Consequently, SA units paid little heed to the call, which Hitler was reported to have made in Lauenburg in early 1932, that 'the borders are to be defended only when beforehand the representatives of the present-day system are annihilated'.¹

Relations between the SA and the Reichswehr were best in East Prussia, largely due to the vulnerable position of the 'island' province. This exposed position made the Wehrkreis I (East Prussia) all the more willing to work together with any group which might help defend the province from external attack, while simultaneously making groups and individuals with widely differing political aims prepared to cooperate with the Reichswehr. The atmosphere in East Prussia was such that local government officials in the Landratsämter (district authorities), the Landesfinanzministerium (regional finance ministry) and the post office cooperated willingly with the Reichswehr, and even members of the largely Social Democratic Reichsbanner were welcomed into the border defence formations.² Thus a political climate existed in which the Nazi movement could not afford to be hostile to the Reichswehr or uncooperative with regard to border defence.

1. Otto Braun, Von Weimar zu Hitler (2nd edn., New York, 1940), pp. 380-1. See also Thilo Vogelsang, 'Hitlers Brief an Reichenau vom 4 Dezember 1932', VfZ, vii (1959), 429-30.

2. Vogelsang, Reichswehr Staat und NSDAP, pp. 157-8; Carsten, op. cit., p. 352. During the late 1920s cooperation with the Reichsbanner had been promoted by the Chief of Staff of the Wehrkreis I, Colonel Erich von Bonin. See Karl Rohe, Das Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Struktur der politischen Kampfverbände zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik (Düsseldorf, 1966), p. 180.

Another important reason why the Reichswehr in East Prussia welcomed cooperation with the SA was the character of its leadership. From October 1929, when Werner von Blomberg - who became Hitler's Reichswehr Minister in 1933 - took command of the Wehrkreis I, its leadership was pro-Nazi. Blomberg was greatly influenced by his Chief of Staff, Walther von Reichenau, and by the divisional chaplain (Wehrkreis-pfarrer), Ludwig Müller, both of whom were quite enthusiastic toward the Hitler movement.¹

The first contacts between the Reichswehr and the SA in East Prussia dated from the late 1920s. These blossomed in 1930, as large numbers of storm troopers participated in the Grenzschutz and closer relations developed between the Reichswehr and the SA at local level.² A particularly important role in promoting the relations between the Reichswehr and the Nazi movement was played by Müller, who had become divisional chaplain in 1926 and identified himself ever more closely with the Nazi cause during 1930 and 1931. Using his Reichswehr position, Müller sought to smooth differences between the army and the Nazi movement and worked together with Röhm to develop cooperation between the SA and the Wehrkreis I.³ The

1. Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, pp. 713-14.

2. See StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 193: Kriminal- und Grenzkommissariat to the Landespolizeistelle in Allenstein, Prostken, 4 Feb. 1931; *ibid.*, f. 466: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Lötzen, 18 Oct. 1930; *ibid.*, f. 471: Wehrkreis-kommando I to the Regierungspräsident in Allenstein, Königsberg, 5 Nov. 1930.

3. See Christian Kinder, Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche im Schleswig-Holstein und im Reich 1924-1945 (Flensburg, 1966), p. 45; BA, NS 22/1065: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 22 July 1931.

efforts of the Wehrkreispfarrer were appreciated by the new SA Chief of Staff. During early 1931 Röhm had been in close contact with General Kurt von Schleicher in the Reichswehr Ministry to discuss, among other things, SA participation in border defence in East Prussia,¹ and in April the Nazi leadership specifically permitted participation by SA men in military exercises, including border defence.² Far from refusing to defend the borders until 'the representatives of the present-day system are annihilated', the NSDAP and the SA eagerly grasped the opportunity to help the Reichswehr. Indeed, within the East Prussian SA, military-strategic considerations assumed such an importance that by early 1932 SA leaders were discussing openly how the storm troopers were to be supplied with weapons and integrated en masse into the Grenzschutz in the event of a Polish attack.³

Even in East Prussia, however, relations between the Reichswehr and the Nazi movement were not completely trouble-free. During late 1930 and early 1931 the Gauleitung in Königsberg raised objections to close cooperation with the army - partly in order to prevent the SA from developing its own contacts independently of the East Prussian Nazi Party, partly due to the hostile attitude of the Nazis toward the new Chief of Staff of the Army Command (Chef der Heeresleitung), General von Hammerstein, and partly because it was felt that the Reichswehr might

1. See Vogelsang, Reichswehr Staat und NSDAP, pp. 118-19; Carsten, op. cit., pp. 332-3; Bennett, German Rearmament and the West, p. 65.

2. BA, NS 22/1065: Reichsorganisationsleiter to Gauleiter Koch, Munich, 21 May 1931.

3. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 909: Kriminal- und Grenzdienststelle to the Regierungspräsident, Prostken, 8 Mar. 1932.

be used to protect the state against the SA and would be prepared to assist the Prussian police suppress the Nazis.¹ In early 1931 a large number of Nazis left the border defence organisations as a result of orders from the Gauleitung; according to the East Prussian Party leadership, participation by SA members in the Grenzschutz was permissible 'only in order to create the possibility for military training and to ascertain stores of weapons'. However, Müller intervened to smooth relations between the army and the East Prussian NSDAP, and, with the explicit approval in April by the Reich Party leadership of SA participation in border defence formations, Koch's objections had little lasting effect. As General Halder later noted, the East Prussian SA remained the 'enthusiastic and willing helper of the numerically weak army in the question of the defence of the country'.²

The other region along Germany's eastern frontiers in which cooperation between the SA and the Reichswehr developed on a significant scale was the Border Province. The basis for this cooperation was similar to that in East Prussia, since the exposed position of the Border Province — stretching along the Polish border, which in Kreis Meseritz was only 150 kilometers from Berlin — made the Reichswehr especially concerned to enlist the active support of the local population. As in East Prussia, the precarious military position created a broad consensus among the population in favour of working together with the military and a willingness among local politicians and government offic-

1. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 193; BA, NS 22/1065: Erich Koch to Gregor Straßer, Königsberg, 22 July 1931; Kinder, op. cit., p. 45.

2. Peter Bor, Gespräche mit Halder (Wiesbaden, 1950), p. 105.

ials of almost all persuasions to back measures designed to protect the frontiers. And, as in East Prussia, once the Nazi movement grew to mass proportions, cultivating the support of the population meant that the Reichswehr had to accept the collaboration of Nazi sympathisers.

The first mention of Nazi participation in the Grenzschutz in the Border Province dates from April 1930, when the SPD police director in Schneidemühl, Erich Thiemann, noted with alarm that Nazi supporters, together with local Stahlhelm leaders and members of the Tannenbergbund, were taking part in Reichswehr briefings on border defence.¹ Among those attending included the leader of the Nazi Party group in Schneidemühl and his deputy, a teacher who had been an NSDAP Landtag candidate in 1929 and became the local Nazi expert on border defence. Thiemann's criticism of Reichswehr cooperation with groups outspokenly hostile to the Republic provoked a revealing response. In reply, the Chief of Staff of the Wehrkreiskommando II (Stettin), Kurt Liese, explained that the Reichswehr did not cooperate with political associations (Vereine) as such, but

regards itself duty-bound to point out that the Germans of the Border Province, insofar as they are fit for military service, are organised almost without exception in Vereine. Therefore it cannot be avoided completely that the solidarity of these Verein members will make its appearance in the briefings.²

Liese did rule that leading Nazi Party members no longer would

1. WAP Poznań, OPS/113, f. 204: The staatl. Polizeidirektor to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 28 Apr. 1930. For a discussion of the attitudes of the SPD and the Prussian Interior Ministry toward the Reichswehr, Grenzschutz and Nazi involvement in border defence, see Bennett, op. cit., pp. 22-35.

2. WAP Poznań, OPS/113, f. 221: The Chef des Stabes, 2. Division (Wehrkreiskommando II), to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 27 June 1930.

be invited to Reichswehr briefings; however, even this concession was qualified by Liese's deputy and Wehrkreis expert on border defence, Major von Gablenz, who pointed out that other supporters of the Nazi movement would not be excluded from the briefings 'because hereby the NSDAP would become even more radicalised'.¹

By late 1931 the rapid growth of the Nazi movement meant that the Grenzschutz formations in the Border Province were composed very largely of Hitler supporters. This development was observed with mounting concern by Thiemann, who was worried about the Republic's opponents gaining access to weapons, and in November 1931 he presented to Oberpräsident von Bülow a detailed report on right-wing penetration of the border defence formations.² Thiemann alleged that altogether 90 per cent of the Grenzschutz were members of the 'National Opposition' - the Stahlhelm, Jungstahlhelm, DNVP, NSDAP and SA - and that, in some districts, the SA virtually had taken over the border defence organisation: the leader of the SA in the Border Province, Arno Manthey, had become the leader of the Grenzschutz in the northern part of the province; in Kreis Schlochau the Grenzschutz consisted largely of Nazis who participated in field exercises wearing their Party pins; in Kreis Flatow the Stahlhelm took part in Grenzschutz exercises in closed formation; in Kreis Deutsch Krone members of the NSDAP were building shelters for the Grenzschutz; in Kreis Jastrow the Grenzschutz

1. Ibid., f. 209: The Polizeipräsident to the Minister des Innern, Berlin, 31 May 1930; ibid., ff. 212-14: The staatl. Polizeidirektor to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 27 June 1930.

2. Ibid., ff. 321-3: The Polizeidirektor to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 16 Nov. 1931.

was composed almost entirely of Nazis who trained in SA uniform and were led by the local SA-Truppführer; in Schneidemühl a number of Nazis were prominent in the Grenzschutz, together with the deputy Gauführer of the Stahlhelm and a number of lesser Stahlhelm leaders; and in the Netzekreis the Grenzschutz consisted almost exclusively of members of the Stahlhelm and the NSDAP. According to the Schneidemühl police director, the Grenzschutz had become an organisation composed largely of enemies of the Republic, whose borders it was supposed to defend.

The Reichswehr contested Thiemann's allegations. Answering for the Wehrkreis II, Chief of Staff Liese claimed that the Nazis had not been so cooperative as Thiemann asserted, that the Grenzschutz was backed by many Centre Party supporters and Social Democrats as well as people on the political Right, and that, in any case, given the political composition of the Border Province it was natural that most of the support for the Grenzschutz should come from the Right.¹ In conclusion Liese stated that 'this report of the police director demonstrates anew that [...] trustful, friction-free cooperation of the German Army with the Prussian police is impossible in the Border Province'. Yet Liese's response to Thiemann's claims was as significant for what it omitted as for what it included. Although Liese claimed that the Nazis had been less cooperative than Thiemann described, he did not dispute the basic allegations about Nazi involvement in the Grenzschutz, the leading position of SA-Standartenführer Manthey, the participation of

1. Ibid., ff. 327-34: The Chef des Stabes, 2. Division (Wehrkreiskommando II), to the Reichswehrministerium, Wehrmachtsabteilung, Abwehrabteilung, Stettin, 14 Dec. 1931.

SA men in uniform, and the fact that supporters of the Nazi movement composed a major proportion of the border defence formations. Nevertheless, Thiemann's campaign against the arming of right-wing opponents of the Republic was doomed to failure. Not only did he face the understandable hostility of the Reichswehr, he also carried on his struggle without allies in the government bureaucracy or among the local population. Far from achieving success, Thiemann's efforts came to an abrupt end in July 1932, when he was dismissed during the purge of the police administration following von Papen's coup against the Prussian government.¹

For their part, the Nazis did not display the reluctance to participate in the Grenzschutz that Liese implied, although the involvement of SA members was not without some complications. In particular, the SA leadership was concerned that participation in the Grenzschutz should not cause it to lose control over its members. On 15 January 1933, Manthey spoke to the SA in Schneidemühl about its involvement in the Grenzschutz and explained the attitude of the SA toward cooperation with the Reichswehr:

We want to have a Grenzschutz. We have negotiated with the Reichswehr and were willing to stand up for the Grenzschutz. But first our leaders should be trained. We do not let our troops out of the hands of our leaders. [...] We have enough people who are prepared to stand up for the Fatherland.²

In other words, the SA was happy to cooperate with the Grenzschutz, provided the SA could run it. Cooperation with the

1. SB, 22 July 1932, p. 1. See also Bessel, 'Militarismus im innenpolitischen Leben', pp. 195-6.

2. WAP Poznań, OPS/169, f. 149: The Regierungspräsident to the Oberpräsident der Provinz Grenzmark Posen-Westpreußen, Frankfurt/Oder, 3 Feb. 1933.

Reichswehr and defence of the borders against the Poles would be welcomed, but dividing the allegiance of the SA membership was to be avoided. However, since so many leadership positions in the Grenzschutz in the Border Province had been taken over by Nazis in any case, this concern proved no great stumbling block to widespread SA participation in the border defence formations.

In Pomerania, which bordered Poland only in its easternmost districts, SA involvement in the Grenzschutz failed to develop as it had in the neighbouring Border Province. Here the border defence formations remained largely in the hands of Stahlhelm members, not because the Stahlhelm was stronger in Pomerania than in the Border Province or East Prussia but due most probably to the attitudes of the Nazi leadership in the province. The Nazi leadership in Pomerania adopted a generally cool attitude toward the Grenzschutz.¹ Indeed, Hans Lustig denied that under his leadership the SA either had taken part in military exercises or had trained with weapons at all.² Reluctance to serve under Stahlhelm officers was almost certainly one reason why, as General von Hammerstein reported in May 1932, local SA leaders in Pomerania refused to serve in the Grenzschutz.³ Another may have been the rapid turnover of the Pomeranian SA leadership, which seemed insufficiently secure in its own position to develop a relatively long-term approach to the

1. See Vogelsang, Reichswehr Staat und NSDAP, p. 158; Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics, pp. 351-2.

2. See Frank, 'Hitler and the National Socialist Coalition', p. 349f.

3. See Thilo Vogelsang, 'Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr 1930-1933', VfZ, ii (1954), 423; Carsten, op. cit., p. 352.

question of border defence. Although available source material is insufficient to make conclusive generalisations, it appears that in Pomerania, unlike in the Border Province, SA leaders did not become key figures in the Grenzschutz.

Nevertheless, although the Pomeranian SA did not participate on a large scale in border defence formations and often was regarded with circumspection by Reichswehr officers, many soldiers held a friendly attitude toward the Nazi movement and the SA tried to cultivate contacts between soldiers and storm troopers.¹ Furthermore, despite its lack of involvement in the Grenzschutz, the Pomeranian SA leadership did discuss defending the frontiers in the event of a Polish attack. According to a report of an SA leaders' meeting in Stettin in early August 1932, instructions had been received from Munich that the SA and SS should be used as border defence formations if there were a Polish invasion.² Although such a commitment was inadequate for the Reichswehr - which required a systematically trained border defence force - and despite misgivings about participating in the Grenzschutz, the Pomeranian SA was prepared to defend the frontiers of the Weimar Republic.

In Silesia the SA was more prepared to participate in the Grenzschutz than it was in Pomerania, although this proceeded less smoothly than in East Prussia or the Border Province. Before the Stennes revolt, the Silesian SA did not take part in military exercises.³ However, from mid-1931 many Nazis, par-

1. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105066-9; *ibid.*, ff. 105096-101.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 289-91: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 5 Aug. 1932.

3. Frank, *op. cit.*, p. 349f.

ticularly in rural districts, participated in the Grenzschutz even though its leadership was drawn almost exclusively from traditional conservative groups, most frequently the Stahlhelm.¹ During 1931 contacts with the Reichswehr developed considerably, and in December the Reichswehr approached the Upper Silesian SA leadership with a proposal to bring the storm troopers together with the Stahlhelm, the Landesschützenverband and the Selbstschutz in order to form a 'black Reichswehr' to defend the frontiers of the province.² The Reichswehr, which was limited to a strength of about 1500 in Upper Silesia, looked to the approximately 3500 storm troopers in the province for possible reinforcements. Although nothing came of the plan, it nevertheless indicates the readiness of the Reichswehr to look to the right-wing paramilitary groups - and from 1930/1931 to the SA - to strengthen its precarious position along the borders.

During 1932, however, some difficulties arose when the Silesian Nazi organisation demanded that SA and NSDAP members in the Grenzschutz be led only by officers who were National Socialists.³ As elsewhere, in Silesia the Nazi organisation was reluctant to allow the allegiance of its supporters to be divided. SA-Reichswehr relations also were coloured by cur-

1. Vogelsang, Reichswehr Staat und NSDAP, p. 159; Carsten, op. cit., pp. 352-3.

2. BDC, SA-Akte, Andreas von Flotow: 'Sonderbericht über die Lage der Provinz Oberschlesien im Dezember 1931'. The Landesschützenverband was a right-wing paramilitary organisation, politically close to the DNVP, headquartered in Oppeln and Breslau; the Selbstschutz (Der Bund ehemaliger Selbstschutzkämpfer Oberschlesiens) was founded in September 1931 and was composed largely of discontented SA men in Hindenburg. See Fiedor, Antypolskie organizacje w Niemczech, pp. 172, 220-1.

3. Carsten, op. cit., p. 353.

rent political events, particularly during the tense months following the July 1932 Reichstag elections. From Upper Silesia the SA leadership reported that it had been in constant contact with the Reichswehr headquarters in Oppeln, but that relations had deteriorated during August and September: storm troopers were leaving Reichswehr 'training courses' because they felt Reichswehr officers were too 'reactionary'; the SA refused to receive military training together with the Stahlhelm; and, in the opinion of Untergruppenführer Ramshorn, the Reichswehr displayed insufficient understanding that the SA wanted to participate in defence preparations only in its own formations.¹ In Breslau as well the political events of August 1932 were registered in a cooling of relations between the SA and the Reichswehr.² Nevertheless, in other parts of Silesia relations remained good: in Liegnitz the leader of the Lower Silesian SA went out of his way to cultivate personal contacts with high-ranking Reichswehr officers, contacts which he claimed had developed into a 'warm comradely relationship';³ and in the northern portions of Lower Silesia the SA observed the Reichswehr's autumn manoeuvres and took part in 'off-duty meetings of the Reichswehr formations' while in brown uniform.⁴ Altogether, despite current political concerns both the Reichswehr and the SA in Silesia had a considerable interest in cooperating with the other.

For the Reichswehr, relations with the SA were characterised

1. BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105186-90.

2. See *ibid.*, ff. 105182-3.

3. *Ibid.*, ff. 105184-5.

4. *Ibid.*, ff. 105178-81.

by a pragmatic concern to defend the eastern borders. Despite the occasional difficulties in working with the SA, the Reichswehr leadership did not object to the presence of storm troopers in the Grenzschutz on political grounds. Indeed, the most striking feature of the Reichswehr attitude toward SA participation in the Grenzschutz was the lack of overt political considerations involved - except perhaps in East Prussia, where the Reichswehr leadership had a particular inclination toward the Nazi movement. Seeking civilian support to defend the frontiers was essentially a matter of practical Reichswehr policy, not the expression of a general desire to intervene in domestic politics. Thus in the eastern Prussian provinces the Reichswehr proved willing to cooperate with those groups which were willing to cooperate with it. Working together with the Stahlhelm probably was regarded as more agreeable than working together with the SA, but from 1930 this was no longer an alternative. Once the Nazis came to dominate German right-wing politics, a satisfactory Grenzschutz could not be constituted only by relying on the Stahlhelm, no matter how desirable this might have seemed to many army officers.

For the SA, relations with the Reichswehr also involved pragmatic concerns - regard for the sentiments of the population of the eastern regions and of the SA members themselves, as well as the interest in gaining military training and access to weapons. However, for the SA more explicitly political considerations played a role as well. It was due to these that the interests of the Reichswehr and the SA sometimes diverged, most clearly over whether SA men should be subordinate to Grenzschutz officers who were not National Socialists. Border de-

fence was not regarded by the SA as separate from party-political rivalry and competition. Fortunately for the Reichswehr, the loyalty of Nazi members of the Grenzschutz, and the military value of the border defence formations, were never put to the test.

The primacy of pragmatic considerations in the relations between the SA and the Reichswehr also were to shape the events of 1934, when the Reichswehr agreed to the purge of the SA. While the Reichswehr leadership displayed few qualms about working together with the SA before 1933, it had no political commitment to do so either. Thus, once the context of SA-Reichswehr relations changed — once the Nazi-led government expressed its determination to expand the armed forces and the SA seemed to pose a threat to the development of the Reichswehr — there were few reservations within the Reichswehr leadership about turning on the storm troopers' organisation. Significantly, however, in the provinces where relations between the SA and the Reichswehr had been best — in East Prussia and the Border Province — the SA escaped the purge, whereas in the regions in which cooperation had been less satisfactory — in Pomerania and Silesia — the SA leadership was removed. While the relations between the Reichswehr and the SA before 1933 of course did not determine how the SA leadership fared in 1934, it is nevertheless revealing that where the SA had been most willing to cooperate with the Reichswehr, there its leaders were able to survive the bloodbath of 1934.

Chapter V

S.A. VIOLENCE AND TERROR BEFORE 1933

(i) The Patterns of SA Violence

The politics of Nazism were the politics of hatred, struggle and violence. The central function of the SA was political violence, the expression of the competition and struggle which formed the cornerstone of Hitler's outlook and Nazi ideology. According to Goebbels,

the SA man wants to fight, and he also has a right to be led into battle. His existence wins its justification only in battle. Without a fighting tendency the SA is absurd and pointless.¹

The official Nazi historian of the Berlin-Brandenburg SA put it even more bluntly: 'The purpose of the [SA] Stürme was not to create archives but to smash the enemy.'²

By the time the Weimar system crumbled, there was hardly a city or town in Germany which had been spared political violence. Among the clearest measures of the rising tide of Nazi violence were the claims registered by the SA compulsory insurance scheme, which covered physical injury suffered during SA duties:

1927:	110 claims
1928:	360 claims
1929:	881 claims
1930:	2506 claims
1931:	6307 claims
1932:	14005 claims ³

1. Joseph Goebbels, Kampf um Berlin (9th edn., Munich, 1936), p. 30.

2. Engelbrechten, Eine braune Armee entsteht, p. 9.

3. Hans Volz, Die Geschichte der SA (Berlin, 1934), p. 63.

Violence which resulted in serious injury or death became an increasingly frequent feature of SA activities during the early 1930s, and was marked by the growing number of Nazi 'martyrs':

	<u>Nazis killed</u>	<u>Of these, SA members</u>
1925	4	0
1926	1	1
1927	5	4
1928	5	1
1929	9	4
1930	15	12
1931	42	27
1932 (to 29 Aug.)	70	50 ¹

In the eastern Prussian provinces 22 adherents of the Nazi movement, most of them members of the SA, lost their lives between May 1930 and September 1932,² and in December 1931 Edmund Heines claimed that in Silesia alone the SA had suffered eight dead, 198 seriously injured and 236 moderately injured 'as a result of the Marxist terror'.³

The Left too had numerous casualties. In late 1931, for example, a group of 'proletarian women' - presumably a Communist group - presented to the Reich Interior Minister materials concerning workers killed by right-wing sympathisers and the police during the first ten months of that year. According to these materials, 27 workers had met their deaths at the hands of the police, Nazis had killed 28, and three were killed by supporters of other organisations (one by a Stahlhelm member, one by a 'nationalist' and one by a 'reformist').⁴ The violence reached

1. Halbmast. Ein Heldenbuch der SA und SS (Munich, 1932).

2. See BA, Sammlung Schumacher/374: 'Ehrenliste der Ermordeten der Bewegung'.

3. VB, 2 Dec. 1931, p. 2.

4. See WAP Opole, OPO/1025, ff. 144-5: The Reichsminister des Innern, Berlin, 28 Dec. 1931.

a peak during the summer of 1932, when in the ten days preceding the July Reichstag elections 24 people were killed and 284 seriously injured in political confrontations in Prussia alone.¹

As dramatic as are the statistics of the dead and injured from the political battles of the early 1930s, they represent nevertheless only the tip of an iceberg. The violence in which the SA was involved consisted of countless thousands of threats, confrontations, attacks and brawls which occurred almost daily during the last years of the Weimar Republic. Not just the dramatic and highly publicised instances of political terror, but perhaps even more the thousands of largely unreported, everyday acts of violence helped undermine the political structure of Weimar Germany. Through innumerable acts of violence and terror at the local level the Nazis provided tangible evidence of the collapse of the political system and demonstrated to many the need for a strong new political leadership to put things right.²

The escalation of political violence which accompanied the destruction of the Weimar Republic of course was not the product exclusively of the Nazis. The activities of the SA initiated a mounting spiral of confrontation and response, which transformed the relatively peaceful climate of the mid-1920s into the violent storms of the early 1930s and, by 1932, dominated political life in Germany. The Nazis pushed their opponents into the arena of political violence, as the challenge

1. IfZ, MA 198/5, microfilm of DZAM, Rep. 77, tit. 4043, Nr. 126: The Minister des Innern, Berlin, 23 Nov. 1932; Broszat, Der Staat Hitlers, p. 44.

2. See Allen, The Nazi Seizure of Power, p. 64.

posed by the SA was met by the fighting organisations of the Left: the largely Social Democratic Reichsbanner, the 'Iron Front' (Eiserne Front) - formed in December 1931 by the SPD, the Social Democratic trade unions, workers' sport organisations and the Reichsbanner as a response to the right-wing 'Harzburg Front' - , the Communist 'Red Front Fighters' League' (Rotfrontkämpferbund) banned in 1929, and the Communist 'Fighting League against Fascism' (Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus), which was founded and began to attract recruits in late 1930. For the KPD in particular the growth of the Hitler movement marked a stepping up of its own violent street politics, as it sought to attract support through its militant and aggressive opposition to National Socialism.¹ According to statistics compiled by the Prussian Interior Ministry during the second half of 1932 - when the violence was at its height - Social Democrats and, above all, Communists frequently were the 'attackers' in violent incidents.² Although they may have reflected some anti-Communist bias of the Prussian police, these figures indicate that KPD supporters probably attacked the Nazis as often as the Nazis attacked them.

The most common occasion for violence involving the SA was the political rally. The emphasis placed by the NSDAP upon rallies made ensuring their smooth progress one of the most im-

1. See Rosenhaft, 'Gewalt in der Politik', pp. 253-7. For details of the early growth of the Kampfbund in eastern Germany, see WAP Szczecin, RS/157, ff. 139-45: The Polizeipräsident to the Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Stettin, 21 Oct. 1930; Stefan Migdał, Opolszczyzna przeciw faszyzmowi w przededniu dojścia Hitlera do władzy (Katowice, 1960), p. 76.

2. IfZ, MA 198/5, microfilm of DZAM, Rep. 77, tit. 4043, Nr. 126: The Minister des Innern, Berlin, 22 Nov. 1932; *ibid.*: The Minister des Innern, Berlin, 23 Nov. 1932; *ibid.*: The Minister des Innern, Berlin, 7 Dec. 1932.

portant functions of the SA, and successful attempts by the Left to disrupt them were serious defeats for the storm troopers. Such attempts were frequent. For example, in the East Prussian Kreis Oletzko in August 1930 the NSDAP staged 23 rallies, of which the SPD and KPD tried to disrupt five; in one instance the SPD succeeded, when the SA proved too weak to prevent 60 Social Democratic sympathisers from making excessive noise.¹ In many cases, particularly in the large cities and industrial centres where the SPD and KPD enjoyed considerable support, the rallies and marches of the Nazis were deliberate provocations - designed to challenge the Left and demonstrate that the streets no longer belonged to the 'Marxists' - and often met with a violent response.²

The patterns of violence which stemmed from Nazi rallies during the final years of the Weimar Republic may be illustrated by a few characteristic incidents. In Gleiwitz, for example, on 30 November 1930 a Nazi rally protesting the 'Polish terror' degenerated rapidly into a brawl when Communists in the crowd answered the Nazi chant of 'Deutschland erwache, Juda verrecke' ('Germany awake, Juda croak') with calls of 'Hitler verrecke'.³ In Deutsch Eylau (East Prussia) an NSDAP rally in the market square in February 1931 ended similarly when Communists and Reichsbanner members tried to shout down the Nazi speaker and threw pieces of ice at the SA men present; according to the

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.78.a.: Kreisleiter Marenski to the Gauleitung in Königsberg, Treuburg, 1 Sept. 1930.

2. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.38.c.1.: Gaukommissar Dargel to the Gauleitung in Königsberg, Marienburg, 25 June 1931.

3. WAP Opole, OPO/1025, f. 1: The Regierungspräsident to the Oberpräsident, Oppeln, 7 Jan. 1931.

local NSDAP leader, the SA then 'cleared the streets', leaving several people injured.¹ During the same month in Binz, on the island of Rügen, Reichsbanner members disrupted a Nazi rally in a hotel and the fights which ensued left the building in a shambles.² In nearby Tribsees, in Kreis Grimmen, the NSDAP staged a large rally on 22 September 1931, which attracted many KPD supporters; cries of 'Heil Hitler' were answered with 'Heil Moskau', fighting broke out, shots were fired, and the rally eventually was disrupted.³ News of such brawls rarely spread beyond the communities involved. Nevertheless, together with thousands of similar incidents they contributed to a general acceptance of violence in politics and a widespread breakdown of law and order, and forced the Nazis' opponents to fight political battles ever more on the Nazis' terms.

In this context it is particularly important that the duties of the storm troopers involved not just the protection of Nazi Party rallies, but also the planned disruption of meetings of the Nazis' opponents. The SPD proved especially vulnerable to attacks by the SA. Its emphasis on rallies, together with its deteriorating political position during the last years of the Republic, made the SPD an easy target for Nazi violence and terror tactics. From late 1930, once the

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.34.d.: NSDAP Bezirk Westpreußen to the NSDAP Gau Ostpreußen, Riesenburg, 14 Mar. 1931.

2. The police dutifully reported that 103 window panes, 107 chairs, 57 beer glasses, 37 other glasses, 27 plates, 22 bottles and 17 teaspoons, as well as a number of hanging electric lights and tablecloths, had been destroyed. See WAP Szczecin, RS/28, ff. 125-45: Landeskriminalpolizeistelle to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 12 Mar. 1931.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/16, ff. 265-8: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident in Stralsund, Grimmen, 2 Oct. 1931.

Nazis were able to count on sufficient numbers, the rallies of Social Democrats in eastern Germany were increasingly at risk. Particularly in the countryside the SA was able to gather its forces, outnumber the local Reichsbanner and SPD supporters, and break up the rallies of the Social Democrats with ease. One of many such incidents occurred on 26 December 1930, when a rally of the SPD in Kreis Leobschütz, Upper Silesia, was broken up by a well-organised attack of the region's Nazis.¹ In early 1931 the Nazi organisation in Kreis Lyck, East Prussia, was informed of instructions from the Munich NSDAP headquarters to break up all meetings of the Reichsbanner; it thereupon prepared detailed plans for the disruption of a Reichsbanner rally, plans which involved mobilising SA units throughout the district.² Often Social Democrats were assaulted even before their rallies got under way, as in Grossburg, Kreis Strehlen (to the south of Breslau), on 26 July 1931, when the SA attacked a group of Reichsbanner members on their way to protect an SPD rally.³ Attempts by the Social Democrats to celebrate 'Constitution Day', 11 August, provided a particularly welcome opportunity for the SA to assault the SPD.⁴ Once Weimar politics became the politics of violence, the Social Demo-

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, f. 223: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 1 Apr. 1931. Subsequently 13 Nazis were arrested and sentenced for their part in the attack, but the sentences were overturned on appeal. See *ibid.*, f. 225: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 8 Nov. 1931.

2. StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 196: Kriminal- und Grenzkommissariat to the Landeskriminalpolizeistelle in Allenstein, Prostken, 6 Feb. 1931.

3. BA, R 43 II/1221, f. 2: 'Straßenterror'.

4. This occurred, for example, in Stolp in Pomerania. See *ibid.*, f. 2.

crats no longer could compete effectively.

The KPD was altogether less vulnerable to Nazi violence than the SPD, and successful attempts to disrupt Communist rallies were rare. The difference was due partly to the different tactics of the KPD, which tended to hold fewer public meetings and concentrated more on so-called 'Kleinarbeit' — the cultivation of political sympathies through person-to-person discussion and canvassing. Thus the Communists left themselves much less open to Nazi terror than the Social Democrats. Furthermore, the Communists were much more ready to counter violence with violence, so that the KPD and its affiliated organisations often were able to turn the tables on the Nazis.¹

The parties occupying the shrinking middle ground of Weimar politics — the Staatspartei, the Wirtschaftspartei and the DVP — rarely were targets for SA violence in eastern Germany, primarily because they held too few meetings for the SA to terrorise. On the other hand, the Catholic Centre Party and its affiliated organisations were threatened by the SA, particularly in Upper Silesia.² Nor were the right-wing rivals of the NSDAP spared. Erich Ludendorff's Tannenbergbund saw its meetings broken up by the SA,³ as did Stennes' breakaway NSKD.⁴ During late 1932 even the Nazis' erstwhile ally, the

1. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 10/17, ff. 433-9: The Regierungspräsident to the Oberpräsident, Marienwerder, 16 Apr. 1930; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, f. 147: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 2 Dec. 1931.

2. See, for example, BA, R 43 II/1221, f. 2.

3. See, for example, WAP Poznań, OPS/148, ff. 218-19: 'Bericht über den Verlauf der öffentlichen Versammlung des Tannenbergbundes am 26. Oktober 1932 in Schneidemühl, Lokal Reichsadler', Schneidemühl, 27 Oct. 1932.

4. See, for example, WAP Wrocław, RO I/1804, ff. 915-17: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 4 Aug. 1931.

DNVP, faced SA violence; in Breslau, for example, a large DNVP rally on 27 September 1932 was broken up by Nazi supporters who interrupted the speaker, Reichstag Vice-President Walther Graef, threw stinkbombs from the corners of the hall, and afterwards assaulted Stahlhelm members who had attended.¹

Perhaps even more important than the violence arising at political rallies were the tactics practiced by the SA elsewhere. Bands of storm troopers frequently terrorised towns and city districts - particularly working-class neighbourhoods where sympathy for the Left was strong - , assaulted offices of left-wing political organisations, and attacked prominent individual members of the KPD, SPD and the trade unions. In Liegnitz, for example, SA men were responsible for a series of such incidents in late 1931: in early September a Reichsbanner member was attacked on the city's streets; in late October the offices of the SPD newspaper Liegnitzer Volkszeitung were bombed; and in mid-November an innocent bystander was beaten on the street, dragged into the hallway of a building and beaten again.² In Greifswald a troop of roughly 40 Nazis tried to storm the offices of the SPD Greifswalder Zeitung in March 1932; they were first driven back, but returned with a force of 100 men, succeeded in taking the building, demolished its interior and sent one of the defenders to hospital.³ At the

1. SB, 28 Sept. 1932, p. 1. In October 1932 the SA leadership prohibited the disruption of DNVP meetings, noting that the SA merely filled the halls for the conservatives and offered the government an excuse to suppress the NSDAP. See BA, NS 22/853: The Oberste SA-Führer, Munich, 13 Oct. 1932.

2. BA, R 43 II/1218, ff. 2-3: 'Straßenterror'.

3. VBS, 9 Mar. 1932; WAP Szczecin, RS/15, ff. 15-19: The Re-gierungspräsident to the Minister des Innern, Stralsund, 9 Mar. 1932; Jahnke, 'Die Geschichte der revolutionäre Arbeiterbewegung in Stralsund', p. 284.

same time attacks were made on the offices of the SPD newspaper Der Vorpommer in nearby Stralsund and Barth.

Such violence was particularly widespread during the July 1932 Reichstag election campaign. For example, on 3 July an outing of the Breslau Social Democratic youth organisation, the Jungfront, was surrounded and fired upon by a band of SA men in Kreis Neurode; two girls were wounded and one youth badly beaten by the Nazis.¹ On the same day in Kattern, about ten kilometers south-east from Breslau, the SA staged a 'brown day' involving hundreds of storm troopers who took the opportunity to break up a celebration of the local Catholic girls' association, tear down black-red-gold flags from houses in the town, assault the local Reichsbanner leader, and attack the home of the SPD chairman of the parish council.² A few days later SA men from Hirschberg assaulted a work camp of the Social Democratic 'Socialist Worker Youth' (Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend) in Schmiedeberg; the police, completely outnumbered, were unable to stop the ensuing brawl until reinforcements arrived from Görlitz and Liegnitz.³ In Hindenburg a band of Nazis drove into a crowd of Communist sympathisers, shooting and wounding a number of them, and in nearby Beuthen a Kreuzschar unit was attacked while accompanied by police officers.⁴ In Bunzlau on 22 July hundreds of SA men returning home from

1. VWB, 4 July 1932, p. 1; SB, 5 July 1932, p. 1.

2. Ibid.

3. VWB, 9 July 1932, p. 1.

4. GStA, Rep. 84a/11770, ff. 2-3: 'Strafverfahren gegen Rechts wegen politischer Ausschreitungen'; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1805, ff. 1199-200: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Oppeln, 8 Aug. 1932.

a mass rally in Liegnitz featuring Hitler, attacked the local ADGB offices, killing one of the defenders and wounding several others.¹ Once again it was the Social Democrats who fared worst. Their impressive organisation - in particular their press and trade-union networks - offered numerous sitting targets for the SA. Apparent organisational strength became tactical weakness as the Social Democrats were forced onto the defensive, attempting to hold fixed positions against the Nazis in a struggle where the advantages lay with the aggressor.

Although the largest share of Nazi violence was aimed against the Left, Jews and Poles also were subjected to SA terror. The most serious outbreak of Nazi violence against the Jewish population in eastern Germany came in the summer of 1932, in the wake of a widespread terror campaign against the Left; especially in East Prussia and Silesia Jews were assaulted and Jewish-owned shops made targets for the bricks and bombs of the SA.² The violence against the Polish community was more sporadic, but nevertheless posed a threat to the Polish minority in Upper Silesia and the Border Province. Confrontations between storm troopers and Poles were not uncommon, and Polish-language entertainment programmes often were disrupted by the SA.³ However, although the Nazi movement was openly and

1. SB, 23 July 1932, p. 1; AZ, 12 Aug. 1932, p. 3.

2. See StAG, Rep. 240/B.31.c.: 'Wie kam es nun zum 1. August 1932?'; Kurt Sabatzky, 'Meine Erinnerungen an den Nationalsozialismus' (unpublished MS in the Wiener Library, London); KV, 1-10 Aug. 1932; *ibid.*, 1-2 Nov. 1932. For details of the terror in East Prussia and Silesia during July and August 1932, see below, pp. 202-13.

3. See, for example, VB, 18 Aug. 1932, p. 1; G. Riedel, 'Die Entwicklung der NSDAP im Kreise Oppeln', in Oppelner Heimat Kalender 1934, pp. 40-2.

aggressively anti-Semitic and anti-Polish, SA violence against Jews and Poles took second place behind attacks on political adversaries. The most important task facing the storm troopers was not the persecution of minorities but the assault on the Left and the acquisition of political power. Furthermore, the Jews and the Poles hardly posed a physical threat to the SA. Thus, compared to the level and extent of the violence between the Nazis and their left-wing adversaries, the actions of the storm troopers against the Jews and Poles before 1933 were relatively modest. In this regard, SA violence was governed by clear political considerations; it was aimed primarily against the organised political opponents of the NSDAP rather than the objects of Nazi racialism.

A further occasional target of SA violence was the state authorities. A favoured SA tactic involving government institutions was the disruption of attempts to auction farm properties after their owners had been unable to pay debts and back taxes - an occurrence all too common in the depressed agricultural economy of the eastern Prussian provinces. For example, during late 1931 and early 1932 in Naugard, in Pomerania, the SA systematically set about preventing the local courts from carrying out forced auctions.¹ When one property, which happened to belong to the local SA-Sturmführer, was scheduled to be auctioned, SA men occupied the court chambers and interrupted the proceedings with catcalls and Nazi songs until conducting normal business became impossible. Prior to another auction posters appeared threatening anyone who dared bid for the property in question, and when the auction finally

1. See VBS, 13 Jan. 1932, '2. Beilage zum "Volksbote"'.

took place the Nazis so disturbed the proceedings that they had to be called off. Even the police were not wholly spared; in Hindenburg during the July 1932 election campaign approximately 50 SA and SS men attacked a police patrol near the main rail station.¹

Nevertheless, on the whole the SA in eastern Germany was careful not to stage a frontal attack upon the authority of the state. Where courts were assaulted, this seems almost exclusively to have been with regard to forced auctions of farm properties, an issue where the Nazis were taking an unquestionably popular political position. Other organs of state power generally were left alone: there were no attempts by the SA to attack the Reichswehr or to sabotage Reichswehr installations; SA bombing campaigns generally were aimed at political opponents, not government offices; and attacks against the police were the exception, not the rule. While SA violence was no doubt an expression of the anger and hatred of the Nazi rank and file, the SA leadership generally seems to have been aware of the limits beyond which it could not go. The SA, for all its violent instincts, stopped short of that sort of activity which would have brought it into direct confrontation with the state before 1933.

Characteristic of SA tactics, particularly in rural areas, was the frequent use of motor transport.² The advantages gained

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1805, ff. 1443-4: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Oppeln, 21 Aug. 1932.

2. Similar mobile tactics were used by Fascist squads in Italy during 1921 and 1922. See Angelo Tasca, Naissance du Fascisme. L'Italie de l'armistice à la marche sur Rome (Paris, 1967), pp. 129-47; Adrian Lyttelton, The Seizure of Power. Fascism in Italy 1919-1929 (London, 1973), pp. 53-4; Paul Corner, Fascism in Ferrara 1915-1925 (London, 1975), pp. 139-42.

through the widespread use of motor vehicles were considerable in the eastern Prussian provinces, where distances were greater and the population more scattered than in western or central Germany. Through the use of mobile tactics the SA often could ignore bans on holding open-air demonstrations or wearing political uniforms, make a powerful impression among the local population, and overpower political opponents and the police. Faced with a sudden invasion of two or three hundred storm troopers, isolated groups of SPD or KPD supporters often could do little to protect their own meetings or confront the Nazis.¹ Similarly, two or three police officers in an outlying village frequently were unable to prevent the SA from disturbing the peace, ignoring the law, and terrorising their opponents. The new terror tactics developed by the SA greatly worried the authorities; in western Pomerania, for example, the Regierungspräsident even suggested to the Prussian Interior Minister a complete ban on people coming into a particular community from outside to attend political rallies.²

Typical of the mobile terror tactics was an attack in March 1931 of storm troopers on the village of Zawadski, Kreis Groß-Strehlitz (Upper Silesia), where more than 150 Nazis gathered from the surrounding region to attend a Party rally and then systematically attacked people on the streets.³ In a

1. However, in Kreis Fraustadt (Border Province) the Communists did develop effective countermeasures: they formed squads of 35 to 40 men who attacked the lorry-loads of Nazis as they left the towns. See WAP Poznań, OPS/167, ff. 156-7: The Landrat to the Oberpräsident, Fraustadt, 4 May 1931.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/28, ff. 55-71: The Regierungspräsident to the Preuß. Minister des Innern, Stralsund, 24 Feb. 1931.

3. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1803, f. 913: Reichsbanner Gau Oberschlesien to Pr. Innenminister Severing, Hindenburg, 8 Apr. 1931; *ibid.*, ff. 955-6: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Groß-Strehlitz, 19 July 1931.

similar incident one year later in Ostrosnitz, Kreis Cosel, nearly 200 Nazis - SA Stürme from Cosel and Kandrzin, reinforced by members of the Hitler Youth - marched through the village, assaulted passers-by on the street, and attacked the headquarters of the local Reichsbanner group; by the time the Nazis had finished, 29 people were injured including 18 Reichsbanner members.¹ By mid-1932 these tactics were being applied even in large cities, where the Left and the police were far from weak. For example, on the evening of 22 June 1932 roughly 2000 SA men were driven into Breslau to attend a rally in the massive 'Jahrhunderthalle', and used the opportunity to terrorise working-class districts of the city before marching in uniform to the hall.² The mobility of the SA greatly increased its effectiveness, and it is significant that neither the Communists nor the Social Democrats seem to have had the easy access to motor vehicles that the SA obviously enjoyed.

In many districts, particularly in the larger cities, the police dealt with SA violence quite strictly. This was due not just to the duty of the police to uphold law and order, which was challenged by the activities of the SA; it was due as well to the fact that until July 1932 the Prussian Interior Ministry and police bureaucracy were largely in the hands of Social Democrats, who were committed to limiting the spread of

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1805, f. 1331: Reichsbanner Gau Oberschlesien to the Regierungspräsident, Hindenburg, 8 Mar. 1932; *ibid.*, ff. 1345-55: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 12 Apr. 1932.

2. See VWB, 23 June 1932, p. 1; VBS, 24 June 1932, p. 1. Naturally the Nazis saw the situation rather differently; according to Heines, the SA had been the victim of 'Marxist' attacks. See VB, 24 June 1932, p. 1.

the Nazi movement. All public Nazi rallies were monitored by the police, who frequently stopped the proceedings when Nazi speakers illegally insulted the state or the black-red-gold national colours, and who were able to prevent many rallies from degenerating into brawls.¹ The police also managed to infiltrate Nazi organisations in order to gain information,² and police raids on SA barracks and offices in the search for illegal weapons were frequent.³ In April 1932 the nationwide ban on the SA, which lasted until June, began with widespread police searches of SA headquarters and Heime.⁴ The Nazi press and leadership complained constantly of police repression. Newspaper headlines about the 'unbelievable brutality' of the police were common,⁵ as were accusations by Nazi leaders of police bias. For example, in Tilsit during 1930 one local Nazi leader described the police in the city as 'completely left-wing',⁶ and in a rally in Gleiwitz in March 1931 Gauleiter Brückner asserted that 'there is no province in Prussia where the police take action against the NSDAP so harshly as in

1. See, for example, WAP Szczecin, RS/10, f. 202: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Demmin, 31 Jan. 1932.

2. See, for example, WAP Szczecin, RS/212 I, ff. 39-41: The Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 10 Mar. 1931.

3. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.38.c.1.: Gaukommissar Dargel to the Gauleitung in Königsberg, Marienburg, 26 Aug. 1931; WAP Opole, OPO/1039, f. 17: The Regierungspräsident to the Preuß. Minister des Innern, Oppeln, 5 May 1931.

4. For a discussion of the ban, and of the intrigues which led up to it, see Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, pp. 481-99, 548-9; Brüning, Memoiren, pp. 538-44, 600; Bennecke, Hitler und die SA, pp. 176-82, 187-8.

5. See, for example, the article about the breaking-up of a Nazi meeting in Ratibor in VB, 20 Jan. 1931, p. 3.

6. StAG, Rep. 240/C.65.b.: Emil (? , signature illegible) to Erich Koch, Alt-Buttkischken, 5 Apr. 1930.

Upper Silesia'.¹

Of course the claims that the Prussian police were brutally suppressing the Nazi movement were often exaggerated or misleading. The relationship of the police to the Nazi movement was more complex, and there is evidence that the NSDAP was not without sympathy within the police forces. For example, the Tilsit police, which in 1930 was dismissed by a local Nazi leader as 'left-wing', had been described in positive terms by the NSDAP district leader during the previous year.² In Insterburg in 1931 the district Nazi propaganda chief assessed the police in his region as 'absolutely first-rate', and went on to assert that 'with only a few exceptions [the police] are quite amicably disposed toward us'.³ In late 1932 a 'Union of National Socialist Police Officers' (Arbeitsgemeinschaft national-sozialistischer Polizeibeamter) was formed in Gleiwitz, where it was reported that a number of policemen actually had joined the NSDAP, that Nazi leaflets were printed on police duplicating equipment, and that pictures of Hitler were to be found in police offices.⁴ The Social Democrats in particular made frequent complaints about the leniency of the police toward the Nazis,⁵ and the numerous reports that the SA had been tipped off about im-

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1805, ff. 1243-5: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 6 Mar. 1931.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.33.d.1.: H. Berg to the Gauleitung in Königsberg, Tilsit, 19 Feb. 1929.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.33.a.: Bezirkspropagandaleiter Fuchs to the Gauleitung, Abteilung Propaganda, Insterburg, 4 Mar. 1931.

4. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, ff. 939-41: The komm. Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 14 Nov. 1932.

5. See, for example, WAP Wrocław, RO I/1803, f. 209: SPD Unterbezirk Oppeln to Vize-Präsident Müller, Oppeln, 10 June 1931; *ibid.*, f. 913.

pending police raids in April 1932 also suggest that the Nazi movement had many sympathisers within the police forces.¹

Furthermore, after von Papen's Prussian 'coup' in July 1932, when SPD officials were removed from the Prussian police bureaucracy, the police became noticeably less strict with regard to the activities of the NSDAP and SA.

The sympathy which the Nazi movement enjoyed among the police, together with the change in the political orientation of the Prussian police administration after 20 July 1932, were to ease its transition in 1933 from being an opponent of the SA to being its ally. Yet, until July 1932, the Prussian police generally dealt rather toughly with the SA and thus helped circumscribe the terror tactics of the storm troopers. Even after July, the fear of provoking a direct confrontation with the state seems to have limited the SA to hit-and-run terror tactics against political opponents. As long as the violence of the SA remained within such limits - retaining the initiative against the Nazis' political adversaries but not supplying the police with a necessary pretext to suppress the organisation altogether - it proved extremely difficult for the police to control.

In large measure the significance of SA violence was a function of its being so widespread. Its impact was cumulative; the most widely publicised acts of SA terror were important not just in themselves, but also in that they were repeated, if on

1. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1805, ff. 453-4: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 19 Apr. 1932; WAP Szczecin, RS/212 II, f. 105: The Landrat, Demmin, 14 Apr. 1932; WAP Poznań, OPS/168, f. 112: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Flatow, 14 Apr. 1932; StAG, Rep. 14/B.I.3., f. 1005: Kriminal- u. Grenzdienststelle to the Krim. u. Grenzkommissariat in Allenstein, Ortelsburg, 14 Apr. 1932.

a less dramatic scale, countless times throughout the country. Yet the substance of SA violence cannot be appreciated only in general terms, as each incident had its local causes and local ramifications. Thus in order to explain why and how political violence was able to develop as it did in Germany during the early 1930s, it is necessary also to examine in detail some specific instances of SA violence and terror.

(ii) The Schweidnitz Incident: 27 September 1929

The first major act of SA terror in the eastern Prussian provinces occurred in Schweidnitz on 27 September 1929. The incident began with a Nazi Party rally on Thursday, 26 September.¹ The Schweidnitz NSDAP used the occasion to challenge the SPD, which had been the dominant political party in the area: the theme of the Nazi speaker was 'The Republican Schutzbund in Austria and the Reichsbanner in Germany, a Jewish defence troop (Judenschutztruppe)', and Nazi leaflets were distributed throughout the city attacking the SPD 'Bonzen', calling the Reichsbanner the 'protection squad of Jewish capital' and accusing the Reichsbanner of cowardice in failing to answer the Nazi challenge. The Social Democrats responded immediately. Together with the local Reichsbanner, the ADGB and the Social Democratic sport club (Arbeiter Turn- und Sportbund), the SPD planned a counter-rally for the following evening in the 'Volksgarten', a large beer hall in the city, where the speaker, the Breslau SPD Reichstag Deputy Carl Wendemuth, was to speak on

1. See BA, NS 22/1068: unsigned Nazi account of the incident, Schweidnitz, 11 Oct. 1929; *ibid.*: unsigned police account, dated 3 Oct. 1929; SB, 28 Sept. 1929, p. 1; Illustrierter Beobachter, 21 Dec. 1929, p. 691; Gundelach, Vom Kampf und Sieg der schlesischen SA, pp. 55-8.

'The true face of National Socialism' and the Nazi challenge would be met.

The Nazis in the region reacted by planning the systematic disruption of the SPD rally, gathering their forces not only from Schweidnitz itself but also by train and motor vehicle from Waldenburg, Striegau, Freiburg and Breslau. By the time the Social Democratic rally began, approximately 150 SA men, dressed in civilian clothes and waiting for the signal to create a disturbance, were among the assembled crowd. The meeting started peacefully, but once Wendemuth began to speak the Nazi discussion speaker, who was to have the floor after Wendemuth had finished, interrupted. A few members of the Reichsbanner, charged with keeping order, warned the Nazi spokesman to be quiet, but noise from the crowd increased as Wendemuth tried to continue. Then, shortly after the initial disturbance the leader of the Schweidnitz NSDAP, who had been sitting at the front of the hall just beneath the podium, gave the order 'caps on!'. Throughout the hall Nazis took SA caps out of their pockets, many put on SA jackets as well, and started their assault.

Within moments the 'Volksgarten' was in chaos. Some of the SA men jumped onto the podium to attack the speaker, as well as the leader of the local SPD and the Reichsbanner members protecting the meeting; the remainder assaulted the crowd with table and chair legs, beer glasses, truncheons and knives. The Social Democrats were completely unprepared for such an attack, having brought neither weapons nor enough Reichsbanner men to protect the rally adequately.¹ Equally unprepared were the

1. See SB, 28 Sept. 1929, p. 1.

police, only four of whom were on duty in the hall. Altogether nearly 50 people had to be taken to hospital afterwards, including seven women and three waiters employed by the beer hall. Money was stolen from the handbags of women as they fled the hall, and the storm troopers even managed to take pocket watches belonging to Wendemuth and the local SPD leader and to steal Wendemuth's spectacles. Having completed their work, the Nazis shouted a loud 'Heil' and marched from the hall in closed formation, singing Nazi songs. Behind them they left a scene of destruction: furniture was smashed, beer glasses thrown everywhere, and blood spattered throughout the hall. Because so few police had been present there were no arrests at the meeting, and the Nazis had demonstrated that they could, with seeming impunity, successfully assault a mass rally of the Social Democrats in a city regarded as an SPD stronghold.

The attack was a shock to the Social Democrats in the region. Their reaction was to demand better police protection and tough police action against the Nazis. According to the Social Democratic Schlesische Bergwacht, the most widely circulated newspaper in the region,

If the Nazis had to fear the truncheons of the police, then they never would have taken the liberty of performing this shameful act. They first must really feel [police truncheons], then their bestiality will disappear quickly.¹

Unlike the Communists, the Social Democrats naively put their trust in the Weimar legal and political system — if only it could be administered properly — and thus left themselves particularly exposed to Nazi violence.

1. Ibid.

Because the assault obviously had been planned in advance and because SA men had been transported into Schweidnitz from the entire region, there was subsequently a stern response from the authorities. In December trials were held, during which Hitler was called as a witness - the Nazi leader's first visit to Silesia - and at which 15 SA men were sentenced to prison terms for their part in the incident.¹ More importantly, the incident led the Social Democratic Oberpräsident in Breslau, Hermann Lüdemann, to order the dissolution of the local Nazi Party groups, together with their SA units, in Breslau, Waldenburg, Schweidnitz, Reichenbach, Freiburg, Striegau and Dittersbach.² Although the Silesian Gau headquarters, which was not banned, remained in Schweidnitz until the end of 1931,³ the ban on these seven local groups remained in effect until February 1932, when Lüdemann's decree was overturned by the administrative court (Verwaltungsgericht) in Breslau. Yet, while the Oberpräsident's decree did create administrative difficulties for the Silesian NSDAP, the ban on the local Party groups had remarkably little effect upon the growth of the Nazi movement in the area, and the SA units in question were able to circumvent the ban by re-forming as 'clubs' under various cover names.

The melee in the Schweidnitz 'Volksgarten' was a milestone in the history of the eastern Prussian provinces. It provided

1. See Illustrierter Beobachter, 21 Dec. 1929, p. 691; Gundelach, op. cit., p. 56.

2. Ibid., p. 57; VB, 21/22 Feb. 1932, p. 3.

3. From March 1929 until December 1931 the Silesian Gau headquarters was situated in Schweidnitz. See BA, NS 26/156: NSDAP Gaupresseamt Schlesien to the NSDAP Hauptarchiv, Breslau, 20 Mar. 1937.

a sudden and terrifying confirmation of the explosive growth of the Nazi movement in eastern Germany. With the incident in Schweidnitz, the Nazi movement signalled its emergence from the fringes of politics onto the main political stage, capable of threatening the activities of what was still the largest political party in Germany. The Schweidnitz incident also indicated that, despite its organisational strength and mass support, the Social Democratic movement was unable to deal with the new menace to its survival. The instinctive reliance of the SPD upon legal sanctions was symptomatic of a fundamental misunderstanding of the Nazi threat, and left the SPD and the trade unions in an extremely weak and exposed position in 1932 and 1933 when they were robbed of their influence in government and administration.

(iii) The Ohlau Confrontation: 10 July 1932

The summer of 1932 saw a great escalation of the violence between the Nazis and their opponents, and, with the lifting of the SA ban on 16 June, the campaign for the July Reichstag elections assumed an increasingly threatening character. The worst of this violence generally occurred on Sundays, when political parties held their largest rallies and mass marches. One of the most serious incidents took place on Sunday, 10 July, in Ohlau, along the Oder between Breslau and Brieg.

The confrontation in Ohlau was a consequence of separate mass rallies of the SPD and the NSDAP, both of which had taken place elsewhere.¹ Each group was returning from its own meeting

1. For accounts of the confrontation, see VWB, 11 July 1932, pp. 1-2; ibid., 12 July 1932, pp. 1-2; SB, 12 July 1932, p. 1; Deutsche Ostfront, 11 July 1932, p. 1; VB, 13 July 1932, p. 1.

- members of the Reichsbanner and SPD supporters coming from a 'red day' in the village of Laskowitz in Kreis Ohlau, SA and SS men coming from a Nazi demonstration in Brieg - and their paths crossed in the 'Ring' in the centre of Ohlau. Almost immediately a brawl started, involving hundreds of people, and in the course of the ensuing battle hundreds of shots were fired. Each side quickly tried to summon reinforcements; the Nazis claimed they were able to gather 300 men from Breslau who rushed to Ohlau.¹ The Ohlau police were completely incapable of containing the violence, which spread throughout the town. Police from the surrounding countryside were brought in to aid the Ohlau force, but this too proved inadequate. Finally at 11.00 p.m., roughly four hours after the violence had begun, the Reichswehr was called and succeeded in clearing the streets. By the time order was restored there had been dozens of casualties. A number of functionaries of the Reichsbanner, the trade unions and the SPD had been attacked in their homes as storm troopers roamed through the town, and two SA men had been killed and many others seriously injured.

The affair led to a trial during the following month, and a number of Reichsbanner members received prison sentences, ranging from three months to four years, for their part in the violence. Although the storm troopers had been far from innocent in the Ohlau confrontation, nevertheless the sentences aroused considerable anger among the Nazis. By chance, the Ohlau trial occurred at the same time as the trial of the Potempa murderers in Beuthen, and the sentences passed on the Reichsbanner men in Ohlau were considerably lighter than those

1. Ibid.

given to the Nazis who had committed premeditated murder in Potempa.¹ Although the two cases involved different crimes and were tried on the basis of different laws – the stern anti-terrorist measures under which the Special Court in Beuthen was set up had not been in force at the time of the Ohlau incident – the juxtaposition of the stiff sentences against the Nazis in Beuthen and the comparatively mild sentences against Social Democrats in Ohlau provided welcome propaganda material for the NSDAP.² Yet the violence which took place in Ohlau, unlike that which occurred in Potempa in August, was completely unplanned. Rather it was a particularly bloody example of how violence beget violence, as the development of mass political armies threatened to turn any chance meeting between opposing groups into a major confrontation.

(iv) The Greifswald Shootings: 17 July 1932

The most serious instance of political violence in Pomerania before 1933 took place in the university town of Greifswald during the July 1932 Reichstag election campaign, one week after the incident in Ohlau. The day of the Greifswald shootings, the 'Bloody Sunday' of 17 July, marked the apex of the political violence in Germany during 1932. Together with the confrontation on the same day in Altona – where a Nazi march through working-class districts was fired upon and the ensuing battle left 15 dead – the incident at Greifswald helped give Reich Chancellor von Papen the excuse for the coup against the Prussian government a few days later.

1. See Richard Bessel, 'The Potempa Murder', Central European History, x (1977), 251.

2. See, for example, VB, 24 Aug. 1932, p. 2.

As in Altona, in Greifswald SA men were victims of violence which their own activities had done much to provoke. The incident began with a march organised by the SA-Standarte in Greifswald, a city with strong Social Democratic and Communist groups.¹ The march was duly registered with the police, and altogether about 800 SA men, including many who arrived from the surrounding countryside, took part. The affair remained peaceful until the afternoon, when the storm troopers split into smaller groups and went in different directions to find something to eat. One of these groups became involved in a fight, during which the SA men attacked a retail outlet of the socialist co-operative society, the Konsumverein, and smashed its windows. Stones were thrown at the Nazis from within the Konsumverein and some shots were fired, but the police arrived in time to prevent the Nazis from storming the building. At the same time another of the SA groups assaulted a working-class housing estate, smashing windows and doors until the police intervened.

The provocations by the SA created an extremely tense atmosphere, particularly in residential areas which were strongholds of the KPD and SPD. In the evening, as the various SA groups from outside Greifswald headed homeward, violence broke out once again. About 40 storm troopers returning to their

1. For accounts of the Greifswald incident, see WAP Szczecin, RS/15, ff. 53-5: The Regierungspräsident to the Minister des Innern, Stralsund, 20 July 1932; *ibid.*, ff. 69-186: The Regierungspräsident to the Minister des Innern, Stralsund, 18 July 1932, followed by statements about the incident taken by the police; PZ, 19 July 1932; VB, 19 July 1932, p. 1; *ibid.*, 20 July 1932, p. 2; Jahnke, 'Die Geschichte der revolutionären Arbeiterbewegung in Stralsund', p. 289. For the relative strengths of political groups in Greifswald in late 1932, see WAP Szczecin, RS/15, ff. 193-4: The Oberbürgermeister to the Regierungspräsident in Stettin, Greifswald, 19 Dec. 1932.

homes in the nearby villages of Dereskow and Pansow were fired upon as they passed working-class housing on the outskirts of the city. The Nazis then tried to assault the buildings and more shots were fired, this time leaving three SA men dead and a large number wounded. The aggressive behaviour of the SA during the day, together with the determination of the SPD and KPD sympathisers in Greifswald to confront the Nazis, had led to such violence that the Regierungspräsident in Stralsund admitted to the Prussian Interior Ministry that he no longer could guarantee public order with the police forces at his disposal.¹

The Greifswald shootings were an indicative, if dramatic, example of the violence in which Nazis themselves were casualties. Like the many other storm troopers who were killed in the political battles of the early 1930s, the three SA men who died in Greifswald on 17 July 1932 became 'martyrs' of the Nazi movement. The circumstances surrounding their deaths provide an illuminating perspective on Nazi martyrdom, which was not the simple result of violence directed against Hitler's supporters but rather the product of the reciprocal patterns of confrontation and response which became increasingly common as the Nazi movement grew. The growth of the Nazi movement and the deliberately provocative character of its activities were the preconditions of the violence which left many SA men, as well as their opponents, dead or injured.

(v) The Königsberg Uprising: 1 August 1932

On the night of 1 August 1932 the East Prussian capital

1. Ibid., ff. 53-5.

experienced a wave of violence which was probably the most concerted terror campaign carried out by the SA before 1933. The violence which occurred in Königsberg at the beginning of August and then spread throughout the province far eclipsed the isolated acts of terror and brawls which hitherto had characterised the activities of the storm troopers. In Königsberg the SA unleashed, for the first time, a campaign which terrorised an entire city.

As throughout Germany, in East Prussia the campaign for the July 1932 Reichstag elections led to a rising tide of violence. The tension in the Nazi camp was then increased by the generally disappointing election results: although the NSDAP captured 230 seats in the new Reichstag, nevertheless the elections had demonstrated the limits of the Nazi advance. The NSDAP had exhausted its reservoirs of electoral support, its vote had not increased appreciably since the Prussian Landtag elections of 24 April, and the parliamentary path to power appeared to have reached a dead end. In Königsberg the atmosphere was made even more tense by the fatal stabbing by a group of Communist sympathisers of an SA man, Otto Reincke, as he was distributing propaganda leaflets.¹ The growing conviction of many storm troopers that violence offered the only possibility for the Nazis to achieve power and the death of Reincke on 30 July combined to break down the inhibitions and discipline which had kept the Königsberg SA in check.

The explosion came immediately after the Reichstag elections. SA units in Königsberg received reports that storm troopers had been ambushed by the 'reds' in the early morning hours of 1 Au-

1. See StAG, Rep. 240/B.31.a.: 'Wie kam es nun zum 1. August 1932?'

gust, and the East Prussian SA leadership, faced with growing difficulty in controlling the membership, ordered the local Sturmführer to respond to the situation as they saw fit.¹

The wave of terror began as SA men set fires at petrol pumps throughout the city in order to confuse and divert the police and fire prevention forces. Store windows were smashed, and a firearms shop was looted. There followed a series of attacks on organisations and leading political figures hostile to the Nazi movement: a bomb attack was made on the 'Otto-Braun-Haus', the headquarters of the SPD newspaper Königsberger Volkszeitung; there was an attempt to set ablaze the offices of the liberal-democratic Königsberger Hartung'sche Zeitung; a Communist member of the city council, Gustav Sauf, was shot and killed in his bed when four Nazis broke into his home; Otto Wyrigatsch, the editor of the Königsberger Volkszeitung, Max von Bahr-feldt, a leading member of the East Prussian DVP and Regierungs-präsident in Königsberg until dismissed by von Papen on 20 July 1932, and a Communist warehouseman of Königsberg's co-operative 'Konsum' organisation were shot in their homes and seriously wounded; and unsuccessful attempts were made on the lives of Walter Schütz, a KPD Reichstag Deputy, and Kurt Sabatzky, the syndic of the Königsberg office of the 'Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Belief' (Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens).

During the next few days the SA terror spread throughout the province. On 3 August the chairman of the parish council

1. Ibid. See also KV, 1 Aug. 1932; Gause, Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg, iii. 114-15; Wilhelm Matull, Ostpreußens Arbeiterbewegung. Geschichte und Leistung im Überblick (Würzburg, 1970), p. 115; Sabatzky, 'Meine Erinnerungen', pp. 19-20.

in Norgau (Samland) and a Reichsbanner leader in Tilsit were shot. On 6 August in Lötzen the local secretary of the agricultural workers' union was assaulted and the area Reichsbanner leader was murdered by a mob of SA men. In Marienburg attempts were made on the lives of a police inspector, a city building inspector (a member of the Centre Party), and the chairman of the local ADGB. In Elbing attacks were made on working-class districts of the city, including one in which a Nazi sympathiser fired into a crowd with a machine gun, and the offices of the Social Democratic newspaper Freie Presse were bombed. Particularly in the market towns in southern East Prussia the Nazi terror was directed against Jews and Jewish businesses. In Allenstein a bomb was thrown at the home of a Jewish Communist and hand grenades hurled at a Jewish shop; in Ortelsburg the windows of Jewish-owned shops were smashed and one store bombed; in Röbel shop windows were smashed; and stores in Osterode, Johannisburg and Lyck were bombed.¹ During the first ten days of August 1932, political life in East Prussia had assumed the character of a civil war.

Rather than counter-attack, the victims of the SA terror appear to have relied on the police to deal with the threat. Initially the police were caught off guard, especially in Königsberg. However, they soon began to take counter-measures, as gathering places of the SA were closed and a number of the storm troopers responsible for the outrages were arrested. Some of the guilty SA men managed to escape, however: a number were smuggled across the border into Danzig; others event-

1. Matull, Ostpreußens Arbeiterbewegung, p. 115; KV, 2-10 Aug. 1932; *ibid.*, 1-2 Nov. 1932; VB, 4 Aug. 1932, p. 1; StAG, Rep. 240/C.67.a.: history of the NSDAP in Kreis Ortelsburg.

ually found their way to Bozen (Bolzano) in the German-speaking Tirol, where they remained until March 1933.¹ Those who were caught by the police were tried before special courts during the autumn election campaign, and the resulting publicity hurt the NSDAP electorally in East Prussia in November.² For the storm troopers who were tried and sentenced, German justice proved quite mild, and the imprisoned SA men were freed as a result of the presidential amnesty in December. The punishment for a campaign of looting, bombing, shooting and murder had been jail terms of but a few months.

While the events in East Prussia in August 1932 demonstrated the tremendous potential for violence within the SA, they also indicated the political limitations of SA terror. Once the violence of the SA was no longer a subordinate part of the political campaign of the NSDAP, it proved a disaster. After the initial surprise, the police were able quickly to master the situation and within a few days SA meeting places were shut down and the men responsible for the terror were either in jail or had fled. Although the SA succeeded in creating a major disturbance, at the same time it left itself open to effective police counter-measures and revealed the inadequacy of its terror tactics so long as the Nazi movement did not control the levers of power.

(vi) The Silesian Terror Campaign: August 1932

The uprising in East Prussia was paralleled in Silesia,

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.53.a.(1): 'Die Geschichte der jetzigen Ortsgruppe Königstraße (Königsberg)'; StAG, Rep. 240/B.31.c.: 'Wie kam es nun zum 1. August 1932?'; Gause, op. cit., pp. 114-15.

2. See below, pp. 214-15.

where the July Reichstag elections were followed by a campaign of arson, shootings and bombings. The frustrations engendered by the election results, the conviction of many storm troopers than an SA coup attempt offered the Nazi movement its only real chance of success, and the restrictions on regular political activity - the political 'truce' (Burgfrieden) decreed by the Reich government on 29 July, prohibiting political rallies until 10 August¹ - channelled the energies of the SA into a full-fledged terror campaign encouraged by the leadership. Disaffection within the SA grew following the July elections, as relatively moderate members left the organisation and the more radical members became restive.² Many Silesian units eagerly awaited the order to 'march', and the disappointment which followed the elections caused SA leaders considerable difficulties in keeping their groups together.³ The Silesian SA leadership responded by trying to combat disintegration with combativeness. Heines and his lieutenants stressed that the storm troopers were neither to tolerate 'insults' to their uniform and to the Nazi 'world view' nor to shrink from confronting the 'red mob',⁴ and they supported a campaign of terror which appears to have been sanctioned by

1. RGB1, 1932, I, 389.

2. See BDC, AOPG, Paul Lachmann, ff. 43-5: Kreisgeschäftsführer Blachnik to the stellvertretender Gauleiter Bracht, Gleiwitz, 7 Aug. 1939.

3. See BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105186-90; *ibid.*, f. 105241: The Führer der Untergruppe MS-Nord to the Oberste SA-Führung, Schloß Kleinöls, 24 Sept. 1932.

4. NAM, T-253, roll 23, frame 1473875: The Gruppenführer Schlesien, 'Gruppenbefehl Nr. 13', Breslau, 5 Aug. 1932; *ibid.*, frame 1473877: The Führer der Untergruppe MS-Süd, 'Untergruppenbefehl Nr. 5', Reichenbach, 3 Aug. 1932.

Röhm.¹ The result was a campaign of terrorism which enveloped the whole of Silesia.

The Silesian terror campaign began in the early morning hours of 2 August, when a grenade was thrown at the Liegnitz 'Volkshaus', the headquarters of the Lower Silesian ADGB, and an attempt was made on the life of the former SPD Landrat (dismissed after 20 July) in Goldberg, about 20 kilometers west of Liegnitz.² In the days and nights which followed similar attacks occurred with increasing frequency throughout Silesia. On 5 and 6 August there were firearm or grenade attacks on an SPD sympathiser in Brieg, shopkeepers in Kreuzburg, Reichsbanner members in Katscher and Leobschütz, and the Socialist Workers' Party leader Ernst Eckstein in Breslau.³ On 7 August the offices of the pro-Centre Party newspaper in Ratibor, the Oberschlesische Rundschau, were bombed, a Reichsbanner leader in Kreis Leobschütz shot dead, and shots fired into the home of an SPD functionary in Goldberg. On the following evening

1. A member of the Sturm which carried out the Potempa raid - but not a member of the murder expedition - wrote years later that the Potempa killing and the wave of bombings and shootings in August 1932 were the consequence of 'Terrorparolen' and orders from higher up. See BDC, AOPG, Paul Lachmann, ff. 43-5. See also NAM, T-253, roll 23, frames 1474527-8: Walter Luetgebrune to Ernst Röhm, Berlin, 1 Dec. 1932; Bennecke, Hitler und die SA, pp. 194-5.

2. BUA, 2 Aug. 1932, p. 1; VB, 4 Aug. 1932, p. 1; AZ, 12 Aug. 1932, p. 3.

3. BUA, 6 Aug. 1932, p. 1; AZ, 12 Aug. 1932, p. 3; *ibid.*, 17 Aug. 1932, p. 3. Eckstein had been chairman of the Breslau SPD until October 1931, when he helped form the breakaway Socialist Workers' Party. He survived the attempt on his life in 1932, but was arrested in February 1933 and taken to the SA concentration camp at Dürrgoy near Breslau and on 8 May 1933 died as a result of his treatment there. See Matull, Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung, pp. 106, 128-30; Kurt Koszyk, 'Die Presse der schlesischen Sozialdemokratie', Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau, v (1960), 248.

the violence escalated further: in Heidersdorf, between Strehlen and Reichenbach, and in nearby Groß-Kniegnitz grenades were thrown at the homes of local SPD leaders; in the village of Jannowitz, about ten kilometers east of Hirschberg, a bomb exploded in front of the local 'Konsum' outlet; in Waldenburg shots were fired into the offices of the SPD newspaper Schlesische Bergwacht and the windows of the newly-built Schocken department store were smashed; in Dittersbach, near Waldenburg, shots were fired at the home of the SPD chairman of the parish council; and in Gleiwitz a grenade was thrown into the home of a Communist city council deputy.¹ The violence continued on the following night: in Görlitz a Reichsbanner man was shot by Nazi storm troopers; in Nieder-Heidersdorf shots were fired and a grenade thrown at the local 'Konsum'; in Hindenburg SA men threw bombs into the office of the Communist 'International Workers' Aid' (Internationale Arbeiterhilfe); in Wünschelburg (Kreis Neurode) shots were fired into the home of the local Reichsbanner leader; in Markowitz (Kreis Ratibor) a grenade was thrown at the home of the chairman of the parish council and leader of the area's Polish community; and in Reichenbach an SA man was killed when the bomb he intended to throw at the flat of Carl Paeschke, the editor of the SPD newspaper Der Proletarier aus dem Eulengebirge, exploded in his hand.²

1. SB, 8 Aug. 1932, pp. 1-3; VB, 9 Aug. 1932, p. 2; *ibid.*, 10 Aug. 1932, p. 2; AZ, 17 Aug. 1932, p. 3.

2. VWB, 9 Aug. 1932, p. 1; SB, 10 Aug. 1932, p. 1; VB, 11 Aug. 1932, p. 2; AZ, 17 Aug. 1932, p. 3. For accounts of the Reichenbach incident and the resulting trial, in which Edmund Heines was convicted of encouraging the assassination attempt, see Gundelach, Vom Kampf und Sieg der schlesischen SA, p. 159; IfZ, Sammlung Carl Paeschke/17, ff. 29-31: Carl Paeschke to Justizrat Bandmann, Reichenbach, 23 Sept. 1932; IfZ, Sammlung Carl Paeschke/18, ff. 19, 92, 113, 116: various newspaper clippings.

The SA terrorism reached a peak on 10 August: in Bunzlau the windows of the Dresdner Bank branch, the local 'Konsum' and the office of a grain dealer were smashed; in Reichenbach shots were fired into the home of a Reichsbanner leader; near Oppeln a KPD sympathiser was shot and wounded by Nazis; in Lauban the labour exchange was blown up; in Penzig, about ten kilometers north of Görlitz, a grenade was thrown into the bedroom of a local Reichsbanner leader, wounding him slightly; in Hertwigswaldau, near Jauer, shots were fired into the flat of the local SPD leader; in Alt-Kohlfurt and Rauscha in the Landkreis Görlitz and in Görlitz itself the windows of 'Konsum' branches were smashed; and in Potempa, in the Landkreis Tost-Gleiwitz, probably the most notorious and widely publicised act of Nazi terror before 1933 took place when an unemployed Polish casual labourer with Communist sympathies was brutally murdered by a drunken band of SA men.¹ At that point, however, the terror quickly subsided. Faced with the frightening wave of violence, on 9 August the Reich government enacted two emergency decrees to combat political terrorism.² These extended the ban on political rallies until the end of the month, provided considerably stiffer penalties for acts of political terror - including the death penalty for politically-motivated

1. AZ, 17 Aug. 1932, p. 3; Deutsche Ostfront, 10 Aug. 1932, p. 1; Otis Mitchell, 'An Institutional History of the National Socialist SA: A Study of the SA as a Functioning Organisation within the Party Structure (1931-1934)' (Univ. of Kansas Ph.D. thesis 1964), pp. 133-40. For accounts of the Potempa murder and the resulting trial, see Paul Kluke, 'Der Fall Potempa', VfZ, v (1957), 279-82; Heinrich Hannover and Elisabeth Hannover-Drück, Politische Justiz 1918-1933 (Frankfurt/Main, 1966), pp. 301-10; Bessel, 'The Potempa Murder', pp. 241-54.

2. RGBL, 1932, I, 403-7. See also Kluke, loc. cit., 279-82; Vogelsang, Reichswehr Staat und NSDAP, p. 259.

murders - and established special courts to hear cases falling under the new provisions. The decrees came into force on 10 August, and had a salient effect in damping the ardour of the Nazi terrorists.

Although there were a few isolated instances of violence aimed against Nazi targets, the terror unleashed during the first ten days of August was overwhelmingly the work of the SA. Most of the incidents were planned in advance and carried out on the orders of the regional and district SA leadership. For example, in the Görlitz area, where the terror had been particularly widespread - according to the public prosecutor in Görlitz more than 30 incidents had taken place in 17 different communities in the area on the night of 9-10 August alone - the campaign of violence had been carefully planned.¹ On the morning of 9 August the SA-Sturmbannführer in Görlitz had called a meeting of the Sturmführer in the district. Here he discussed the general political situation, dwelling particularly on the negotiations about the formation of a new Reich government, and asserted that pressure should be applied in order to speed up a change in government. According to the Sturmbannführer, that night there were to be a series of terrorist attacks against 'Konsum' outlets and Social Democrats. In addition, a few harmless attacks were to be made on Nazi targets to give the appearance that the KPD was behind the violence, so that the SA might have an excuse to intervene to restore law and order! The Sturmführer then passed on orders, local SA units formed special task forces, specific targets

1. NAM, T-253, roll 23, frames 1474376-82: The Oberstaatsanwalt to the Sondergericht, Görlitz, 19 Nov. 1932.

were selected, and the assaults were carried out according to plan.¹

During the weeks which followed many storm troopers were arrested for their part in the terror campaign, while still more fled rather than face prosecution. According to the Silesian SA leadership, roughly 50 men were arrested as a result of the wave of terror, and another 150 fled.² Among those on the run were the leader of the SA 'Untergruppe Mittelschlesien-Süd' and his adjutant, both of whom were implicated in the bombings in Reichenbach and Kreis Nimptsch. The terror campaign presented serious problems for the Silesian Nazi Party. In addition to alienating voters, the resulting court proceedings cost the regional Nazi organisations considerable sums of money, as did aid for the families of storm troopers who had fled.³ Significantly, however, Hitler did not publicly reproach the SA terrorists; indeed, his outspoken support for the Potempa murderers indicated just the opposite.⁴ The 'irresponsible' campaigns of the SA were not really criticised by the Party until after the setbacks in the November Reichstag elections; apparently the Party leadership felt that to censure the storm troopers in August would have involved too great a risk of losing activist support.

The terror campaigns in August 1932 appear to have been

1. For a description of how these assaults were carried out, see *ibid.*, frames 1474343-50: The Oberstaatsanwalt to the Sondergericht, Görlitz, 28 Nov. 1932.

2. BA, NS 23/474, f. 105179. See also SB, 19 Oct. 1932, p. 1; *ibid.*, 22 Oct. 1932, p. 1.

3. See, for example, BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105186-90.

4. See Bessel, 'The Potempa Murder', pp. 242, 251-2.

largely a result of the SA getting out of control. In the case of the East Prussian SA, the leadership seems to have lost control of the membership and the lower-level officers; in Silesia it was the SA leadership itself which acted independently of the Party and committed the SA to a campaign of terrorism. As in East Prussia, in Silesia the victims of the SA appear to have relied on the police and the courts rather than take counter-measures themselves, and, in the short term, events seemed to confirm the reliance of the Nazis' opponents upon the existing legal system. However, the significance of these terror campaigns was not just that they resulted in short-term setbacks for the Nazis, but also that they foreshadowed the violence of the spring of 1933. In 1932 the outbreaks of terrorist violence damaged the fortunes of the NSDAP; in the spring of 1933, once the Nazis faced neither free elections nor legal sanctions, the terrorist campaigns of the SA no longer threatened the position of the Nazi movement. Rather, they served to demolish an opposition to the Nazis which had left itself no recourse other than to a legal system which in 1933 ceased to exist.

(vii) The Consequences of Terror and the Crisis of late 1932

The failure of the tactics of 'legality' to bring the NSDAP to power during the summer of 1932 and the terror campaigns during August combined to cause a crisis within the Nazi movement which for a time appeared to threaten its survival. This crisis put into sharp relief the basic dichotomy within the movement: between the young activists in the SA on the one hand and the passive supporters who had voted for the NSDAP on the

other. For the SA violent political activism had become a way of life and virtually an end in itself, while for many Nazi voters the SA violence seemed increasingly to threaten order and security. In the middle stood the NSDAP, which needed both to cultivate the voting public and to retain the goodwill and co-operation of the storm troopers - tasks which began to appear mutually exclusive in late 1932.

In East Prussia, where the SA terror in August and the downturn in the Nazi vote in November 1932 had been especially dramatic,¹ the Gau propaganda chief, the Königsberg student Joachim Paltzo, had a very clear idea of what had gone wrong:

The cause of this decrease [in votes in East Prussia] is to be sought in the events of 1 August. The acts of terror, which were executed systematically in the entire province, have, through their lack of success and the almost childish manner in which they were carried out, repelled the population from us. Our opponents on all sides have cleverly understood how to make full use of this in their propaganda. In the last 14 days before the elections in all the larger towns in the province special courts were set up which investigated the acts of terror. The reports of the special court proceedings were provided with venomous commentary in the press of our opponents and were the best means to frighten from us the fickle bourgeois [Spießbürger] who previously voted for us.²

Morale among the Nazis' supporters plummeted. In Kreis Treuburg the district NSDAP leadership complained that, were another election to be held soon, not only many Nazi voters but also numerous Nazi Party members probably would not bother to vote.³ In Kreis Goldap one NSDAP leader expressed fears that, if another

1. See the table above, p. 20.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/B.7.d.: 'Stimmungsbericht der Gau-Propaganda Ostpreußen über die Wahlen vom 6. November 1932', Königsberg, 10 Nov. 1932.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.78.a.: NSDAP Kreisleitung Treuburg to the Gauleitung, Abt. Propaganda, Treuburg, 8 Nov. 1932.

election came in the near future, up to 70 per cent of the farmers and workers who had voted for the Nazi Party would turn to the Communists.¹ The leader of the NSDAP in Allenstein attributed the reversal of the Party's fortunes to the 'fickle political attitude' of government employees alarmed at the terrorist trials underway in the city, and to the unwillingness of the SA to co-operate with the local Party organisation.² And in Kreis Osterode the district NSDAP leadership blamed the drop in electoral support on the recent arrest of 15 local Nazis in connection with the August bombings, for which the conservative farm population had little sympathy.³

Although the fall in the Nazi vote in Silesia was less sharp than in East Prussia, there too the Party leadership attributed the downturn to the SA terror campaign during August.⁴ According to the NSDAP Untergauleitung in Liegnitz, many voters had been 'shocked by the irresponsible behaviour of the SA'. The Party leadership in Upper Silesia came to similar conclusions, noting that the terror had had a clearly negative effect on the Nazi vote, and blamed the SA leadership for being either unable or unwilling to control the rank and file:

The SA often give the impression of freebooters [Landesknechten] who help the NSDAP out of a lust for adventure or other reasons, but not out of ideological [weltanschauliche] conviction. The blame for this does not

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1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.47.e.: NSDAP Ortsgruppe Blindgallen to the Gauleitung, Blindgallen, 8 Nov. 1932.
 2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.39.b.: NSDAP Kreisleitung Allenstein to the Gau-Propagandaleitung, Allenstein, 8 Nov. 1932.
 3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.68.a.: NSDAP Kreisleitung Osterode to the Gauleitung, Abt. Propaganda, Kraplau, 7 Nov. 1932.
 4. BA, NS 22/1: 'Stimmungsbericht der Reichspropagandaleitung', undated (stamped 26 Nov. 1932).

belong to the simple SA man [...], but to the leadership material of the SA which is not equal to the demands placed upon it.¹

In Pomerania the terrorist violence of August - which included attempts on the lives of left-wing political figures in Stolp and the bombing of the offices of the SPD newspaper Volks-Bote in Stettin² - was condemned publicly by the NSDAP. Bellicose Nazi ideology notwithstanding, when in January 1933 warrants were issued for the arrest of the Stettin SA-Standartenführer Wilhelm Leuschner and an SA-Sturmführer, Conrad Kühn, for instigating the Volks-Bote bombing, the Stettin Nazi Party announced in the press that the accused men had been thrown out of the NSDAP, that they had acted as provocateurs, and that the bombing had been calculated to harm the image of the Nazi movement.³

The effects of the crisis were not limited to the downturn in the NSDAP vote. Once the aura of invincibility was lost, Party members began to leave the organisation because, as the official historian of one local NSDAP group in Königsberg put it, 'they already saw in the Party a sinking ship'.⁴ The main sources of income for the NSDAP were drying up, leaving many local Party groups in desperate straights; people no longer were attending Nazi rallies in the numbers they had done previously, and the revenue from Party dues was falling

1. Ibid.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/83, f. 287: notice issued by the Polizeipräsident in Stettin; VB, 9 Aug. 1932, p. 2; *ibid.*, 11 Aug. 1932, p. 2; *ibid.*, 9 Jan. 1933, p. 2; VBS, 8 Jan. 1933, p. 1.

3. See VB, 9 Jan. 1933. Leuschner in fact resurfaced within the Nazi movement soon after 30 January.

4. StAG, Rep. 240/C.54.b.: 'Chronik der Ortsgruppe Steindamm', p. 36.

steeply.¹ In November Wilhelm Kube, Gauleiter in the 'Ostmark', noted that 'every Gauleiter knows from practical experience that the receipt of dues has decreased in recent months in a manner nothing short of catastrophic' and that in his own Gau dues receipts had fallen by half since May.² In addition to the shrinking of dues revenue, the loss of support from many of the more prosperous and conservative members of the community, who had been frightened by the events of August, was particularly damaging.³ Both directly and indirectly, the SA terror had seriously undermined the financial position of the Nazi Party.

Within the SA itself the situation was little better. Almost all the SA groups in the eastern Prussian provinces faced severe shortages of funds, and SA leaders were increasingly hard pressed to maintain control over their men.⁴ Many storm troopers found their own position growing more desperate, and in the absence of any prospect of improvement they became less and less inclined to accept organisational discipline. In Breslau, for example, where unemployment among the storm troopers was a particularly pressing problem in the autumn of 1932, local SA leaders were finding it difficult to 'keep the spirit [among the SA men] fresh'.⁵ In Upper Silesia Untergruppenführer Rams-

1. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.39.b.: NSDAP Kreisleitung Allenstein to the Gau-Propagandaleitung, Allenstein, 8 Nov. 1932.

2. BA, NS 22/1064: Wilhelm Kube to the Reichsleitung der NSDAP, Berlin, 21 Nov. 1932.

3. See StAG, Rep. 240/B.7.d.: 'Stimmungsbericht der Gau-Propaganda Ostpreußen über die Wahlen vom 6. November 1932'.

4. See, for example, BA, NS 23/474, ff. 105094-5; *ibid.*, ff. 105096-101.

5. *Ibid.*, ff. 105182-3.

horn reported that, in the wake of the July elections, even the best elements in the SA were 'depressed' and that within the SA there had grown an 'embitterment' which threatened to erupt in 'acts of violence on a large scale'.¹ In many areas the SA leadership was fighting a battle to keep the storm troopers' organisation from falling apart.

One measure of the desperate position of the SA in late 1932 was the preparations made by the Silesian SA for the coming 'seizure of power'. The Silesian SA leaders had long been among those most in favour of direct, violent action, and after the November elections special SA units were formed and given military training and equipment so that they would be 'equal to the police [Schutzpolizei] in technical ability'.² The purpose of these special formations was to prepare for the violent seizure of power which the Silesian SA leadership believed was not far off. According to Ramshorn at that time, 'the Third Reich cannot be achieved with the ballot paper, but can be established only through bloodshed'; and at an inspection of a special SA formation in Ratibor in late December Heines asserted that 'the SA must be kept ready to fight and fit to march, because it must be reckoned that the SA will march, if not in January then in the spring at the latest'.³ This was a recipe for disaster, raising the possibility of the sort of confrontation which Hitler had been determined to avoid since the failure of the 1923 Munich Putsch attempt, a confrontation which the Nazis could not hope to win.

1. Ibid., ff. 105186-90.

2. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, ff. 1037-8.

3. Ibid., ff. 1043-4: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 3 Jan. 1933.

The problem which the crisis in late 1932 brought to the fore was outlined neatly by Pomeranian Gauleiter Karpenstein, who asserted after the November elections that in many places the SA was 'no longer the fighting instrument of the movement, but has become an end in itself'.¹ The SA had ceased to serve the political ends of the movement and thus became a serious liability. Careful political calculations were notably absent in the SA terror campaigns, even though the choice of targets for attack was politically motivated. Little reasoned consideration was given to how the terror might affect the position of the NSDAP; rather the violence seems to have consisted of the brute reactions of the storm troopers and their leaders - the Silesian SA leadership in particular - , and whether this actually helped or harmed the movement as a whole was largely coincidental. What saved the SA and the Nazi movement from the worst consequences of this lack of political calculation was the timely appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor in January 1933.

(viii) The Significance of SA Terror

The significance of SA violence and terror falls into two broad categories. In the first place, it greatly affected political developments during the last years of the Weimar Republic. It provided the Nazi movement with a powerful tactical weapon against its opponents and considerably reduced the effectiveness of traditional forms of political organisation and campaigning. Yet the SA violence before 1933 was ef-

1. BA, NS 22/1: 'Stimmungsbericht der Reichspropagandaleitung'.

fective also because it was kept within limits. Significantly, the SA did not actually confront the state authorities — even at the height of the August terror campaigns the SA was not throwing grenades and molotov cocktails at police stations and army barracks — and on the whole the SA refrained from underground terrorism and the assassination of political leaders. While the violence of the SA and its opponents was certainly widespread, the street battles which engulfed Germany during the early 1930s did not constitute a civil war. Rather the political violence and terrorism remained generally within limits, and the risks involved, although they were far from negligible, were limited as well. Most of the deaths and many of the injuries were not the consequences of planned confrontations — such as battles for control of a political rally — but rather resulted from chance meetings, ambushes and unplanned escalations of minor street violence. On the whole, considering the political philosophies and the size of the organisations involved, the number of dead and seriously injured seems to have been evidence less of an uncontrolled civil war fought on Germany's streets than of a series of confrontations in which the rules of the game generally were understood and respected. When the storm troopers did begin to get out of control or when the use of firearms did start to change the rules of the game, as occurred in the late summer of 1932, SA violence became a liability for the Nazi movement, damaging its electoral fortunes, frightening away its support and exacerbating internal divisions.

The second, and ultimately more important, aspect of SA violence before 1933 was the extent to which it made possible

the devastatingly effective terror campaigns after Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor. After years of battling their opponents on the streets, the storm troopers had little inclination toward peaceful coexistence once the police and the army were not obstacles to SA terror tactics. It is here that the political violence of the SA can be seen as characteristic of a fascist takeover. Among the most important elements differentiating Nazi rule from the authoritarian system which immediately preceded it was its terrorist character, the consequence of the politics of hatred practiced by the Nazis and the violence which shaped their struggle for power. By helping to create a climate in which compromise was ruled out and violence regarded as the appropriate and expected expression of political differences, the SA laid the groundwork for the decisive terror campaigns of 1933.

Chapter VI

THE S.A. AND THE SEIZURE OF POWER

(i) The SA in 1933

The formation of the Hitler government on 30 January 1933 dramatically altered the position of the SA. The limitations upon the violence of the SA hitherto — the need of the Nazi Party to avoid alienating public opinion, the threat of effective countermeasures by the police, and the possibility of intervention by the Reichswehr — were swept away with Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor. SA violence assumed a new significance as the storm troopers were able, virtually unhindered, to mount a decisive campaign of terror during the first half of 1933 and thereby to determine to a great extent the shape of the Nazi seizure of power. While Hitler and his cabinet colleagues owed their new positions to neither a 'seizure of power' by the Nazi movement nor an upsurge in popular support but to a 'backstairs intrigue',¹ it was the terror campaign of the SA which allowed Hitler to consolidate his position and to transform a right-wing coalition government into the Nazi dictatorship. Thus a discussion of the activities of the SA in 1933 is a discussion of the Nazi seizure of power from below — of the extent to which the rank-and-file activists of the movement determined the pace and form of the Nazi takeover, and to which the seizure of power constituted an 'uprising of the small-time Nazis'.²

1. See Bullock, Hitler, p. 253.

2. See, especially, Mason, Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich, pp. 81-8.

When examining this seizure of power from below, it must be appreciated that during 1933 the SA was growing at a phenomenal rate week by week. In mid-March, by opening the SA to all 'patriotically-minded' German men, Röhm made possible the unlimited expansion of the organisation, and when, on 1 May, recruitment into the NSDAP was halted temporarily, the requirement that all SA men also belong to the Party ceased to have any meaning.¹ The growth which the SA experienced as a result was remarkable. By the beginning of 1934 its nationwide strength reached 2,950,000 - approximately six times the number in January 1933.² Of these, 105,000 were members of the 'Gruppe Ostland' (East Prussia), 128,000 of the 'Gruppe Pommern' (Pomerania), 92,000 of the 'Gruppe Ostmark' (of which the SA in the Border Province formed a part), and 206,000 of the 'Gruppe Schlesien' (Silesia). This massive influx greatly changed not only the size of the SA but its character as well, allowing many men who were either indifferent or opposed to the Nazi movement to enter the storm troopers' organisation. Furthermore, this explosion of the SA membership meant that it is questionable whether within a few months of Hitler's appointment the SA still could be considered an organisation at all. The chaotic growth of the SA made undisciplined and unauthorised action at the lower levels more difficult to control, and subsequently was among the chief reasons why the

1. Mathilde Jamin, 'Die Rolle der SA im nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystem - eine Skizze' (unpublished MS, presented at a conference of the German Historical Institute, London, at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, 9-11 May 1979), pp. 3-4.

2. BA, NS 23/9: The Oberster SA-Führer, Munich, 27 Mar. 1934.

SA failed to turn its strategic importance in 1933 into a secure position within the new power structure of the 'Third Reich'.

(ii) The Assault on the KPD, the SPD and the Trade Unions

As in the rest of the Reich, throughout eastern Germany the announcement of the formation of the Hitler government was greeted with jubilation by the Nazis, militant calls for protest and strike action by the Communists, and concern by the Social Democrats not to be provoked into providing an excuse for government repression. The Nazis, often together with their conservative allies, took to the streets in torch-light parades; the Communists made numerous attempts to rouse the mass opposition of the working classes; and the Social Democrats looked on, anxious that they not act prematurely.¹ The events of the next few days clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of the Left. The Communists, who failed to muster the mass support necessary for a successful confrontation, offered the Nazis and the police a welcome pretext for suppression, while the Social Democrats preferred to preserve their organisation at the price of not being able to use it.

Typical of the behaviour of the Nazi movement at local level and of the police, and indicative of the weakness of the

1. For the immediate reaction of the Social Democratic leadership to the events of 30 January, see Erich Matthias, 'Die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands', in Das Ende der Parteien 1933, ed. Matthias/Morsey, pp. 158-62. For a general discussion of the vacillating politics of the ADGB in early 1933, see Gerard Braunthal, Socialist Labor and Politics in Weimar Germany. The General Federation of German Trade Unions (Hamden, Conn., 1978), pp. 74-83.

Left, was the response in Breslau to the formation of the Hitler government. On 31 January there was a series of demonstrations in the city similar to those elsewhere in Germany.¹ The first to take an initiative were the Communists. Early in the day the local KPD distributed leaflets announcing a protest demonstration, at which the call would be raised for a general strike. However, as the Communist rally was about to begin roughly 500 SA men marched through the square where it was to take place. Because of the SA march, the police temporarily closed the square to the 500-600 unemployed supporters of the KPD, who were made to wait while the Nazis passed. Once the Communist demonstration finally got underway the police soon intervened, claiming that the participants had begun singing 'songs of punishable content'. Police officers pulled out their truncheons and the Communists scattered, some smashing the windows of shops selling Nazi uniforms. The police then began shooting, and a 52-year-old unemployed worker was killed. Thus the planned call for a general strike turned into a fiasco which gave the city's Police President, Thais (a member of the Staatspartei), an excuse to ban all Communist rallies and marches in the Breslau region as threats to public order.² Meanwhile, the Social Democratic leadership chose to do nothing rather than give the police a pretext to suppress their organisation as well, and saw the failure of the Communist demonstration as a confirmation of their decision. That evening the Nazis celebrated their victory with a huge demon-

1. See VWB, 1 Feb. 1933, 'Beilage'.

2. Despite his zeal in combatting the Communists, Thais was forced to resign only two weeks later.

stration at which Heines addressed a crowd estimated at 50,000 people, and the centre of Breslau was inundated with swastika flags, military music and marching columns of storm troopers.¹ The collapse of the Communist demonstration, the reluctance of the Social Democrats to commit their forces to a struggle, and the active sympathy of the police had allowed the SA to become masters of the city's streets overnight.

The events in Breslau were repeated throughout the eastern Prussian provinces, as the establishment of the new government was greeted by mass demonstrations, SA marches and torchlight parades. Where the KPD attempted to organise counter-demonstrations, the police quickly seized the opportunity to forbid Communist rallies. Thus by 1 February, when Communist rallies were outlawed altogether by the Prussian Interior Ministry, the KPD already could no longer demonstrate legally anywhere in Silesia, for example.² It appears that the police, having been purged of Social Democrats in the previous summer, jumped at the chance to suppress the KPD during the first days of the Hitler government - before the Reichstag fire or a frontal attack on the Communists by the SA. The conservative Right, whose representatives generally controlled the police at that time, had few qualms about suppressing the Communists, and ineffective KPD calls for mass action provided an ideal occasion to do just that.

The celebrations which followed Hitler's appointment were

1. See Schlesischer N.S. Beobachter, 4 Feb. 1933, p. 5.

2. See WAP Opole, OPO/1021, ff. 381-3: The komm. Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Oppeln, 2 Feb. 1933; VWB, 1 Feb. 1933, 'Beilage'; Schmerbach, 'Der Kampf der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands', pp. 186-8.

joined not only by the NSDAP, SA, SS and Hitler Youth, but frequently the Stahlhelm as well. In Oppeln, for example, on the evening of 31 January the Nazis demonstrated together with members of the Stahlhelm and the Landesschützenverband, as Upper Silesian SA leader Ramshorn led a torchlight parade in which 1400 members of the SA, SS and Hitler Youth participated.¹ In Schneidemühl the Stahlhelm joined a torchlight parade with the SA, SS and Hitler Youth, and at the demonstration which took place afterward the SA leader for the Border Province, Manthey, shared the podium with the district Stahlhelm leader Zemplin.² In Allenstein too the SA and SS were joined by the Stahlhelm for a mass march through the city.³

Immediately after assuming office Hitler submitted to Reich President von Hindenburg a formal request to dissolve the Reichstag and hold fresh elections, scheduled for 5 March.⁴ Thus the activities of the storm troopers during the weeks after Hitler became Reich Chancellor remained essentially what they had been before 1933: supporting the electioneering of the NSDAP and assaulting the opponents of the Nazis. Bands of SA men began to attack trade-union offices, meeting-places of the left-wing political parties, and the homes of prominent local

1. WAP Opole, OPO/1021, ff. 381-3.

2. WAP Poznań, OPS/169, f. 148: 'Bericht über den Verlauf des Fackelzuges der SA, SS und HJ sowie des Stahlhelms, Ortsgruppe Schneidemühl, am 31. Januar 1931', Schneidemühl, 1 Feb. 1933.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.39.c.: NSDAP Kreis Allenstein Stadt, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für Monat Februar 1933', Allenstein, 14 Mar. 1933.

4. See Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, p. 50.

figures on the left.¹ However, during the first weeks of the campaign such violence was on a relatively small scale. The main focus of SA activity remained the elections which Göring, speaking to leading Ruhr industrialists on 20 February, claimed 'certainly would be the last for ten years, probably for one hundred years'.²

A significant turning point in the SA campaign against the Left came in mid-February when Göring, in his capacity as Prussian Interior Minister, issued a series of decrees which opened new possibilities for SA violence. On 15 February Göring formally ordered the Prussian police to cease any surveillance of Nazi organisations;³ on 17 February he ordered that the police were not to interfere with the SA, SS and the Stahlhelm and were to avoid any action which might create the impression of persecution of the storm troopers, whom they were to support 'with all their powers';⁴ and on 22 February, due to the 'increasing disturbances from left-radical, and especially Communist, quarters', he ordered the formation of the 'auxiliary police' (Hilfspolizei) to be composed of members of the SA, SS and the Stahlhelm.⁵

1. See, for example, VWB, 3 Feb. 1933, 'Beilage zur Volkswacht'; VWS, 11 Feb. 1933, p. 2; WAP Opole, OPO/1021, ff. 379-80: The komm. Polizeipräsident to the Oberpräsident, Oppeln, 15 Feb. 1933.

2. See Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, op. cit., pp. 70-1.

3. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, f. 1: The Pr. Minister des Innern to the Ober- and Regierungspräsidenten and the Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Berlin, 15 Feb. 1933.

4. See Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, op. cit., pp. 72-3, 864-5. Göring also urged the police to act resolutely against 'subversive' organisations and not to shrink from the use of firearms.

5. Ibid., p. 66. For a discussion of the Hilfspolizei in eastern Germany, see below, pp. 257-60.

These measures were followed by a marked increase in SA violence, much of which preceded the Reichstag fire, and once again the Social Democrats proved particularly vulnerable. On the evening of 21 February in Königsberg a band of storm troopers attacked the 'Otto-Braun-Haus', smashing windows but failing to get inside.¹ On 26 February the SPD headquarters in Beuthen, the 'Volkshaus', was occupied by the SA; the swastika flag was raised on the building, rooms were searched, documents of the local miners' union branch destroyed and hand grenades allegedly discovered, and thereafter the building remained under the guard of the SA with the agreement of the police.² On the evening of 1 March SA men stormed the ADGB offices in Ohlau, sending two trade-union members to hospital with serious injuries, and on 3 March in Gleiwitz an armed group of SA men occupied a young people's hostel sponsored by the ADGB.³

Attempts by Social Democrats and Communists to hold political rallies became increasingly risky. On 22 February an 'Iron Front' rally in Hindenburg was broken up by 60 SA men, who assaulted the assembled crowd; these storm troopers were joined subsequently by 100 more, and together they chased the Social Democratic crowd from the hall and pursued them down nearby streets while the police calmly looked on.⁴ That evening an attempt by the KPD to hold a rally in Hindenburg met with a similar fate, and a number of the participants were

1. See KV, 22 Feb. 1933, p. 3.

2. See OK, 27 Feb. 1933, p. 6; VWB, 27 Feb. 1933, p. 5.

3. See Matull, Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung, p. 131.

4. See VWB, 23 Feb. 1933, p. 1.

seriously injured.¹ In the Landkreis Allenstein the SPD attempted to hold seven rallies during February (as compared to 64 for the NSDAP) but were successful with only four, while the KPD was unable to hold any meetings at all and Communists who tried to distribute leaflets and engage people in discussion were set upon by SA and SS men.² Belated joint attempts by the Left to resist the Nazi onslaught also were doomed to failure; thus in Gerdauen, East Prussia, the endeavour of the SPD, KPD and Reichsbanner to march together in the central market place on 26 February was broken up by the SA, 'civilian' members of the NSDAP and the Stahlhelm.³ Leading functionaries of the SPD and KPD were arrested, and increasingly the police co-ordinated their activities with the storm troopers. For example, in Stallupönen, near the eastern border of East Prussia, police closed the Communist 'Volkshaus' at the request of the local NSDAP and then allowed the SA to occupy the building.⁴ By the time the elections were held on 5 March, the combination of the steadily mounting SA violence, police action and administrative repression — by the end of February the entire Communist and Social Democratic press in the eastern Prussian provinces had been silenced for ever — effectively had halted the legal public activity of the Left.

Despite the increase in Nazi violence in late February

1. Ibid.

2. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.39.e.: NSDAP Kreis Allenstein Land, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat Februar 1933', Allenstein, 13 Mar. 1933.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.46.a.: NSDAP Kreis Gerdauen, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat Februar/März 1933', Gerdauen, 14 Mar. 1933.

4. StAG, Rep. 240/C.75.b.: NSDAP Kreis Stallupönen, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für die Zeit vom 1. Februar bis 12. März 1933', Stallupönen, 20 Mar. 1933.

and early March, it was after the elections - and not immediately after the Reichstag fire - that the really decisive assault on the Left was mounted. By early March the storm troopers, together with the police, had been able to paralyse the SPD and drive the KPD underground. Yet the organisational supports of Social Democracy - most importantly the trade unions - remained largely intact. Once the elections were past, however, the SA, freed of the need to assist with the campaigning of the NSDAP, turned its attention to the root-and-branch destruction of the SPD and the trade-union movement.

The death struggle of Social Democracy in eastern Germany began immediately after the elections. On the night of 5 March the SA in Königsberg attacked and occupied the 'Otto-Braun-Haus', destroyed the interior, demolishing the local SPD and Reichsbanner offices in the process, and subsequently took over the building for its own purposes.¹ Thus the one-time nerve centre of East Prussian Social Democracy was transformed into an SA headquarters in which Socialists and Communists were beaten, tortured and - in the case of the KPD Reichstag deputy Walter Schütz - killed.

Three days later the ADGB headquarters in Breslau fell to the storm troopers.² At about 7.30 in the morning of 8 March

1. See Matull, Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung, pp. 357-9; Braunbuch über Reichstagsbrand und Hitlerterror (Basel, 1933), pp. 133-4.

2. See IfZ, MA 198/5, microfilm of DZAM, Rep. 77, tit. 4043, Nr. 127: report of the incident in Breslau on 8 March 1933; GStA, Rep. 77/23: Ortsausschuß Breslau des ADGB to Vize-Kanzler von Papen, Breslau, 8 Mar. 1933; GStA, Rep. 77/29: Helmuth Brückner to Hermann Göring, Breslau, 9 Mar. 1933; ST, 9 Mar. 1933, p. 1; Walter Tausk, 'Tagebuch 19' (MS in the University Library, Wrocław, Ako. 1949 KN 1351), pp. 28-30; Walter Tausk, Breslauer Tagebuch 1933-1940 (Berlin, 1975), pp. 32-4; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, op. cit., p. 441.

a group of roughly 250 SA men passed in front of the Breslau trade-union offices. According to the Nazis, shots were fired at the storm troopers from within the building; according to the trade unionists the Nazis stormed the building unprovoked, in order to hoist a swastika flag. In any event, the storm troopers tried to occupy the union headquarters, shots were fired, a number of people were wounded and four were killed, including one Reichsbanner member and one member of the SA. Afterwards the SA searched the building, accompanied by members of the police force including the Breslau Police President and his deputy. Eleven occupants were arrested, and as soon as the police left and the search was entrusted solely to the SA, the storm troopers, some of whom were Hilfspolizei, proceeded to demolish the interior.

Two days later it was the turn of the ADGB in Liegnitz. On 10 March the city police chief, under pressure from the district Nazi Party leader and the area SA-Standartenführer, agreed that the 'Volkshaus', which contained both the area trade-union headquarters and the presses of the city's SPD newspaper, should be searched for weapons and subversive literature.¹ Late in the afternoon a contingent of local SA men, acting as Hilfspolizei, carried out the search and raised the swastika flag from the building. Then the police sealed the building, while the district NSDAP leader lectured the crowd gathered outside about the difference between the orderliness of 1933 and the chaos of 1918. That night, however, the leader of the Lower Silesian SA, Karl-Heinz Koch, returned to Liegnitz

1. See GStA, Rep. 77/32, ff. 64-5: The Kreisleiter der NSDAP Liegnitz Stadt-Land to the Untergauleiter der NSDAP Niederschlesien, Liegnitz, 12 Mar. 1933.

from Breslau and ordered an immediate search of the 'Volkshaus'. The storm troopers who accompanied Koch broke into the building, smashed furniture, burned trade-union documents and literature, stole typewriters and other items, and left the 'Volkshaus' a scene of complete destruction. The next morning the NSDAP Kreisleiter, who the day before had boasted of the order of the Nazi revolution, found what to him seemed worse than the aftermath of the Spartakist uprising. He complained to the Untergauleiter, who instructed the Liegnitz Party and SA leaders that no further damage was to be done to the 'Volkshaus'. However, on the following night Koch returned with another band of SA men and again broke into the trade-union headquarters, leaving the NSDAP Kreisleiter to claim that these 'senseless acts of destruction' stood 'in the most glaring contrast' to the expressed wishes of Hitler and Göring. This last reference was, unintentionally, ironic, for Göring had been the most outspoken abettor among leading Nazis of SA violence in early 1933. Nevertheless, the indignation of the Kreisleiter was a clear expression of the dismay which many Nazi Party leaders, as well as the police, must have felt as the storm troopers took the seizure of power into their own hands.

The SA offensive against the trade unions gained momentum as March progressed. On 13 March the ADGB headquarters in Görlitz were occupied by police and SA men, trade-union officials arrested and a portion of the building converted into an SA meeting place. On 15 March storm troopers broke into trade-union offices in Reichenbach, and on the night of 18 March the SA assaulted the headquarters of the Pomeranian SPD in Stettin,

demolished the interior of the building, destroyed the Party archive, blew up the Party's printing presses and converted the cellar into a torture chamber for political opponents.¹ On 20 March SA and SS men attacked the trade-union headquarters in Schneidemühl, which they had occupied for a short period the week before, threatened that any resistance would be met with armed force, destroyed furniture, stole whatever cash and usable articles they could find, and, together with the police, arrested a number of union officials.² On 21 and 22 March groups of SA men searched trade-union offices in Stargard, seizing whatever property could be carried away.³ On 29 March in Greifswald, where police had shut the trade-union headquarters more than two weeks earlier, SA men occupied the ADGB building during a police search and hoisted the swastika flag.⁴ By the end of March there remained hardly a single

1. See Matull, Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung, p. 292; Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 29-30.

2. BA, R 43 II/531, ff. 37-43: The Vorstand des ADGB to Reichspräsident von Hindenburg, Berlin, 5 Apr. 1933; WAP Poznań, OPS/152, ff. 280-2: ADGB, Ortsausschuß Schneidemühl, to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 13 Mar. 1933; *ibid.*, f. 283: The Polizeidirektor to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 27 Mar. 1933.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/35, f. 113: Allgemeiner Freier Angestelltenbund, Bezirkskartell Pommern und Mecklenburg-Strehlitz, to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 28 Mar. 1933; *ibid.*, ff. 117-18: Deutscher Landarbeiter-Verband, Gau Stettin, to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 25 Mar. 1933; *ibid.*, f. 119: Deutscher Landarbeiter-Verband, Kreisgruppe Pyritz-Saatzig, to the Gauleitung des Deutschen Landarbeiter-Verbandes in Stettin, Stargard, 22 Mar. 1933; *ibid.*, ff. 125-9: ADGB, Bezirk Pommern und Mecklenburg-Strehlitz, to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 25 Mar. 1933.

4. BA, R 43 II/531, ff. 37-43; WAP Szczecin, RS/15, ff. 371-2: The Oberbürgermeister to the Regierungspräsident, Greifswald, 29 Mar. 1933; *ibid.*, f. 375: The Führer der SA-Untergruppe Pommern-West to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 6 Apr. 1933; *ibid.*, ff. 377-8: The Oberbürgermeister to the Regierungspräsident, Greifswald, 7 Apr. 1933.

major town in eastern Germany where the Social Democratic trade unions still could function normally.¹ By assaulting trade-union offices one by one - buildings which usually housed local or regional SPD headquarters as well - the SA had managed to destroy what only weeks before seemed the strongest bulwark against a Nazi takeover.²

Of particular importance in the crippling campaign against the Left was the co-ordination between the SA and the police. For example, in Upper Silesia hundreds of prominent figures on the left were arrested by the police and their SA auxiliaries during March and April; according to the police, 364 Communist functionaries had been arrested and 244 searches carried out in the province during the first two weeks of March alone.³ In Breslau on 9 April a bar-room brawl in which two SA men were killed provided the excuse for a wave of arrests by storm troopers and police of Communists and Social Democrats.⁴ Even in outlying rural districts the arrests were numerous. In the

1. Evidence of SA violence against the Catholic trade unions in eastern Germany could not be found, and this aspect of the Nazi campaign against organised labour remains to be investigated. Unfortunately Jürgen Aretz, in his recent study of the Catholic trade-union movement in western Germany, has little to say about the role of Nazi terror in suppressing such organisations at local level. See Jürgen Aretz, Katholische Arbeiterbewegung und Nationalsozialismus. Der Verband katholischer Arbeiter- und Knappenvereine Westdeutschlands 1923-1945 (Mainz, 1978), pp. 69-88.

2. For a discussion of the crucial importance of this campaign as it occurred throughout Germany, see Gerhard Beier, Das Lehrstück vom 1. und 2. Mai 1933 (Frankfurt/Main and Cologne, 1975); Mason, Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich, pp. 82-8.

3. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1845, ff. 5-33: letters of the komm. Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, dated between 17 Mar. and 8 July 1933.

4. See ST, 9 Apr. 1933, p. 1; VB, 10 Apr. 1933, p. 1; Tausk, 'Tagebuch 19', pp. 101-2; Tausk, Breslauer Tagebuch, pp. 61-2.

East Prussian Kreis Gerdauen, for example, on 11 March 47 Communists and Social Democrats were taken into custody, including the local trade-union secretary, the director of the district savings bank (Kreissparkasse) and a former mayor of the town of Gerdauen.¹

The total effect of this campaign of repression was devastating. Within roughly two months of Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor open left-wing opposition to the Nazis had virtually disappeared. For example, in the East Prussian Kreis Darknehmen Nazi Party leaders proudly boasted in mid-March that neither the SPD nor the KPD could hold meetings anywhere in the district, as these would either be prohibited or broken up; SPD supporters were prevented from canvassing house to house; local Communist functionaries were arrested; and KPD candidates were forced to withdraw their names from the Party lists for the Kreistag elections on 12 March.² In Allenstein the local Nazi propaganda chief reported in early April that neither the SPD nor the KPD remained active in the region; by the end of April only 23 members of the SPD were left in Allenstein and the membership of the ADGB affiliates had dropped to 167, down from approximately 400 two months previously.³ And in nearby Kreis Ortelsburg the district Nazi

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.46.a.: NSDAP Kreis Gerdauen, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat Februar/März 1933', Gerdauen, 14 Mar. 1933.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.43.a.: NSDAP Kreis Darknehmen, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat Februar/März 1933', Darknehmen, 15 Mar. 1933.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/C.39.c.: NSDAP Kreis Allenstein Stadt, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für die Zeit vom 13. bis 31. März 1933', Allenstein, 8 Apr. 1933; *ibid.*: NSDAP Kreis Allenstein Stadt, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für die Zeit vom 1. bis 30.4.1933', Allenstein, 6 May 1933.

propaganda leader noted in April that the Communists and Social Democrats no longer showed any signs of activity, 'since virtually all the functionaries of the SPD and KPD are in custody'.¹

On 10 April the Hitler government proclaimed that henceforth 1 May would be a holiday, a 'Day of National Labour'.² A goal for which the trade unions had striven for decades was achieved by a government whose supporters simultaneously were smashing the trade-union movement to pieces. The planned festivities of 1 May were to be followed by a systematic offensive against the trade unions the next morning: all offices of the Social Democratic unions were to be occupied, leading figures in the trade-union movement were to be arrested, and the SA and SS were to carry out the action.³ After weeks of watching and waiting while their supporters attacked Communist, Social Democratic and trade-union organisations, the Nazi leadership decided to celebrate the removal of the Left from German political life.

On the evening of 1 May Goebbels noted in his diary: 'Tomorrow we are going to occupy the trade-union offices. Resistance is not expected anywhere.'⁴ Goebbels' expectations were

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.67.d.: NSDAP Kreisleitung Ortelsburg, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat April 1933', Ortelsburg, 2 May 1933.

2. RGBI, 1933, I, 191; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, p. 181.

3. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/235: NSDAP Reichsleitung, Stabsleiter Robert Ley, 'Rundschreiben Nr. 6/33', Munich, 21 Apr. 1933; Hans-Gerd Schumann, Nationalsozialismus und Gewerkschaftsbewegung (Hannover and Frankfurt/Main, 1958), pp. 69-74; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, op. cit., pp. 181-3; Braunthal, Socialist Labor and Politics, pp. 74-83.

4. Joseph Goebbels, Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei (Munich, 1934), p. 307.

well-founded, as most trade-union headquarters were occupied already by the SA or the police and most leading figures on the left were either in jail or exile. The real battle already had been waged and won, and the campaign against the trade unions on 2 May was essentially a piece of political theatre. At the same time, it offered a convenient opportunity for a mopping-up operation: in Stettin, for example, the Gau headquarters of the Reichsbanner were shut, the ADGB offices again occupied, and all the property of the unions seized;¹ in Königsberg the trade-union offices were occupied and converted into headquarters of the newly created 'German Labour Front', which seized the property of the unions as well as of the 'Konsum' organisation;² and in Schneidemühl the union offices, already occupied for some time by the SA, were turned over to the NSBO, while the SA, together with the local police, arrested a number of former trade-union functionaries.³ The terror campaign which individual SA groups had been carrying out for weeks became official government policy. By the time the government involved itself unequivocally in the attack against the trade unions, however, there remained very little work left to be done.

During the weeks which followed the formation of the Hitler government, active support by the Nazi leadership for the terror campaign of the SA was conspicuously small. With

1. Rohe, Das Reichsbanner, p. 463; Matull, Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung, p. 293.

2. Ibid., p. 359; Matull, Ostpreußens Arbeiterbewegung, pp. 126-7.

3. WAP Poznań, RP/59, f. 92: Staatspolizeistelle to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 18 May 1933.

the important exception of Göring, government and Party leaders stressed the need for discipline and were concerned that the political process set in motion not get beyond their control.¹ If the storm troopers took the initiative on Göring's encouragement, which certainly helped legitimise the extreme violence of the SA, then they listened only to those messages from the Nazi leadership which they liked and ignored those which they did not. The crucial assault on the trade unions during March and April appears to have been neither planned nor organised by the Party or government leadership; for none of the attacks by the storm troopers against the Left in eastern Germany is there evidence that the action was carried out on orders from Munich or Berlin. Rather, the campaign seems to have arisen from the initiative of SA groups which, seeing their chance, decided to attack their 'Marxist' enemies and settle old scores.

The piecemeal nature of the offensive against the Left and the fanaticism of the SA made effective resistance virtually impossible. Divided and on the defensive, not knowing where or when the next blow might be struck, unsure which of the hundreds of attacks might constitute the proper occasion for all-out resistance to the Nazi regime, faced with the combined forces of the SA, SS, Stahlhelm, police and, potentially, the army, the Left was in an almost hopeless position. The character of this successful Nazi assault underlines the extent to which the 'seizure of power' was driven from below. The initiative of the SA committed the Hitler government to the complete destruction of the Left; while the government in Berlin and the Party leadership in Munich looked on, the storm

1. See Mason, Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich, pp. 84-6. See also below, pp. 283-9.

troopers broke the strength of the trade unions. Once this had been accomplished and it became apparent that the destruction of the SPD and the trade unions involved little risk, the Nazi leaders readily took advantage of the situation created by their most fanatical supporters. The result was a defeat for the German labour movement of incalculable proportions.

Despite the crucial importance of the SA for the Nazi leadership in early 1933, the storm troopers' organisation failed to build up its own power position effectively. The SA proved unable to make use of the huge contribution it had made toward creating the Nazi dictatorship by carving a place for itself within the new political system. The SA terror campaign against the Left was essentially backward-looking - aimed at smashing groups which had fought the storm troopers before 1933 and governed more by hatred than by political calculation - rather than looking forward toward securing a place within the emerging Nazi state. By successfully attacking the Left, the SA enabled Hitler to erect a dictatorship without fear of effective opposition from the German labour movement, but in doing so it made itself politically redundant.

(iii) The Assault on the Jews

The wave of Nazi violence which struck the Jews in eastern Germany during 1933 was different, both in timing and in political significance, from the assault on the Left. Since the Jewish population was largely defenceless and relatively isolated, the risk that the Jews might offer substantial resistance was virtually nil. Furthermore, the assault on the Jews clearly

took second place behind the campaign against the Left. Before the Reichstag elections on 5 March there were a few isolated violent attacks on Jews; for example, in the Upper Silesian town of Cosel a band of Nazis, among them a drunken local SA leader (a former tax inspector with a history of criminal convictions for violence), fired shots into the homes and businesses of Jews in the early morning hours of 23 February.¹ On the whole, however, the Jewish population was left relatively undisturbed, and even in Breslau — which contained the largest Jewish community in eastern Germany and where the worst anti-Semitic excesses were to take place in the weeks ahead — it appears that the SA remained preoccupied with the upcoming elections and the struggle against the Left.²

This changed in mid-March. On 10 March Göring, who controlled the Prussian police, declared in a speech in Essen: 'I am unwilling to accept the notion that the police are a protection squad for Jewish shops. No, the police [...] are not here in order to protect Jewish profiteers.'³ Göring's speech signalled an explosion of anti-Semitic violence, including a growing number of SA-enforced boycotts of Jewish businesses. On 10 March in Gollnow, Kreis Naugard (about 25 kilometers north-east from Stettin), SA men stationed themselves in front

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, ff. 929-30: The Landrat to the Polizeipräsident in Oppeln, Cosel, 23 Feb. 1933.

2. In his diary, Walter Tausk, a Jewish businessman in Breslau, first noted on the eve of the Reichstag elections that the Nazis were turning their attentions to the Jews. See Tausk, 'Tagebuch 19', pp. 1-25.

3. See Kurt Pätzold, Faschismus Rassenwahn Judenverfolgung. Eine Studie zur politischen Strategie und Taktik des faschistischen deutschen Imperialismus (1933-1945) (Berlin, 1975), p. 40.

of a Jewish shop, carrying signs admonishing the public not to buy from Jews and blocking the entrance.¹ On 10 and 11 March a similar incident occurred in Pasewalk, where SA men posted themselves in front of a Jewish shop with signs reading 'Germans, buy only from Germans', 'Germans, don't buy from Jews', and 'Fellow citizens, support the native Mittelstand'.² And on the night of 12 March SA men assaulted a Jewish cattle dealer, together with his wife and daughter, in their home in Arys, East Prussia.³

It was in Breslau that the most serious incidents took place, when on 13 March armed squads of storm troopers invaded courtrooms and the offices of the local and regional courts, crying 'Jews out!', and forced Jewish lawyers and judges to leave the buildings.⁴ Some of the unfortunate victims were beaten, as lawyers and judges were dragged from courtrooms while cases were being heard. At the same time, SA men broke into the Breslau stock exchange, ostensibly to search Jewish

1. WAP Szczecin, RS/20, ff. 191-3: The Bürgermeister, Gollnow, 14 Mar. 1933.

2. The mayor of Pasewalk decided not to call for police intervention, citing Göring's speech as his justification. See WAP Szczecin, RS/36, f. 411: The Bürgermeister to the Landrat in Uekermunde, Pasewalk, 13 Mar. 1933.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/B.29.f.: Fräulein Itzig to Reichsminister (sic) des Innern Göring, Arys, 15 Mar. 1933; *ibid.*: Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens to the Landesverband des C.V., Berlin, 23 Mar. 1933.

4. See Tausk, 'Tagebuch 19', pp. 42-4; Tausk, Breslauer Tagebuch, pp. 38-9; Das Schwarzbuch. Tatsachen und Dokumente. Die Lage der Juden in Deutschland 1933, ed. Comité des Délégations Juives (Paris, 1934), pp. 94-105; Horst Göppinger, Die Verfolgung der Juristen jüdischer Abstammung durch den Nationalsozialismus (Villingen, 1963), pp. 21-2; Helmut Krausnick, 'The Persecution of the Jews', in Helmut Krausnick, Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, Anatomy of the SS State (London, 1968), p. 24; Pätzold, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-6.

stockbrokers for weapons. The police failed to intervene, and at a meeting of the Breslau Police President, the President of the Breslau Court of Appeal (Oberlandesgericht), Edmund Heines and other SA and SS leaders it was decided that, since further attacks by the local population against Jews were likely to continue and the police could protect only a fraction of the Jewish lawyers, the remainder would be advised not to try to enter the court buildings. The Breslau events, in which the SA brought the legal system in one of Germany's major cities virtually to a standstill, triggered no explicit censure from the Reich authorities and were repeated subsequently elsewhere.

As March progressed, anti-Semitic incidents became increasingly frequent. In East Prussia, for example, the Jewish 'Central-Verein' recorded a frightening number of assaults by storm troopers during the second half of the month.¹ In Königsberg a Jewish businessman was murdered by the SA; in Prostken Jews were taken into custody and their homes searched for weapons; in Treuburg SA men patrolled the streets to keep watch on possible patrons of Jewish shops; in Arys, Lyck and Osterode Jewish businessmen were taken into custody; in Ortelsburg SA men prevented customers from entering Jewish shops and smashed the windows of a store whose owner allegedly had tried to sell SA uniforms (The shopkeeper protested that the clothing in question was simply brown trousers, which he had always stocked);

1. StAG, Rep. 240/B.29.f.: 'Mitteilungen des C.V.-Syndikats', by Alfred Levi, Berlin, undated but probably written in late March 1933; *ibid.*: Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens Ostpreußen to the Centrale Berlin, Königsberg, 27 Mar. 1933. See also Gause, Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg, iii. 117; Gerhard Reifferscheid, Das Bistum Ermland und das Dritte Reich (Cologne and Vienna, 1975), p. 22.

and in Allenstein storm troopers pulled down black-white-red national flags displayed by Jews and enforced a boycott of Jewish shops on market day — an action which was halted, however, when the local SA leadership sent in the SS and threatened the SA members involved with expulsion from the organisation. A new pogrom was underway, and its instigators were not the Nazi leaders but the activists in the SA.¹

The response of the government and Nazi Party leadership to the upsurge in anti-Semitic violence was ambivalent. On the one hand, Germany's new rulers had little sympathy for the Jews, and it was difficult to prevent their supporters from carrying the anti-Semitic exhortations of Nazi propaganda to logical conclusions. On the other hand, however, they were concerned that retail trade not be disrupted by the racist fervour of their supporters. Whereas on 10 March Göring appeared to have given the storm troopers a blank cheque, at the same time Hitler issued an appeal for the 'tightest discipline' within the Nazi movement.² Hitler's appeal was echoed by East Prussian Gauleiter Koch, by Nazi Reich Interior Minister Frick (who demanded an end to interference with retail trade), and by the NSDAP in Munich.³ Nevertheless, the storm troopers

1. For general accounts of the mounting pressure on the Jews throughout Germany, see Uwe Dietrich Adam, Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich (Düsseldorf, 1972), pp. 46-9; Helmut Genschel, Die Verdrängung der Juden aus der Wirtschaft im Dritten Reich, (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 44-5; Pätzold, op. cit., pp. 41-7.

2. BA, R 43 II/1195, f. 61: 'Aufruf Adolf Hitlers an SA und SS', Berlin, 10 Mar. 1933.

3. StAG, Rep. 240/B.29.f.: 'Mitteilungen des C.V.-Syndikats'; OT Gliwice, Landratsamt Gleiwitz/G63, f. 147: The Reichsminister des Innern to the Innenministerien der Länder and the Reichskommissare, Berlin, 13 Mar. 1933; VB, 14 Mar. 1933, p. 2; Heinrich Uhlig, Die Warenhäuser im Dritten Reich (Cologne and Opladen, 1956), p. 196; Genschel, op. cit., pp. 45-6; Mason, Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich, pp. 84-5. See also below, p. 284.

continued their actions, and neither the police nor the NSDAP took active measures to stop them. Nazi supporters were not following the instructions of their leaders, and outside Germany the terror against the Jewish population was arousing a loud outcry.

The answer to the dilemma facing the Nazi leadership came on 26 March, when Hitler and Goebbels decided to call a nationwide boycott of Jewish shops and businesses.¹ The boycott was scheduled for Saturday, 1 April, in response to the 'lies' and 'atrocities propaganda' in the foreign press. Plans for the boycott were announced hurriedly in the press, and were to be co-ordinated by a 'Central Committee' headed by Julius Streicher. Despite the official preparations, however, many SA groups did not wait for the signal from above and immediately stepped up a campaign already underway. For example, on the evening of 27 March Jews in Gerdauen were dragged from their beds and forced to send telegrammes to the British government, declaring that the reports of atrocities in Germany were 'fairy tales'.² In Stargard SA men searched Jewish homes, allegedly looking for Communist literature,³ and in Swinemünde and Wollin (Pomerania) SA and SS men prevented customers from entering Jewish-owned shops.⁴ As the week progressed storm troopers

1. Goebbels, Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei, p. 288; Genschel, op. cit., pp. 46-61; Pätzold, op. cit., pp. 51-9.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.46.a.: 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat März 1933', Gerdauen, 5 Apr. 1933.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/35, f. 109: Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, Landesverband Pommern-Grenzmark/Ortsgruppe Stettin, to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 28 Mar. 1933.

4. WAP Szczecin, RS/38, f. 352: Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, Landesverband Pommern-Grenzmark/Ortsgruppe Stettin, to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 28 Mar. 1933; WAP Szczecin, RS/92, ff. 107-9: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Swinemünde, 31 Mar. 1933.

enforced boycotts in cities and towns throughout Germany, including Glogau, Liegnitz, Schweidnitz and Waldenburg in Silesia and Stettin and Stolp in Pomerania.¹ The campaign against the Jews in the legal profession was stepped up as well. In Königsberg Jewish lawyers were urged to go on 'holiday'; and in Görlitz angry crowds surrounded the city's courts and demanded that Jewish lawyers be removed, and 'in order to prevent more serious disturbances' the SA and SS occupied the Görlitz court building and took a number of Jewish lawyers and judges into custody, while the police confined themselves to directing traffic around the scene.

On 1 April the organised boycott proceeded peacefully on the whole, and mirrored on a co-ordinated, national scale the actions undertaken by individual groups of storm troopers during the previous weeks. In front of Jewish shops throughout the country were stationed SA and SS men who 'enlightened the public' and carried posters admonishing Germans not to buy from Jews.² In Königsberg, for example, the boycott passed calmly: posters were affixed to the windows of Jewish shops and the offices of Jewish doctors and lawyers, SA men stood guard at the doors to Jewish businesses to prevent customers from entering, and one SA troop forced the grain exchange to close.³ In Breslau Jewish businesses received similar treatment, as the windows of shops owned by Jews were painted over

1. See ST, 31 Mar. 1933, p. 7; Pätzold, op. cit., p. 65.

2. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.46.a.: 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat März 1933', Gerdauen, 5 Apr. 1933; Der SA-Mann, 8 Apr. 1933, p. 2; Das Schwarzbuch, pp. 302-14.

3. Gause, Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg, iii. 147; StAG, Rep. 240/C.54.b.: 'Chronik der Ortsgruppe Steindamm (Königsberg-Stadt)'; Pätzold, op. cit., p. 75.

with the word 'Jew' and covered by stickers which read, 'Germans, don't buy from Jews'.¹ Not content with keeping customers from entering Jewish shops, storm troopers also blocked the doors of Breslau's giant new Wertheim department store, searched Jewish businesses, and patrolled Breslau's cafés ejecting and/or beating anyone they believed to have a Jewish appearance. In Görlitz SA men forced the department store 'Zum Strauß', the local branch of the Karstadt chain, to shut, while in Stettin most Jewish shopkeepers simply closed their stores once the storm troopers took up their posts.²

According to the German press, the nationwide boycott had been an unqualified success, carried out 'in peace and discipline', 'according to plan' and without incident. However, while the boycott generally did take a peaceful course, support for it was less than total and in a number of places the public responded by demonstratively buying from the black-listed businesses. In Breslau, for example, on the afternoon of 31 March SA men took up positions in front of shops to be boycotted the following day because these shops were filled with customers; in some cases stores had to close not because of the boycott, but because they had run out of merchandise due to the extraordinarily heavy demand.³ In Allenstein the district Nazi Party leader surveyed the political situation after the boycott and noted that, although the public had participated in a rally against the 'Jewish atrocity stories',

1. BUA, 1 Apr. 1933, p. 1; Tausk, 'Tagebuch 19', pp. 78-86; Tausk, Breslauer Tagebuch, pp. 52-6.

2. See BUA, 1 Apr. 1933, p. 1; VB, 3 Apr. 1933, p. 1.

3. Tausk, 'Tagebuch 19', pp. 77-8; Tausk, Breslauer Tagebuch, pp. 51-2.

the response to the boycott itself had left much to be desired:

In the future actions against the Jews must be kept secret. Here in Allenstein the announcement of the boycott achieved just the opposite. On the two days directly preceding [the planned boycott] the Jewish shops were overflowing.¹

The nationwide boycott had been planned as a one-day affair, after which a decision would be made about whether it should be continued.² On Wednesday, 5 April, it was announced in the press that there would be no further boycott measures; Goebbels publicly judged the boycott to have been a tremendous success and decided that there was no need to continue.³ It seems that mounting economic pressure from abroad — especially threats of boycotts of German products — made Germany's new masters think twice about allowing Julius Streicher to set the pace for the persecution of the Jews. The boycott had failed to mobilise anti-Semitic feeling among the population, and it posed a threat to the German economy. Nevertheless, if one purpose of the nationwide boycott had been to steer and contain SA violence, then it was successful. Although in some towns storm troopers continued to enforce local boycotts of Jewish businesses after the official action had been called off — as for example in Swinemünde⁴ — the number of individual actions against Jews quickly diminished. The nationwide anti-Jewish

1. StAG, Rep. 240/C.39.e.: NSDAP Kreis Allenstein-Land, 'Tätigkeitsbericht für den Monat März 1933', Allenstein, 8 Apr. 1933.

2. See Genschel, Die Verdrängung der Juden, pp. 53-4; OK, 1 Apr. 1933, p. 1; ST, 4 Apr. 1933, p. 1.

3. See Pätzold, op. cit., pp. 75-6.

4. WAP Szczecin, RS/38, f. 358: Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens, Landesverband Pommern-Grenzmark/Ortsgruppe Stettin, to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 3 Apr. 1933.

boycott appears to have provided a satisfactory safety valve and a means by which the Nazi leadership could channel the activities of followers who were threatening to get out of control.

The course of the anti-Jewish boycotts of early 1933, like that of the assaults on the Left, suggests that the violence which followed the Reichstag elections constituted an uprising of the Nazi activists rather than a calculated campaign of the Nazi leadership. However, the attacks on the Jewish population were not crucial to the securing of political power. The violence against the Jews, unlike that against the Left, created difficulties for the Nazi leadership without offering compensating political dividends, and seems to have aroused misgivings, if not antipathy, among the public. In the campaign against the Left, unthinking violence had served an important political purpose; in the campaign against the Jews, the limits of its usefulness for the Nazi leadership appear to have been reached.

(iv) Further Targets of SA Violence

The explosion of SA violence which marked the early months of 1933 was not restricted to the Left and the Jews, but extended to the Centre Party, Germany's Polish minority, outlets of chain and department stores, local government authorities and, on occasion, even the Nazis' erstwhile conservative allies. For a few months at least, in the absence of police interference with their activities, it seemed that the storm troopers could do what they pleased and attack with impunity whatever targets aroused their anger and hatred.

Especially in Upper Silesia, the violence of the SA was directed against the Centre Party as well as the Left during the 1933 election campaigns. For example, on 17 February in Beuthen following a rally of the Catholic youth organisation Nazi storm troopers attacked participants as they returned home, in particular uniformed members of the Kreuzschar who had come along to protect the meeting.¹ A few days later in Peiskretschan, near Gleiwitz, a band of SA men tossed a grenade into the home of a Centre Party politician (who had been chairman of the town council) during a wave of terror in which they also smashed the windows of emergency housing for the unemployed and threw stones through the windows of Jewish homes.² The most serious incident came on 9 March, when the leader of the Upper Silesian Centre Party, Karl Ulitzka, was attacked by storm troopers after attempting to address a mass rally in Gleiwitz.³ About 30 minutes after the rally began it was broken up by SA men who forced their way into the hall. Ulitzka tried to escape but his car was spotted by the Nazis, who slashed the tyres so that he could not drive away, smashed the windows and hurled insults. The police, who since had ceased to protect leaders of the left-wing parties, still showed a readiness to shield the Centre Party leader. Nevertheless, one Nazi supporter managed to strike Ulitzka on the head, landing a blow which required medical treatment. The routing of the Gleiwitz rally signalled the demise of the Upper Silesian Centre Party, once

1. See OK, 22 Feb. 1933, p. 1.

2. OT Gliwice, Landratsamt Gleiwitz/G64, ff. 8-9: The Magistrat to the Landrat in Gleiwitz, Peiskretschan, 23 Feb. 1933.

3. See WAP Opole, OPO/1025, ff. 324-5: Magistrat Brzezinka to Oberpräsident Lukaschek, Gleiwitz, 10 Mar. 1933; OK, 10 Mar. 1933, p. 1.

the largest political party in the province but by March 1933 no longer able to hold public meetings.

The Polish minority was also a target for the SA during early 1933, particularly in the Border Province and Upper Silesia.¹ In the northern portions of the Border Province, for example, the SA threatened the leader of the Polish community in Kreis Flatow, searched Polish homes, and marched through villages with large Polish populations singing songs with lyrics such as 'If Polish blood spurts from the knife, so much the better'.² In one instance a band of SA men sang anti-Polish songs during Easter celebrations in a mixed community of 300 Germans and 1100 Poles; however, the German population, anxious to avoid conflict with their neighbours, disapproved, and the Regierungspräsident in Schneidemühl appealed to the province's SA leader, Arno Manthey, to prohibit such behaviour.³ Nationally as well the authorities sought to curb SA violence against Poles, fearing incidents which might be reported in the Polish press and have international repercussions. Thus in late April the SA, SS and the Stahlhelm were ordered to keep away from the eastern borders altogether so that provocative incidents would not occur.⁴

1. See reports in WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797.

2. WAP Poznań, OPS/152, f. 315: Landjäger Oberleutnant Schnalke to the Landrat, Flatow, 21 Apr. 1933; *ibid.*, f. 313: The Landrat to the Oberpräsident, Flatow, 29 Apr. 1933; WAP Poznań, OPS/169, f. 293: Kriminal- und Grenzkommisariat to the Staatspolizeistelle Schneidemühl, Neu Bentschen, 5 Apr. 1933.

3. *Ibid.*, f. 374: The Regierungspräsident to SA Brigadeführer Manthey, Schneidemühl, 19 Apr. 1933.

4. WAP Poznań, RP/49, f. 45: The Regierungspräsident to the Landräte des Bezirks, Schneidemühl, [?] Apr. 1933; GStA, Rep. 77/14, f. 3: 'Entwurf Telegramm an alle SA, SS und Stahlhelm Formationen von Ostpreußen, Schlesien und Grenzmark'; *ibid.*,

During 1933 the SA also struck out at department stores and outlets of retail chains, which had been attacked for years by the Nazis as enemies of the Mittelstand. Among the more important in eastern Germany was the Wertheim department store chain, which had outlets in Breslau and Stralsund. The large, modern Breslau store had been opened with great fanfare in late 1930, when it provided the Nazis with a welcome propaganda theme.¹ Predictably, the Breslau Wertheim became one of the first stores to face a boycott in 1933, when on the morning of 10 March its entrances were blocked by storm troopers and police.² The SA returned to Wertheim on 29 March, when storm troopers appeared at the doors of a number of stores in the city with placards announcing that department stores were shut because they were 'annihilating the Mittelstand'.³ One month later it was the turn of Wertheim in Stralsund, where the firm had begun in 1875. There on 28 April storm troopers took up posts before the store entrances, carrying posters demanding that Germans not patronise department stores, while one SA man photographed anyone who nevertheless entered the shop.⁴ When the store manager complained, citing the govern-

f. 2: The Gruppenführer Schlesien, 'Gruppenbefehl Nr. 32', Breslau, 24 Apr. 1933; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, f. 79: The Oberste SA-Führer, Munich, 2 May 1933; Karol Jonca, Polityka narodowościowa Trzeciej Rzeszy na Śląsku Opolskim (1933-1940). Studium polityczno-prawne (Katowice, 1970), p. 149.

1. See NSST, 25 Nov. 1930, p. 5.

2. See Tausk, 'Tagebuch 19', pp. 33-5; Tausk, Breslauer Tagebuch, pp. 35-6.

3. ST, 31 Mar. 1933, p. 6.

4. WAP Szczecin, RS/32, ff. 77-9: A. Wertheim GmbH to the Regierungspräsident in Stettin, Berlin, 2 June 1933; *ibid.*, ff. 103-5: A. Wertheim GmbH to the Pr. Minister des Innern, Berlin, 9 May 1933.

ment proclamations against such activities, he was told that the boycott decision had come 'from above'. Despite protests by the Wertheim management to the provincial administration in Stettin and to the Prussian Interior Ministry, the SA repeated the action every Friday and Saturday throughout May.

Wertheim was, of course, not the only chain store in eastern Germany to experience SA-enforced boycotts during early 1933. On 11 March in Neisse the local outlet of a small department-store chain, 'Hava, Haus der vielen Artikeln', was forced to close temporarily.¹ On 29 March in Liegnitz foreign-owned chain stores, Woolworth and the Czech shoe manufacturer and retailer Bata, found storm troopers at their entrances, and similar incidents occurred in Schweidnitz and Glatz.²

The actions against these stores demonstrate that the hostility of the SA extended not simply to the NSDAP's political opponents and racial targets, but also to alleged economic threats to the German Mittelstand. The instincts of the storm troopers appeared to reflect the points of the Nazi Party Programme, which had emphasised the importance of a 'healthy Mittelstand'. It is doubtful, however, whether their actions reflected a more general and conscious anti-capitalist sentiment among the SA membership. In the eastern regions SA actions against capitalist concerns in 1933 seem to have involved almost exclusively particular types of retail outlets. Industrial plants, corporate offices and commercial banks were spared.

1. However, soon thereafter the provincial administration secured a promise from Ramshorn that further actions against the store would not be permitted. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1738, f. 29: Hava, Haus der vielen Artikeln, to the Oberpräsident, Neisse, 11 Mar. 1933.

2. See ST, 31 Mar. 1933, p. 7; *ibid.*, 7 May 1933, p. 9.

The targets chosen by the SA seem to have been the most visible capitalist enterprises which appeared to be inflicting economic damage upon a significant section of the Nazi Party membership. If this was anti-capitalism, it was anti-capitalism of a rather selective kind. The campaign against the chain stores was not aimed at a transformation of the economic system; it consisted of violence against a highly visible threat to the perceived interests of the German Mittelstand.

The storm troopers also aimed their activity at the symbols of local authority. One frequently repeated action of the SA in early 1933 was to assault local government offices and hoist the swastika banner from their flagpoles. SA men stormed into city and town halls, post offices, courthouses and schools, tore down the republican flag and raised the colours of the 'new Germany'.¹ In Breslau, for example, this took place on 7 March, shortly after the Reichstag elections, as the SA and the Stahlhelm together hoisted the swastika flag and the black-white-red flag of Imperial Germany on government buildings throughout the city.² In Naugard, in Pomerania, on 11 March the SA paraded together with the SS and the Stahlhelm through the town and then raised both the Imperial and Nazi flags on the Landrat office, the office of the district administration, the district savings-bank building, the tax office, town hall, courthouse, labour exchange, schools and the prison.³

1. For a discussion of this process in Germany as a whole, see Horst Mazerath, Nationalsozialismus und kommunale Selbstverwaltung (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 66-72.

2. Tausk, 'Tagebuch 19', pp. 26-7; Tausk, Breslauer Tagebuch, pp. 31-2.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/20, ff. 187-8: The Bürgermeister, Naugard, 11 Mar. 1933.

Afterwards the storm troopers and their allies gathered in the town marketplace and ceremoniously burned the republican flags they had removed. In raising the swastika flag the SA generally met with no opposition; with the Left on the defensive, the police cooperating with the SA, and many civil servants sympathising with the NSDAP, there was little enthusiasm to try to prevent the symbolic confirmation of the Nazi victory.

In some cases the SA actively interfered in the day-to-day working of local administration. For example, on the morning of 9 March in Hindenburg a group of SA Hilfspolizei entered the city tax office and forced two officials to hand over tax records.¹ On 3 April in Peterswalde, in Kreis Schlochau in the Border Province, the district SA-Standartenführer demanded the dismissal of a post-office employee whose only crime was the distribution of Centre Party leaflets the year before and who was prevented by storm troopers from carrying out his duties.² SA leaders also took advantage of the new situation to pressure officials to release storm troopers from prison - as Upper Silesian SA leader Ramshorn did in the case of three men convicted of the murder of August Bassey in Bankau, Kreis Kreuzburg, in 1932³ - or to purge unwelcome people from public

1. The precise motive remains unclear, although the man who led the raid was himself a city employee. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, f. 1103: The Oberbürgermeister to the Pr. Minister des Innern, Hindenburg, 9 Mar. 1933; *ibid.*, ff. 1105-15: police statements and reports of the incident.

2. See WAP Poznań, RP/59, f. 62: Oberpostdirektion to the Regierungspräsident in Schneidemühl, Köslin, 18 Apr. 1933; *ibid.*, f. 63: The Oberpräsident to the Präsident der Oberpostdirektion Köslin, Schneidemühl, [?] Apr. 1933.

3. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1806, f. 1091: The Führer der Untergruppe OS to the Oberpräsident, Oppeln, 12 Mar. 1933.

service - as attempted by the SA-Standartenführer in Schneidemühl.¹ These incursions by the SA into the operations of local and regional government were a new feature of the violence in 1933, and no doubt were quite disturbing to those whose task was to ensure the smooth running of the administration.

By the time Hitler proclaimed on 6 July 1933 that the Nazi 'revolution' was over, the SA had attacked almost every organised political group in Germany.² Yet it was characteristic of the SA violence during 1933 that the storm troopers met little resistance, since organisations which might seriously have challenged the SA were left alone. Significantly, those organisations in eastern Germany which escaped the violence of the storm troopers - the army, the police, the Reich and Prussian governments, employers' federations, and the NSDAP itself - were seats of real political power. SA violence was directed essentially in those areas where the risks were low. Violence which aimed toward a fundamental change of the social and economic system or which directly challenged the Nazi leadership was conspicuous by its absence.

The explosion of SA violence in early 1933 can be seen as a legacy of the 'years of struggle'. The terror against political and ethnic groups was an extension, in much more favourable circumstances, of SA tactics of the previous years. In addition, the extension of the violence in 1933, particularly

1. The Schneidemühl SA leader was put off by the provincial administration, which claimed that these matters could not be settled until work connected with the 'Law for the Re-Establishment of the Professional Civil Service' was finished. See WAP Poznań, OPS/152, f. 376: report of a visit by 'Stabsführer Müller', Schneidemühl, 25 Apr. 1933; *ibid.*, f 381: The Oberpräsident to the SA Untergruppe Grenzland, Schneidemühl, 29 June 1933.

2. For a discussion of SA violence against the Nazis' right-wing allies in the Stahlhelm, see below, p. 276.

after the March elections, resulted from the fact that the end of party-political campaigning - hitherto the most important field of SA activity - left a large gap. Time which previously might have been filled protecting rallies or distributing propaganda leaflets now was spent attacking new victims and interfering with retail trade and local government. On the one hand, this allowed the new government to suppress its political opponents with unexpected speed and thoroughness; on the other, however, it created problems of discipline and the reassertion of law and order which would become increasingly pressing in the months ahead.

(v) The SA as Auxiliary Police

The use of storm troopers, together with members of the SS and the Stahlhelm, as auxiliary police was a key aspect of the SA violence in 1933. The idea of employing SA men in this manner had been proposed earlier - by the Nazi Interior Minister Dietrich Klagges in August 1932¹ - but was first put into practice on 22 February 1933, when Göring, as Prussian Interior Minister, announced the formation of the Hilfspolizei. Plans for the deployment of auxiliary police already had been developed in some areas in eastern Germany before Göring's decree, however. In the Regierungsbezirk Liegnitz detailed schemes were drawn up and circulated on 20 February, according to which the auxiliary police were to consist primarily of SA men, together with smaller numbers of SS and Stahlhelm members, and were to form forces averaging between 25 and 100 in each dis-

1. See Roloff, Bürgertum und Nationalsozialismus, p. 113.

trict.¹ In Breslau and Oppeln as well the Regierungspräsi-
denten investigated the possibility of setting up an auxiliary
police force in advance of Göring's decree.²

The auxiliary police forces which Göring called into
being generally were recruited in a ratio of 50 per cent SA,
30 per cent SS and 20 per cent Stahlhelm. They were placed
at the disposal of the regional Prussian police forces, under
the command of regular police officers, and were to perform
their duties in the uniform of their paramilitary organisa-
tion but with a white armband bearing the inscription 'Hilfs-
polizei'.³ The auxiliary police in Prussia were paid rela-
tively little - the costs of the Hilfspolizei in Prussia were
considerably lower than in the other German Länder⁴ - , although
the amount seems to have varied from region to region. Ac-
cording to one report from Kreis Uekermünde in Pomerania, the
Hilfspolizist was paid 3.00 RM per day, while in Berlin he re-
ceived 1.00 RM per day as pocket money.⁵ In addition to pocket
money, room and board generally were provided, which meant in

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, ff. 13-15: The Regierungspräsident, 'Rundverfügung betreffend Hilfspolizei', Liegnitz, 20 Feb. 1933. The city of Liegnitz was to have a Hilfspolizei of 100 SA and 100 SS, and the city of Görlitz a Hilfspolizei of 100 SA and 50 SS.

2. Ibid., ff. 17-19: The Stahlhelm, Landesamt Schlesien, to the Gaue, Breslau, 21 Feb. 1933. It remains unclear whether this planning was a response to directives from Berlin.

3. See Konrad Heiden, Geburt des dritten Reiches. Die Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus bis Herbst 1933 (Zürich, 1934), pp. 117-18; Broszat, Der Staat Hitlers, p. 95.

4. BA, R 43 II/395, ff. 20-1: The Reichsminister des Innern to the Bayerische Staatsministerium des Innern, Berlin, 12 May 1933.

5. WAP Szczecin, RS/92, ff. 111-13: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Uekermünde, 31 Mar. 1933; Engelbrechten, Eine braune Armee entsteht, p. 266.

effect that the upkeep of otherwise homeless and unemployed storm troopers living in SA hostels was to be paid from state funds.¹

The role of the Hilfspolizei during the early months of 1933 had two basic aspects. First, the auxiliaries performed a number of tasks at the behest of the regular police, ranging from searching the flats of suspected Communists to standing watch over a town's gas works.² Second, SA participation in the auxiliary police lent Nazi violence the authority of the state. The fact that SA men became members of the Hilfspolizei allowed them to 'arrest' their victims at will and made resistance to the SA an attack against the forces of 'law and order', giving considerable tactical advantage to the storm troopers in the campaigns of early 1933.

Despite the advantages to the SA of providing auxiliary policemen from its ranks, not all SA leaders were eager to become involved. Thus in the Border Province the SA played no part in the Hilfspolizei, which was recruited exclusively from the SS and the Stahlhelm.³ Here the leader of the SA 'Gruppe Ostmark', Siegfried Kasche, decided that auxiliary police duties were not suited to the storm troopers and handed over to the regional SS leader (Abschnittsführer), Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, the task of selecting men for the Hilfspolizei.⁴

1. See GStA, Rep. 77/28: The Polizeipräsident (Heines) to the Pr. Minister des Innern, Breslau, 25 Apr. 1933.

2. See, for example, WAP Szczecin, RS/92, ff. 51-5: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Uekermünde, 15 Mar. 1933.

3. See, for example, the lists of auxiliary police recruits in WAP Poznań, RP/705 (Kreis Bomst); WAP Poznań, RP/706 (Kreis Deutsch Krone); WAP Poznań, RP/707 (Kreis Meseritz).

4. WAP Poznań, OPS/169, p. 162: The Führer der Gruppe Ostmark, 'Gruppenbefehl Nr. 19', Frankfurt/Oder, 27 Feb. 1933.

Nevertheless, the restraint shown by the SA leadership in the Border Province with regard to the auxiliary police did not prevent the SA there from co-operating closely with the regular police as they assaulted the Left.¹

Once the Nazi regime began to consolidate its position, the need for the auxiliary police forces quickly disappeared. On 2 August the Prussian Interior Ministry ordered the dissolution of the Hilfspolizei and cut off funds for their further deployment,² although at the same time secret lists were prepared by the police of the former auxiliaries so that they might be reactivated in case of internal unrest.³ Particular stress was placed on the need to collect all the weapons, instructions, armbands and identification papers which the former auxiliary policemen had been issued during the previous months. The disbandment of the Hilfspolizei marked the beginnings of efforts by the Nazi leadership to restrict the activities of the SA, and formed a significant first step toward the emasculation of the SA in the summer of 1934.

(vi) SA Leaders in Office

During the upheavals of 1933 numerous SA leaders were

1. Ibid. See also WAP Poznań, RP/59, f. 92: Staatspolizeistelle to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 18 May 1933.

2. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, f. 91 and OT Gliwice, Landratsamt Gleiwitz/G92, f. 36: The Pr. Minister des Innern to sämtl. Polizeischulen and sämtl. Regierungspräsidenten, Berlin, 2 Aug. 1933. The Hilfspolizei were disbanded officially throughout the Reich on 15 August.

3. See, for example, ibid., ff. 37-8: The Landrat to the Landjägerhauptmann Seeliger, Gleiwitz, 23 Aug. 1933; ibid., f. 40: The komm. Landrat to the Regierungspräsident in Oppeln, Gleiwitz, 30 Oct. 1933.

able to acquire public office, either as 'Special Commissars' (Sonderkommissare) appointed by Röhm or as heads of regional police forces. Concern that the progress of the Nazi 'revolution' not be interrupted by officials whose sympathies were in doubt was combined with hunger for power and positions and the anxiousness of the SA leadership - and Röhm in particular - that the SA carve a place for itself in the new state structure.

Within days of the decision to establish the Hilfspolizei, Röhm appointed SA Sonderkommissare throughout Prussia, one in each province.¹ Their purpose was essentially to establish and maintain contact with the heads of the provincial and regional administrations, in order to prevent friction between the government and the SA.² The Special Commissars were meant also to control undisciplined elements within the SA and SS who might try to take advantage of the new situation, and to guard against infiltration from left-wing organisations into SA and SS ranks. In addition, they were to ensure that the measures of the Reich and Prussian governments in fact were carried out by the regional authorities; however, the 'dismissal of mayors, interference in private industry, the appointment of provisional heads of associations, etc.' were strictly forbidden.

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/406: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Wahrung der Disziplin', Munich, 25 Feb. 1933. In October 1933 the 'Special Commissar' posts were superseded by the posts of 'Special Plenipotentiaries' (Sonderbevollmächtigte) for those who maintained contacts with the Oberpräsidenten, and 'Special Commissioners' (Sonderbeauftragte) for those appointed to maintain contacts with the Regierungspräsidenten and Landräte. See Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, pp. 512-13.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/409: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Sonderkommissare', Munich, 12 May 1933.

The Special Commissars appointed for eastern Germany in late February were, with one important exception, the leaders of the SA in the respective provinces. Thus Karl-Siegmund Litzmann was appointed Sonderkommissar in East Prussia, Siegfried Kasche in the Border Province (together with the Regierungsbezirk Frankfurt/Oder), Hans Friedrich in Pomerania, Edmund Heines in Lower Silesia, and Silesian SS leader Udo von Woyrsch in Upper Silesia. Turnover among the Sonderkommissare generally mirrored changes in the SA leadership. In East Prussia when Adolf Kob replaced Litzmann as leader of the SA 'Gruppe Ostland' in September 1933 he also was appointed Special Commissar. Similarly, Hans Friedrich was replaced by Hans Peter von Heydebreck in September 1933 and Kob by Heinrich Schoene in February 1934. The exception was Silesia, where Karl-Heinz Koch replaced Heines as Special Commissar in Lower Silesia in the autumn of 1933 and Heines replaced von Woyrsch as Commissar in Upper Silesia in January 1934.¹

Significantly, the one Sonderkommissar in Eastern Germany not a member of the SA, von Woyrsch, was the most aggressive in pursuing his duties. In June 1933, for example, von Woyrsch banned a number of Stahlhelm groups, an exercise of the Special Commissar post not attempted by any of the SA leaders.² With

1. See BA, Sammlung Schumacher/406: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Wahrung der Disziplin', Munich, 25 Feb. 1933; BA, Sammlung Schumacher/272: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betreff: Sonderbevollmächtigte und Sonderbeauftragte des Obersten SA-Führers in Preußen', Munich, 23 Oct. 1933; BA, Sammlung Schumacher/409: The Stabschef, 'Betreff: Sonderbevollmächtigte und Sonderbeauftragte des Obersten SA-Führers in Preußen', Munich, 10 Jan. 1934; GStA, Rep. 84a/12003, ff. 183-4: The Stabschef, 'Betr.: Sonderbevollmächtigte des Obersten SA-Führers', Munich, 6 Feb. 1934.

2. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, f. 405: Von Woyrsch to the Oberpräsident, Brieg, 23 June 1933; WAP Opole, OPO/998, f. 87: clipping from the Neue Breslauer Zeitung, 28 June 1933.

the exception of Upper Silesia, however, relatively little use seems to have been made of the position. Rather than enabling SA leaders to 'rule' their regions between early 1933 and mid-1934,¹ it seems that their appointment as Special Commissars caused little change in the power relationships in the eastern Prussian provinces. The tasks which were assigned to the Sonderkommissare - such as co-ordinating relations with government officials and ensuring discipline within the SA - were essentially those which, as regional SA leaders, they would have carried out in any case. For example, Hans Ramshorn, who was not named a Special Commissar, was concerned to maintain discipline among the storm troopers in Upper Silesia and actively intervened in disputes involving the SA and government authorities. The actual power of regional SA leaders remained a function of their positions within the SA and, in some cases, of the posts they acquired within the police apparatus; it was not enhanced particularly by their appointment as Sonderkommissare.

Nevertheless, the Special Commissars did represent an incursion into regional government, and objections to their interference were registered by the Gestapo.² Thus the real significance of the Sonderkommissare may have lain in the suspicions and opposition they aroused rather than in the power they held as a result of their new posts, and it is worth noting that among the first changes made by SA Chief of Staff Viktor Lutze

1. This has been suggested by Edward N. Peterson, The Limits of Hitler's Power (Princeton, 1969), pp. 90-1.

2. See, for example, WAP Szczecin, RS/186, ff. 283-311: Staatspolizeistelle to the Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt in Berlin, Stettin, 8 Dec. 1933. In other areas of Germany, such as Württemberg and Bavaria, the Sonderkommissare caused considerable friction. See Hüttenberger, Die Gauleiter, pp. 83-4.

after the 1934 purge was to dissolve the Special Commissar positions.¹

More important in terms of real political power were the positions which SA leaders captured in the police administrations. In the eastern Prussian provinces, however, SA leaders were able to gain a significant hold on the leading police posts only in Silesia. In Pomerania the police remained out of the hands of the SA leadership altogether, and in Stettin the police were led between September 1933 and late April 1934 by SS-Oberführer Fritz-Karl Engel.² In the Border Province the reluctance of SA-Gruppenführer Siegfried Kasche to grab new posts meant that the SA leadership there did not become involved in the police administration.³ In East Prussia the SA leadership did assume control of the Königsberg Polizei-präsidium, but not until November 1933, when Adolf Kob was appointed Police President.⁴ Kob was succeeded two months later by Heinrich Schoene, both as East Prussian SA leader and Königsberg police chief; despite his apparently strong position, however, Schoene soon found himself forced on the defensive by Erich Koch, who had been appointed Oberpräsident

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/409: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betr.: Sonderbevollmächtigte der Obersten SA-Führung', Munich, 10 July 1934.

2. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 20-35. Engel was dismissed in the wake of the scandal arising from conditions at the SS concentration camp set up in the Stettin docks. See below, pp. 271-2.

3. Kasche had been offered the position of Regierungspräsident in Frankfurt/Oder, but refused because his 'primary talent lay in the military field'. See GStA, Rep. 77/2: Wilhelm Kube to Hermann Göring, Berlin, 1 Apr. 1933.

4. See Gause, Die Geschichte der Stadt Königsberg, iii. 128; Hugo Linck, Der Kirchenkampf in Ostpreußen (Munich, 1968), pp. 100, 243.

of East Prussia in June 1933 and in effect ran the Polizei-präsidium over Schoene's head.¹

In Silesia SA leaders were able to secure appointment as Police President in Breslau, Oppeln and Gleiwitz. At the beginning of March Gauleiter Brückner began a campaign to remove the leading figures from regional government and police administrations, complaining to Göring that Nazi policies were being sabotaged.² Similarly, Hans Ramshorn asserted that the necessary co-operation between the SA and the police was being blocked by unsuitable police chiefs and demanded the installation of '100-per-cent National Socialists' in the Polizei-präsidien in Oppeln and Gleiwitz.³ Heines amplified Ramshorn's arguments,⁴ and on 26 March the efforts of the Silesian Nazi leaders were rewarded: Brückner was appointed Oberpräsident in Breslau, Heines became the Breslau Police President, Ramshorn took over the regional police command in Gleiwitz, and SA-Standartenführer Metz became Police President in Oppeln.⁵ Both Heines and Ramshorn used their new positions to expand their personal power bases. Heines took particular advantage of his appointment, with the result that his direction of the Breslau Polizeipräsidium became a public scandal.⁶

1. See Gause, op. cit., p. 129; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, pp. 436-7.

2. See GStA, Rep. 77/32, ff. 3-4: Helmuth Brückner to Hermann Göring, Breslau, 1 Mar. 1933.

3. GStA, Rep. 77/29: Hans Ramshorn to Edmund Heines, Oppeln, 11 Mar. 1933.

4. Ibid.: Gruppenstabsführer Graf Pückler to SS-Gruppenführer Staatskommissar Daluge, Breslau, 14 Mar. 1933.

5. OVS, 26 Mar. 1933, p. 1; NSST, 27 Mar. 1933, p. 1.

6. See Tausk, 'Tagebuch 20', pp. 117-18; Tausk, Breslauer Tagebuch, p. 122.

Whereas in early 1933 it may have seemed an appropriate reward for SA leaders to place them at the head of regional police forces, it became evident very quickly that putting men such as Heines and Ramshorn in charge of police headquarters would not facilitate the creation of an orderly and efficiently repressive police state. While SA police chiefs may have been suited to the chaotic months of early 1933, they were particularly unsuited to the period which followed, and it appears significant that those most successful in capturing important positions in 1933, Heines and Ramshorn, were among the most prominent victims of the purge in 1934. Considering the ease with which the SA leadership was purged in 1934, the most striking aspect of the accumulation of offices by regional SA leaders was that ultimately these offices counted for so very little. This reflected the fundamental political weakness of the SA after the seizure of power. While the positions which SA leaders acquired in police administrations probably were their most important spoils in 1933, real power in the emerging police state was not to be found in the various Polizei-präsidien but in the offices of the Gestapo, in which the SA gained no foothold whatsoever. The success of SA leaders in gaining new posts proved hollow, and the real significance of the incursion into government was not that it enhanced the power of the SA but that it helped arouse opposition to it.

(vii) SA Concentration Camps

The escalation of violence and political persecution in early 1933 led to a sudden increase in arrests, especially of the Nazis' left-wing opponents. By March 1933 jails throughout

Germany were overflowing with thousands of prisoners rounded up in the campaigns against the Left, and official estimates put the number of people in 'protective custody' at roughly 15,000.¹ The actual figure was considerably higher, and according to one Social Democratic observer about 10,000 political prisoners were in custody in Pomerania alone during March 1933.² The overcrowding which resulted in the existing jails and prisons, together with the desire of the storm troopers to do with their prisoners as they liked, led to the establishment of a number of SA concentration camps. These bore little resemblance to the ordered and systematically brutal SS camps of later years; rather they tended to be rather improvised affairs, often set up at the initiative of the regional SA leadership. As Rudolf Diels, the first Gestapo chief, later remarked, 'they were not founded, one day they simply were there'.³

During early 1933 concentration camps were established in each of the eastern Prussian provinces: at Quednau near Königsberg; at Hammerstein in Kreis Schlochau in the Border Province; in Stettin; and at Dürrgoy, on the southern outskirts of Breslau. The camps at Quednau and Hammerstein were among six officially recognised and funded by the Prussian Interior Ministry, and both were small and short-lived.⁴ The facility at Quednau

1. See BA, Sammlung Schumacher/271: The Pr. Minister des Innern to the Reichsminister des Innern, Berlin, [?] June 1933; Diels, Lucifer ante Portas, p. 190.

2. Matull, Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung, p. 292.

3. Diels, op. cit., p. 190.

4. See BA, Sammlung Schumacher/271: The Pr. Minister des Innern to the Reichsminister des Innern, Berlin, [?] June 1933; Martin Broszat, 'The Concentration Camps 1933-45', in Anatomy of the SS State, p. 409-10.

was intended as a transit camp, for which the Prussian authorities had given 3000 RM to set up. The camp at Hammerstein, toward which the Prussian Interior Ministry had contributed 15,000 RM, was rather more substantial and housed many prisoners from neighbouring Pomerania; at its height, the Hammerstein camp had a population of roughly 350.¹ Quednau and Hammerstein were essentially minor parts of an incipient state-run system of concentration camps. Both were dissolved in the summer of 1933, when the system was rationalised leaving only three camps in Prussia: at Sonnenburg in the Regierungsbezirk Frankfurt/Oder, at Lichtenberg near Torgau - where the prisoners from Hammerstein were sent when it was shut - and a newly enlarged camp in the Emsland marshes near Osnabrück.

The other two camps, at Stettin and Dürrgoy, were of a rather different character, examples of the 'wild' concentration camps opened during the early months of 1933. Of these 'wild' camps, Dürrgoy was among the most notorious. On 14 April, shortly after Heines had been appointed Breslau Police President, barbed wire was put into place and work begun to convert the one-time camp for French prisoners of war to the south of Breslau into a concentration camp for the SA. Two weeks later, on 28 April, the camp opened to receive its first 100 inmates.²

1. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), p. 31; WAP Poznań, OPS/177, f. 93: The Pr. Minister des Innern to the Oberpräsident in Schneidemühl and the Polizeipräsident in Berlin, Berlin, 4 July 1933; *ibid.*, f. 109: The Lagerkommandant, Gefangenensammellager Hammerstein, to the Oberpräsident, Hammerstein, 10 July 1933. Other prisoners from Pomerania were sent to the much larger camp at Sonnenburg in the Reg. Bez. Frankfurt/Oder, for which the Prussian authorities had given 170,000 RM and which was run primarily by the SS.

2. See Günther Schmerbach, 'Dokumente zum faschistischen Terror gegen die Arbeiterbewegung (1933 und 1934)', ZfG, iii (1955), 441.

Among the prisoners who filled the Dürrgoy camp were Paul Löbe, the former SPD Reichstag President; the former SPD Oberpräsident in Breslau, Hermann Lüdemann; Ernst Eckstein of the Socialist Workers Party; Ernst Zimmer, the former editor of the Breslau SPD newspaper Volkswacht; the leaders of the Reichsbanner in Breslau, Hans Alexander and Max Kukielczynski; and Karl Mache, the leader of the Breslau district SPD and former mayor of the city.¹ The camp had been set up solely at the initiative of Heines, without expressed authorisation from Berlin; indeed, the Staatspolizeiamt in Berlin first learned that the camp had been established when the American journalist Louis Lochner discovered that Löbe, who was arrested in the capital in March, had been kidnapped by Heines' SA and transported to Dürrgoy.² With control of the Breslau Polizeipräsidium and what amounted to his private concentration camp, Edmund Heines had become virtually a law unto himself.

Conditions at Dürrgoy were characterised by a make-shift sadistic anarchy.³ From the relatively modest beginning in April 1933 the number of prisoners in the camp grew to more than 500 at its peak. These had to endure both the random violence of the storm troopers and the especially brutal be-

1. Ibid., p. 441; Matull, Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung, pp. 61, 130-2; Gundelach, Vom Kampf und Sieg der schlesischen SA, pp. 171-2.

2. Diels, op. cit., pp. 190, 194-5.

3. For accounts of life in the camp, see Paul Löbe, Erinnerungen eines Reichstagspräsidenten (Berlin, 1949), pp. 152-60; Karol Fiedor, 'Oboz koncentracyjny we Wrocławiu w 1933 r', Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka, i (1967), 170-90. Fiedor's account is based largely on the diary of a prisoner of the camp, Helmut Friese, deposited in the 'Zentrales Parteiarchiv der SED' in Berlin, and on the oral account of another prisoner, Kurt Skupin.

haviour of the camp commandant, Heinze, and Heines himself. For example, Heinze took special pleasure in holding fire drills throughout the night, during which the half-clad prisoners were forced to leave their barracks and walk along muddy paths in the darkness, to be beaten as they returned. Heines, in a particularly vengeful act, compelled former Oberpräsident Lüdemann to walk through the streets of Breslau wearing the costume of a harlequin to a chorus of insults by SA men. Nevertheless, the persecution of the unfortunate victims remained unsystematic, and, unlike in the SS camps of later years, at least the prisoners were given adequate nourishment.¹

The camp at Dürrgoy soon became a thorn in the side of the Berlin Staatspolizeiamt, and reports about it, especially those concerning the treatment of Lüdemann, led Diels to send a representative to Breslau to investigate.² The report sent back to Berlin alarmed the Gestapo chief, who presented the findings to Göring and received authorisation to discuss 'winding up' the camp with Heines. When Diels met Heines, however, the SA leader welcomed him with a tirade against the 'soft approach' (Leisetreterei) of Berlin and refused to co-operate. Diels then took the matter to Hitler and was able to get authority to shut Dürrgoy. Thus on 10 August, shortly after Göring ordered that the Hilfspolizei be disbanded, the camp was closed and its prisoners either taken to the camp near Osnabrück or brought to the Berlin police headquarters and set free.

1. See Löbe, op. cit., p. 158; Gerhard Rossbach, Mein Weg durch die Zeit. Erinnerungen und Bekenntnisse (Weilberg-Lahn, 1950), pp. 139-41.

2. See Diels, op. cit., p. 195.

The other 'wild' concentration camp in eastern Germany, also set up without the authorisation of the Prussian Interior Ministry, was established by the SS in late 1933 in a disused portion of the 'Vulkan' docks in Stettin.¹ During the early months of 1933 the SA had tortured left-wing opponents in the former offices of the SPD newspaper Volksbote in the centre of Stettin. These activities soon were transferred to a barracks on a sports ground toward the outskirts of the city, where many citizens, particularly wealthy Jews, were tortured by SA men and forced to contribute to a 'fund for the fight against Marxism'. The conduct of the SA became a public scandal, however, and the informal camp on the Jahnstraße sports ground was closed down in the early summer. The vacuum left was filled by the Stettin SS, which opened its own camp in the docks during the autumn. Initially intended for the interrogation of prisoners and handling the additional work load of the increasingly busy police headquarters in the city, with the backing of Stettin Police President and SS leader Fritz-Karl Engel this camp soon developed a life of its own. Far from the city centre, SS and SA members were able to torture their victims in privacy, and the corpses of the more unfortunate were weighted with stones and dumped in the Oder. However, when the Berlin authorities finally were made aware of what was happening at the 'Vulkan' camp - due to complaints registered by Field Marshal August von Mackensen and the Pomeranian 'Trustee of Labour' Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz - it was decided to curb

1. See Drewniak, Początki ruchu hitlerowskiego, pp. 105-8, 156-62, 287; Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 29-35, 287.

the activities of the camp's overseers.¹ Göring sent a representative to Stettin with the power to move against the SS; in March 1934 the 'Vulkan' camp was shut down; and soon afterwards its commandant and other SS members involved in its running were brought to trial.

The development of the concentration camps in 1933 closely paralleled the fortunes of the SA as a whole. During the early months the storm troopers were able to attack their opponents virtually at will, and the camps formed an important element of the terror campaign which helped break the Left. In an orderly authoritarian state, however, there was little room for a concentration camp such as Dürrgoy. Once the new government had established itself, the 'wild' concentration camps ceased to serve an important function and became a painful embarrassment. They posed a threat both to public order and to the power of other institutions - the judiciary, the Reich and Prussian Interior Ministries, and, most importantly, the Gestapo - and soon were dissolved.

(viii) The Seizure of Power from Below: Why did it happen?

If, as is argued above, it was the violence of the storm troopers which enabled Hitler to consolidate his position and transform the remnants of the Weimar system into a dictatorship in which no opposition was tolerated, then it is necessary to explain how this was possible. What motivated the storm troopers in their terror campaign in early 1933, and what allowed them

1. See Diels, op. cit., pp. 287-9; Drewniak, op. cit., pp. 178-86; Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 31-5; Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Quellen), pp. 268-78.

to get away with it?

It appears that the storm troopers were motivated, to a considerable degree, by brute hatred rather than political calculation. The assaults which so effectively crippled the Left and paralysed the Nazis' bourgeois party-political competitors were expressions of a gut-level politics of hatred. In the climate of early 1933, such gut-reaction politics worked. It worked because of the indecision of the Nazi leadership, which — with the possible exception of Göring — did not know how it was going to erect the 'Third Reich'; the Nazi leadership seemed quite willing to take advantage of the violence of its supporters, but without committing itself to such an extent that it would have been exposed had the SA campaign failed. It worked as well because the traditional forces of authority, in particular the police, were uncertain about what was expected of them and were, in any case, hardly averse to the suppression of the Left. And, finally, it worked because the opponents of the Nazis already were on the defensive: the KPD had, in theory if not in fact, resigned itself to an underground existence; the Social Democrats, having watched helplessly the gradual dismantling during the early 1930s of the democratic structure of government which they supported, had no more imaginative answer to the Nazi challenge than to admonish their supporters not to be 'provoked'; and the Nazis' bourgeois competitors only could offer programmes of authoritarian government, which the Nazis themselves could effect much better.

To sum up, the campaign which the SA mounted in early 1933 succeeded largely because real possibilities for effectively

opposing the Nazis already had withered. This was not necessarily apparent in January 1933; Hitler and his cabinet colleagues probably did not realise it at the time, nor did the Nazis' opponents. The historic service of the SA for the Nazi leadership was not so much that it won a decisive battle, but that through its unthinking violence in early 1933 it exposed the fact that there really was no major battle which needed to be won.

Of course, Hitler's success hardly would have been possible without support from many who were not necessarily enthusiastic Nazis. It is important to remember that the destruction of the labour movement was not just a Nazi goal, and that many conservatives liked the product of the SA terror even if they sometimes found the violence itself unsavoury. The campaigns of the SA in 1933 were successful largely insofar as their goals coincided with goals which found great sympathy outside the NSDAP as well. For such campaigns to be successful did not require careful political calculation; gut-level, violent politics were sufficient. However, once the SA violence went beyond the generally accepted boundaries — once the Left had been suppressed and the storm troopers proved unwilling or unable to keep themselves in check — then it was to arouse real opposition and threaten the organisational future of the SA itself.

Chapter VII

THE S.A. AFTER THE SEIZURE OF POWER

(i) The SA and the Stahlhelm

After the Nazi leadership had gained control of the government and administration, the main function of the SA - violence against the Nazis' political opponents - became superfluous. The fundamental problem facing the SA leadership, whether it recognised this or not, then became putting its house in order and securing a power base in the new state. This problem shapes the main themes of the history of the SA during the period immediately after the seizure of power: the growth of the organisation, the need to control the violence of its members, and its relations with the conservative Right. These themes are closely related. The problem of exerting control over the SA was exacerbated by the phenomenal growth of the organisation in 1933 and 1934 - a growth which brought in many men whose commitment to National Socialism was questionable at best; the growth of the SA involved, to a considerable degree, the takeover of the Stahlhelm and the absorption of its members; and the relations with the conservative Right during this period were closely bound up with the problem of uncontrolled SA violence threatening to undermine popular support for the Nazi movement.

The Stahlhelm played a central role in the changes which affected the SA from the summer of 1933 onward. The close co-operation between the Nazi storm troopers and the conservative veterans' organisation which followed the formation of the Hit-

ler government was quite short-lived. The two organisations soon were drawn apart by the pressures of the March elections, when the Stahlhelm supported the conservative 'Kampffront Schwarz-Weiß-Rot' (the successor to the DNVP). On 20 February the Stahlhelm's second in command, Theodor Duesterberg, ordered a halt to joint marches with the Nazis,¹ while local Nazi groups grew increasingly reluctant to work together with their erst-while conservative allies.² Following the elections, relations between the SA and the Stahlhelm deteriorated further, and the Stahlhelm was attacked openly by the SA. In Ratibor, for example, the SA threatened the district Stahlhelm leader with arrest in late March, and in Königsberg a Stahlhelm rally was broken up violently by storm troopers in April.³ The spirit of comradeship between the SA and the Stahlhelm after 30 January lasted only a few weeks.

The tension between the SA and the Stahlhelm increased as the latter developed into a focus of opposition to the new regime. This opposition had two main components. The first was the conservative Right. Many of the conservatives in the Stahlhelm regarded the new regime with suspicion and found the violence of the storm troopers distasteful. When their organisation was subordinated to the SA in July 1933, this met with

1. See Berghahn, Der Stahlhelm, p. 252. Not all Stahlhelm groups obeyed, however. See, for example, WAP Szczecin, RS/20, ff. 187-8: The Bürgermeister, Naugard, 11 Mar. 1933.

2. See, for example, StAG, Rep. 240/C.49.a.: 'Tätigkeitsbericht für die Zeit vom 1.2. bis 12.3.1933', Heiligenbeil, 29 Mar. 1933.

3. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1777, ff. 361-2: The Stahlhelm, Landesverband Schlesien, Gauleitung Oberschlesien, to the Regierungspräsident, Gleiwitz, 29 Mar. 1933; StAG, Rep. 240/B.10.d.: The Höhere Polizeiführer Ost to the Gauleitung der NSDAP, Königsberg, 7 Apr. 1933.

the strong disapproval of many Stahlhelm leaders. The head of the East Prussian Stahlhelm, Graf Siegfried zu Eulenburg-Wicken, left the organisation in protest when its national leader, Franz Seldte, agreed to Hitler's demands that the Stahlhelm give up its independence, and the former chairman of the DNVP in Pomerania, Georg Werner von Zitzewitz, publicly voiced his objections to the 'sell-out' of the Stahlhelm.¹

Among the more serious confrontations between the conservative Stahlhelm leadership and the Nazis in eastern Germany occurred in Meseritz, in the Border Province.² In June 1933 members of the NSDAP attempted to seize control of the 'Agrarian Association' (Landbund) in Meseritz and remove its chairman, the area Stahlhelm leader Graf zu Dohna von Hillergaertingen. After the Nazis in the association failed to oust Dohna in an election, they attempted to do so with the help of the area Staatskommissar von Bredow, who appointed a new, Nazi leadership for the Landbund. When the Stahlhelm leader protested, von Bredow ordered the SA to arrest him. This greatly increased tension between the SA and the Stahlhelm in the region, and long after Dohna's release - following Stahlhelm appeals to the government in Berlin - the two organisations remained dangerously hostile toward one another. Particularly in rural areas, such as the Border Province, the reservations

1. Walter Görlitz, Die Junker. Adel und Bauer im deutschen Osten (Glücksburg, 1956), pp. 392-3. According to Görlitz, when Heines heard of Zitzewitz' protest he came to Pomerania with a squad of SA men to jail 'that pig Zitzewitz' for life, but was dissuaded when, upon arriving in Kolberg to arrest the conservative leader, he was met by an armed Stahlhelm unit.

2. See WAP Poznań, OPS/172, f. 120: The Polizeidirektor to the Oberpräsident, Schneidemühl, 10 June 1933; *ibid.*, ff. 121-2: Staatspolizeistelle to the Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt in Berlin, Schneidemühl, 16 June 1933.

of many members of the traditional conservative elite about the successful Nazi movement could be seen most clearly in the attitudes of the Stahlhelm toward the SA.

The second component of the opposition within the Stahlhelm to the new regime was formed by Communists and Social Democrats who entered the veterans' organisation once their own political organisations had been suppressed. This infiltration resulted in serious violence in Braunschweig, where many supporters of the Left joined the Stahlhelm and were attacked brutally by the SA, SS and police in late March.¹ In the eastern Prussian provinces as well left-wing infiltration of the Stahlhelm was a major cause of concern to the police and the Nazi movement. In Angerburg in East Prussia, for example, the district NSDAP reported in late March that 'here too' the Stahlhelm was attracting many new members who were 'former Marxists'.² In Pomerania during May and June both the Nazi Party Gauleitung and the police noted with alarm the tendency of 'Marxists' to enter the Stahlhelm in large numbers.³ When in late June the police made a detailed investigation of the recent recruits in the Pomeranian Stahlhelm, they found that

1. See Roloff, Bürgertum und Nationalsozialismus, pp. 147-9; Berghahn, op. cit., pp. 263-5.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.40.a.: 'Tätigkeitsbericht für die Zeit vom 13.3. bis 31.3.33', Angerburg, 4 Apr. 1933.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/187, ff. 73-91: Gauleitung Pommern der NSDAP, 'Bericht über den Übertritt ehemaliger Marxisten in nationale Verbände in Sonderheit in den Stahlhelm', Stettin, 29 May 1933; ibid., ff. 93-5: The Führer der SA Gruppe Pommern to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 29 May 1933; WAP Szczecin, RS/186, ff. 33-5: 'Ergebnis der Feststellungen in Sachen "Neuaufnahmen in den Stahlhelm und Durchsetzung desselben mit Marxisten in Vorpommern und auf Rügen"', Stettin, 25 June 1933; ibid., ff. 39-41: 'Ergebnis der Feststellungen in Sachen "Neuaufnahmen in den Stahlhelm und Durchsetzung desselben mit Marxisten in Hinterpommern und Usedom-Wollin"', Stettin, 26 June 1933.

the new members often were former supporters of the SPD and KPD: for example, in Uekermünde the Stahlhelm group, which numbered 60 in January 1933, had grown by 28 by June, of whom three were described as 'democrats', two DVP supporters, one from the Centre Party, 12 SPD and one KPD; in Stralsund the Stahlhelm group, numbering about 200 members in January, doubled during the next six months and the police calculated that 74 of the newcomers were 'Marxists'; in Greifenhagen, to the south of Stettin, of 64 Stahlhelm members who joined between January and June 1933, 13 had been SPD members, nine KPD members, and one a member of the DDP.

The extent of opposition to the Nazi regime within Stahlhelm ranks became painfully obvious as the SA carried out its step-by-step absorption of the veterans' organisation. The first step took place in late April 1933, when Seldte dismissed Duesterberg and formally placed his organisation under Hitler's political leadership.¹ In return for formally subordinating the Stahlhelm to Hitler, Seldte felt he had secured official recognition for the organisation and thus ensured its continued independence. This independence did not last long, however. On 21 June Hitler and Seldte reached a new agreement whereby the Scharnhorst Bund, the youth wing of the Stahlhelm, became part of the Hitler Youth and the Jungstahlhelm, which contained the members between the ages of 18 and 35, became the Wehr-

1. For details of the gradual takeover of the Stahlhelm by the SA, see Berghahn, op. cit., pp. 257-70; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, pp. 886, 890-2; Karl Martin Graß, 'Edgar Jung, Papenkreis und Röhmkrise 1933/34' (Univ. Heidelberg Phil. Diss. 1966), pp. 105-9. See also the testimony of Theodor Gruss, the national treasurer of the Stahlhelm in 1933, at the Nuremberg trials in 1946, in TMWC, xxi. 107-11; Theodor Duesterberg, Der Stahlhelm und Hitler (Wolfenbüttel and Hannover, 1949), pp. 138-42.

stahlhelm and was subordinated directly to the SA leadership. A few weeks later it was agreed that the Wehrstahlhelm would be integrated more closely into the SA. This aroused considerable anger among Wehrstahlhelm members, who thus found themselves drafted into the SA, often against their will and under threat of arrest if they refused.¹ In November 1933 came the next step: the reorganisation of the remaining Stahlhelm members into the 'SA Reserve I' (for those aged 36 to 45) and the 'SA Reserve II' (for those over 45). The 'SA Reserve I' was integrated completely into the SA in January 1934. The 'SA Reserve II', however, regained a measure of independence when Röhm and Seldte agreed in March that it would become the 'National Socialist German Front-Fighters' League' (Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Frontkämpferbund = NSDFB), to exist alongside the SA. The SA had largely swallowed the Stahlhelm, but in so doing it received hundreds of thousands of new members who felt little loyalty to the Nazi movement.

Not surprisingly, the forced amalgamation of the Stahlhelm with the SA went far from smoothly. In Pomerania many Stahlhelm groups openly resisted the amalgamation in June 1933.² To deal with the situation Heines, who at the time was 'Obergruppenführer' of the SA in Pomerania as well as in Silesia, was appointed 'Special Plenipotentiary for the Reorganisation of the Stahlhelm in Pomerania' and disbanded numerous Stahlhelm units and purged the memberships of many others.³ In Upper

1. See TMWC, xxi. 109.

2. See BDC, AOPG, Edmund Heines: report sent to Ministerialdirektor Daluge, Berlin, 24 June 1933.

3. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1777, f. 377: 'Amtlicher Preußischer Pressedienst vom 26.6.33'. See also WAP Szczecin, RS/186,

Silesia as well there was a vigorous campaign against a recalcitrant Stahlhelm.¹

Friction between the remnants of the Stahlhelm and the SA remained considerable in 1934. Particularly in Pomerania serious conflicts developed between members of the SA proper and members of the NSDFB. In May a number of NSDFB leaders were arrested for alleged 'sabotage against the SA, i.e. the direct or indirect influencing of former Stahlhelm members not to join the SA Reserve I'.² Reporting to Göring on the difficulties in Pomerania, the recently appointed Gestapo chief, Reinhard Heydrich, observed:

The antagonisms between the SA, the SA Reserve I and the NSDFB have become so aggravated that the functioning of the SA Reserve I is considerably endangered, and the action of the NSDFB in Pomerania has brought about considerable unrest in the population over and above the ranks of the SA.³

By mid-1934 brawls between the SA and former Stahlhelm members were common and arrests of NSDFB leaders increasingly frequent.⁴ The tension between the SA and the former Stahlhelm membership reached its peak shortly before the 1934 purge, when an SA-Sturmführer was fatally stabbed by an NSDFB member following

f. 31: The Polizeipräsident, Staatspolizeistelle, to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 26 July 1933; *ibid.*, f. 71: The Stahlhelm, Landesverband Pommern-Grenzmark, to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 24 July 1933.

1. See above, p. 262.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/186, ff. 469-71: Staatspolizeistelle to the Landräte des Bezirks and Oberbürgermeister der kreisfreien Städte, Stettin, 29 May 1934; Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), p. 82; Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Quellen), pp. 322-6.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 324-5.

4. See *ibid.*, pp. 326-9; WAP Szczecin, RS/240, ff. 19-59: police reports concerning conflicts between the SA and the NSDFB during the first half of 1934.

a summer solstice festival on 23 June in Quetzin, about 15 kilometers east of Kolberg.¹ Such was the feeling aroused by the killing that, to prevent dangerous confrontations, the police banned the NSDFB throughout Pomerania. The SA leadership demanded the total dissolution of the NSDFB, since 'scarcely a day went by which did not bring friction, fights and tension' whereby 'the instigators were almost always to be found in the ranks of the NSDFB'.² By the eve of the 1934 purge, the SA had been drawn into open conflict with the remnants of the Stahlhelm, which it had been so eager to absorb.

The SA lost more than it gained by the takeover of the Stahlhelm. The absorption of the Stahlhelm reduced the political reliability of the SA, diminished its suitability as an instrument of the Nazi leadership, and increased the threat which an unruly storm troopers' organisation posed to the orderly running of the country. Thus the takeover of the Stahlhelm puts into sharp relief a central dilemma facing the SA after the seizure of power. In order to acquire an important place in the new Nazi state, the SA leadership felt it was necessary that the organisation grow as rapidly as possible - which meant swallowing the Stahlhelm. Yet this sort of growth created more problems than it solved, making it less rather than more likely that the SA could fulfil a useful function in the 'Third Reich'. In addition, by taking over the Stahlhelm the SA exacerbated the unease and disgruntlement of the older, conserva-

1. For accounts of the incident, see BA, Sammlung Schumacher/402: newspaper clipping from an unnamed newspaper, dated 25 June 1934; VB, 26 June 1934, pp. 1-2; Stettiner Abendpost, 26 June 1934, p. 3; Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 83-5.

2. VB, 26 June 1934, p. 2.

tive nationalists with the Nazi rank and file, a theme which was to figure prominently in the summer of 1934.

(ii) The SA in 1933-1934

During late 1933 and early 1934 the problem of what was to become of the SA grew ever more pressing.¹ Without political opponents to fight, the SA leadership - and Röhm in particular - hoped to see the SA develop into a new National Socialist people's army. However, achieving such a goal (even if it was unrealistic), or indeed any solution to the problem of the SA's future role, depended upon the SA putting its own house in order, of establishing and maintaining discipline. Unlike the SS, which remained a small, elite force, the SA was growing by leaps and bounds and becoming less manageable at a time when it had to be brought under control.

The first call in 1933 to impose discipline on the storm troopers came from the SA leadership itself. Röhm was aware of the problems which indiscipline would cause, and discussed the issue quite openly when he appointed the Sonderkommissare in late February.² Referring to reports reaching his desk from throughout Prussia of excesses by SA and SS men, he expressed understanding for the violence and stated that he 'appreciated completely the long-suppressed rage and the desire for retribution'; however, he went on to stress that it was

1. See Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Macht-ergreifung, pp. 880-96; Broszat, Der Staat Hitlers, pp. 256-63.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/406: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Wahrung der Disziplin', Munich, 25 Feb. 1933. See also above, p. 261.

in the interests of the SA that the March elections take place and that uncoordinated violence constituted a harmful interference with the state authorities and the police (which in Prussia were controlled by Göring). Therefore Röhm prohibited 'excesses and acts of indiscipline', ordered that the SA and SS be on best behaviour to dispel rumours of a Putsch, and urged that special precautions be taken against 'provocateurs' in SA ranks.

During March, when the SA uprising really got under way, numerous Nazi leaders echoed Röhm's call for discipline. Hitler began the attempt to bring his supporters under control on 10 March with an appeal to the SA and SS in which he blamed the unwelcome violence on 'unscrupulous characters, mainly Communist spies', demanded the 'tightest discipline' and insisted that 'the molesting of individuals [and] the obstruction or disturbance of businesses must cease'.¹ On 13 March Reich Interior Minister Frick issued a circular, which was published in the press the following day, sharply criticising the uncontrolled violence and instructing the police to take action to stop it; ten days later the 'politische Zentralkommission' of the NSDAP, headed by Rudolf Heß, prohibited attacks by Party members on businesses.² Whereas on the one hand Göring appeared vigorously to approve of the mounting wave of SA terror, the remainder of the Nazi leadership felt compelled to take a public stand against the 'excesses'.

1. BA, R 43 II/1195, f. 61.

2. OT Gliwice, Landratsamt Gleiwitz/G63, f. 147; VB, 14 Mar. 1933, p. 2; Uhlig, Die Warenhäuser im Dritten Reich, p. 196; Genschel, Die Verdrängung der Juden, pp. 45-6; Mason, Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich, pp. 84-5.

Despite the calls by Nazi leaders for discipline, the violence of the storm troopers continued. Thus during April, after the anti-Jewish boycott, both Frick and the NSDAP leadership reiterated their warnings. Expanding on its decree of late March, the NSDAP 'politische Zentralkommission' explicitly prohibited members of the NSBO, SA, SS and the Party from acting on their own; not only unauthorised interference with the operations of economic organisations, factories and banks but even actions against the trade unions were forbidden.¹ For his part, Frick attempted to clarify the legal position of SA and SS members - who effectively stood outside the jurisdiction of the law - 'in order to punish offences against discipline and order in the appropriate manner'.²

A frequent theme in the calls for discipline was the alleged threat of left-wing subversion. Not only Hitler was concerned about violence being incited by 'unscrupulous characters, mainly Communist spies': in mid-February the Prussian Interior Ministry issued a warning that men who were neither SA nor SS members were wearing uniforms of the Nazi paramilitary groups and provoking incidents to discredit these organisations;³ in early March the SA leadership in Munich warned of possible Communist infiltration;⁴ and ten days later Röhm issued a di-

1. BA, R 43 II/1195, f. 210: 'Anordnung der politischen Zentralkommission der NSDAP', 7 Apr. 1933. See also Pätzold, Faschismus Rassenwahn Judenverfolgung, p. 76.

2. BA, R 43 II/1203, f. 2: The Reichsminister der Innern to the Staatssekretär in der Reichskanzlei, Berlin, 27 Apr. 1933.

3. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, ff. 39-40, and StAG, Rep. 10/30, f. 288: The Pr. Minister des Innern to all Regierungspräsidenten, Berlin, 15 Feb. 1933.

4. BA, NS 23/1: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Scheringer-Staffeln', Munich, 10 Mar. 1933.

rective outlining how the SA should cope with the avalanche of new members, stressing the need for 'careful measures to prevent a flooding of our splendid SA with unsuitable elements, provocateurs and spies'.¹ However, the issue of left-wing infiltration was not clear-cut. While the SA and particularly the Stahlhelm did receive a number of new recruits from the Left in 1933, blaming left-wing provocateurs for unwelcome violence could offer Nazi leaders a convenient means by which to distance themselves from the actions of their supporters if necessary. Such a hypothesis seems to be supported by the fact that during the early months of 1933, when Hitler used this argument and the outcome of the struggle against the trade unions was still uncertain, the Left had not yet had the time to organise effectively within the SA.

Until mid-1933 left-wing subversion had been only a small problem for the SA in eastern Germany, despite the efforts made by the KPD to undermine the storm troopers' organisation from within.² Immediately after the appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor there were renewed calls by the KPD for its supporters to 'encourage sedition in the ranks of the Nazis', to 'show the misled SA-proletarians for whose interests they are being used', and to 'pull the misled SA members over into the front of the fighting proletariat'.³ In a number of places the KPD did meet with success, particularly once it had been driven underground and Communist sympathisers sought to continue their political

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/407: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Aufnahme in die SA', Munich, 20 Mar. 1933.

2. Such efforts appear to have met with some success in the Ruhr. See Böhnke, Die NSDAP im Ruhrgebiet, p. 157.

3. VWS, 2 Feb. 1933, p. 1.

activity in the ranks of the SA.¹ For example, an account of the Nazi movement in Upalten, in Kreis Lötzen (East Prussia), noted that almost all the Communists in the area joined the SA in early 1933 and that they succeeded in driving many of the original Nazi members from the organisation.² Isolated reports during the early months of 1933 mention the expulsion or arrest of SA men for being Communists, spreading Communist propaganda or 'spying' in the SA,³ and in the districts of Kreuzburg and Rosenberg in Upper Silesia it appears that one-time Communist sympathisers in Nazi uniform were responsible for a number of violent incidents.⁴ However, the main wave of left-wing infiltration seems to have come after the SA campaigns against the Left were finished, when left-wing sympathisers entered Stahlhelm units in large numbers.

The summer of 1933 brought renewed efforts to control the SA men. On 6 July Hitler proclaimed that the 'revolution' was 'not a permanent state of affairs',⁵ a warning which provided Frick and Heß with the opportunity for yet another attempt to impose discipline on the Nazi rank and file. On 10 July the Interior Minister issued a proclamation stating that the 'vic-

1. See Weißbuch über die Erschießungen am 30. Juni 1934 (Paris, 1935), p. 47. Another target for left-wing subversion was the NSBO, especially in Silesia. See GStA, Rep. 77/16: Treuhänder der Arbeit to the Reichsarbeitsminister, Breslau, 7 Aug. 1933.

2. StAG, Rep. 240/C.61.a.: Ortsgruppenleiter Lange, 'Zur Geschichte der Ortsgruppe Upalten', Grunau, 4 Mar. 1942.

3. See, for example, WAP Poznań, OPS/177, f. 62: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Schlochau, 10 Apr. 1933.

4. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, ff. 63-5: NSDAP Untergauleitung Oberschlesien to the Preußisches Innenministerium, Oppeln, 5 May 1933; *ibid.*, ff. 67-8: The komm. Polizeidirektor, Staatspolizeistelle, to the Regierungspräsident, Oppeln, 31 May 1933.

5. See Bullock, Hitler, pp. 281-2.

torious German revolution' had entered the phase of evolution, 'i.e., normal, lawful reconstruction work'; according to Frick,

any attempt of sabotage of the German revolution, as can be seen particularly in unauthorised interference in the economy and the disregard of the orders of representatives of the state, must be punished with the strictest measures.¹

Two weeks later Heß repeated the Party ban on unauthorised violence and declared that the NSDAP too would take action against anyone who disobeyed.² Röhm also intervened once again, and explained that, while he was 'eager to secure and defend in all regards the rights of the SA as the officially recognised troop of the National Socialist revolution', he could not tolerate the reports reaching him of theft, burglary, plunder and the illegal settling of scores.³ Those responsible 'were placing the good reputation of the SA at risk', and only once indiscipline had ceased did Röhm feel he could 'advocate with the necessary weight before the state authorities that SA men might not be arrested by the police but only by SA men'.

Not only Röhm, but on occasion even regional SA leaders went on record to condemn the unthinking violence of the men under their command. In the Upper Silesian industrial region, for example, one SA Sturmbannführer, whose desk was covered with complaints about storm troopers' conduct, threatened in

1. BA, R 43 II/1263, ff. 91-2: The Reichsminister des Innern to the Reichsstatthalter and sämtliche Landesregierungen, Berlin, 10 July 1933.

2. BA, NS 6/215: The Stellvertreter des Führers, 'Verfügung', Munich, 24 July 1933.

3. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/403: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betreff: Disziplin', Munich, 31 July 1933.

July to expel SA members who created difficulties for the police.¹ Shortly afterwards Ramshorn, the leader of the entire Upper Silesian SA, condemned the continuing violence — which had included attacks by storm troopers on Party members — and ordered that the guilty people be thrown out of the SA and arrested.² The problem of adapting the SA to the period of 'evolution' was proving difficult indeed.

Although the summer of 1933 saw the first concrete steps to curb the excesses of the SA — some of the 'wild' SA concentration camps were closed and the Hilfspolizei were disbanded — the problem of the uncontrolled violence of the storm troopers remained. Frick in particular continued his efforts to bring the SA membership under control, and in October he issued a memorandum in which he stated bluntly:

Despite the repeated declarations of the Reich Chancellor and despite my numerous memoranda, in recent weeks new excesses by junior officers and members of the SA have been reported again and again. In particular, SA officers and SA men have undertaken police actions either for which the authorisation was lacking or which were carried out in a manner incompatible with the existing laws and the decrees of the National Socialist government. [...] These excesses finally must come to an end.³

However, this was no more effective than previous warnings.

1. WAP Katowice, SA-Brigade Gleiwitz/1: Sturmbannführer Mannchen to Standarte 156 in Beuthen, Gleiwitz, 11 July 1933.

2. WAP Opole, SA-Untergruppe Oberschlesien: The Führer der Brigade Oberschlesien, 'Untergruppenbefehl 33/33', Oppeln, 20 July 1933; *ibid.*: The Führer der Brigade Oberschlesien, 'Untergruppenbefehl Nr. 36/33', Oppeln, 26 July 1933. Nevertheless, the violence continued, and in late October Ramshorn felt compelled to issue another sharp warning about insufficient discipline within the SA. See WAP Katowice, SA-Brigade Gleiwitz/1: The Führer der Brigade 17, 'Brigadebefehl 52/33', Gleiwitz, 30 Oct. 1933.

3. BA, R 43 II/395, ff. 2-3: The Reichsminister des Innern to the Reichsstatthalter and the Landesregierungen, Berlin, 6 Oct. 1933.

The storm troopers were paying little heed to the Party and state leadership, and it was becoming apparent that, in order to control the SA, drastic measures would have to be taken.

It is against the background of these repeated efforts to establish order that the violence of the storm troopers during late 1933 and early 1934 must be seen. By continuing their unruly behaviour, the storm troopers were ignoring clear directives from the Nazi leadership, and local and regional SA leaders were either unable or unwilling to keep their men in line. Not surprisingly, this violence alienated public opinion, and it hardly enhanced the position of the SA in its quest for a new political role after the seizure of power. Although they did not realise it, the members of the SA who were committing this violence, and the SA leaders who could not control it, were playing a very dangerous game indeed.

A major part of the problem seems to have been a lack of constructive activities to take the place of the street fighting and electioneering which hitherto had been the staple diet of the SA man. Furthermore, it appears that a substantial number of storm troopers remained unemployed despite the new government's work-creation programmes and thus constituted a reservoir of potential trouble-makers.¹ In any case, the best jobs were meant for the veterans of the pre-1933 period, and by the summer of 1933 only a minority of the SA membership fell into this category. Nevertheless, the SA violence of late 1933 and early 1934 did not involve social protest, against unemployment, for example; rather it appears to have consisted of the rowdy be-

1. Jamin, 'Die Rolle der SA', p. 9. Unfortunately, records of how the storm troopers fared on the job market during 1933 and 1934 could not be found for the eastern Prussian provinces.

haviour of young men who believed that once they had an SA uniform they could do as they pleased.

Partly to keep idle hands busy and partly to underscore the presence of their organisation, regional SA leaders engaged their men in a succession of mass rallies designed to impress both onlookers and the participants themselves. Thus in late May 12,000 storm troopers participated in a march on the Anna-berg in Upper Silesia; in early June 16,000 took part in a march through Liegnitz; and at a monster rally in Breslau in October there appeared a reported 80,000 SA men.¹

Such activities failed to divert the storm troopers from unwelcome violence, however, and in any event the lead given by the SA leadership was far from unequivocal. For example, at the Liegnitz rally in June, Heines was hardly counselling moderation when he told the assembled storm troopers that,

one often now hears the question of what will become of the SA. The future of the SA men will be decided by the SA itself. [...] The SA demands the continuation of the German revolution; it declares that whoever is not for us is against us.²

With SA leaders prepared to make such statements, it is not surprising that storm troopers continued to bully communities throughout eastern Germany. In Stralsund in early June the local SA threatened to take over the entire city when it was felt that the mayor 'had not displayed enough energy with regard to his actions against Communist functionaries'.³ While

1. See Schlesischer N.S. Beobachter, 27 May 1933, p. 6; *ibid.*, 3 June 1933, p. 11; *ibid.*, 10 June 1933, p. 9; *ibid.*, 24 June 1933, p. 5; *ibid.*, 7 Oct. 1933, p. 1.

2. Der SA-Mann, 10 June 1933, p. 3.

3. See WAP Szczecin, RS/32, ff. 59-61: The Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 14 June 1933.

leading members of the Stralsund NSDAP were discussing these allegations with the Regierungspräsident in Stettin, SA men took matters into their own hands, formed special 'action committees' throughout the city, and threatened to occupy the city hall and arrest, among others, the mayor. Serious trouble was averted only by the intervention of the regional SA leadership, which condemned the behaviour of the Stralsund storm troopers. More frequently the intimidation assumed a less well-organised and overtly political character, as SA men became involved in countless fights and public disturbances of various kinds. Drunken brawls involving storm troopers were particularly common.¹ Often personal disputes were at the root of the violence. For example, in Kreis Randow in Pomerania a disagreement between the fiancée of an SA man from the village of Frauendorf and men at a 'Labour Service' camp in nearby Gotzlow led to a major brawl in mid-June between the Frauendorf SA and the men from the Gotzlow camp.² Throughout eastern Germany the SA was posing a serious threat to law and order.

Few aspects of the Nazi movement proved so effective in alienating the politically neutral or uncommitted public as the unruly behaviour of the storm troopers. During July 1933 in Königsberg, the NSBO - which in the East Prussian capital had attracted support mainly from white-collar workers in what were described as 'reactionary firms' - complained that the conduct

1. See, for example, WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, ff. 781-9: Josef Grziwotz to Polizeipräsident Ramshorn, Beuthen, 7 July 1933.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/22, 457-8: The Landrat des Kreises Randow, 'Betrifft: Schiesserei in Frauendorf', Stettin, 26 June 1933.

of the SA was a major cause of unrest among its members.¹ New NSBO recruits, primarily previously apolitical or conservative members of the middle classes, were especially upset at the indiscipline and violence of the SA men who 'all run around with pistols or knives'. In rural villages the activities of the SA could have equally negative effects. For example, in Penkuhl, in Kreis Schlochau in the Border Province, the local SA leader generated 'constant unrest among the population because of his behaviour', which included causing disturbances in the village tavern and repeatedly threatening villagers with arrest and concentration camp.²

For the police the conduct of the SA presented a particularly tough problem. While storm troopers clearly were a threat to public order, the police could face considerable difficulties if they tried to bring SA men to book. A typical incident occurred in Neustadt in Upper Silesia in late October, when a local police officer attempted to stop a group of SA men from singing loudly in the main square late at night.³ The officer tried to arrest the storm trooper whom he suspected was the ringleader, but the other SA men prevented him from doing so, surrounded him and gave him a serious beating. The storm troopers then began a rampage through the town, beating passers-by and finally becoming involved in a brawl with some Reichswehr soldiers in civilian clothing. Although charges eventually were

1. StAG, Rep. 240/B.17.e.: NSBO Ortsgruppenbetriebswart, 'Stimmungsbericht Juli 1933', Königsberg, 14 July 1933.

2. WAP Poznań, OPS/169, ff. 213-14: Hermann Kanthak to the Landrat in Schlochau, Quaks bei Penkuhl, 14 Aug. 1933.

3. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, ff. 675-7: Staatspolizeistelle, 'Ereignismeldung', Oppeln, 7 Nov. 1933.

brought against some SA men for their part in the affair, the storm troopers had, while causing a major disturbance without thought of the consequences, challenged the authority of the police.

In other cases the challenge to the police was equally worrying. In Neisse, for example, on 17 December two SA men assaulted a local Jewish businessman in a café and when a police officer came to investigate he was admonished not to 'proceed so harshly against SA men' and threatened with concentration camp.¹ Rather than provoke additional trouble, the police officer decided to leave the storm troopers alone.² In another incident, in the Upper Silesian village of Dombrovka a.d. Oder in January 1934, an SA-Truppführer demanded from the police the keys to the local jail since he felt that 'the SA has the right to proceed with arrests on the streets and to place people in custody'.³ It was hardly surprising in such circumstances that the SA failed to attract the confidence of the police or the public at large.

The problem of how to impose control on the SA was complicated further by Röhm's attempt to remove the storm troopers from the jurisdiction of the police and the courts. Röhm met with success, and in December regional SA leaders were informed

1. Ibid., ff. 565-9: Walter Redlich to NSDAP Kreisleiter Hörmann, Neisse, 19 Dec. 1933; ibid., ff. 577-8: The Oberbürgermeister, Neisse, 21 Dec. 1933.

2. The two SA men eventually were disciplined by the regional SA leadership. See ibid., f. 581: NSDAP Kreisleiter Hörmann to Polizeioberinspekteur Heinze, Neisse, 23 Dec. 1933; ibid., f. 595: Brigadeführer Ramshorn to the Staatspolizeistelle für die Regierungsbezirk Oppeln, Gleiwitz, 5 Apr. 1934.

3. Ibid., ff. 483-4: The Amtsvorsteher to the Landrat in Oppeln, Dombrovka a.d. Oder, 20 Jan. 1934.

that disciplinary action against SA men - even where they clearly had broken the law - could be handled only by the storm troopers' organisation itself.¹ According to the 'Supreme SA Command',

no member of the SA may be brought to trial, taken into custody, arrested in order to obtain a confession, or questioned as a witness or as an accused person without the permission of the SA leadership.

Orders were given to SA members that, should police officers attempt to summon them for questioning, the police were not to be obeyed but rather informed that SA men could not be summoned by the police forces. Where SA members had to be arrested this was to be handled by the SA-Standarte's legal advisor, and in every community of reasonable size the SA was to have its own legal council recruited from SA ranks. Despite these elaborate provisions, however, it is doubtful whether the self-disciplining of the SA actually functioned; cases of SA men punished by their own organisation were rare, and the failure of the SA to discipline its own ranks must have made it seem all the more dangerous. Röhm succeeded in removing the SA from the jurisdiction of the normal, civil judicial system. However, rather than strengthening his position Röhm probably weakened it, since now only by moving directly against the SA leadership could the police authorities - which included Göring and Himmler - effectively assert control over the SA.

The threat to internal security posed by the storm troopers led to growing concern in Berlin, where the Gestapo were taking careful note of the incidents in which SA members had been in-

1. Ibid., ff. 361-3: The Führer der Standarte 21, 'Standartenbefehl Nr. 1/33', Neustadt OS (undated, from early December 1933).

volved.¹ In early January the head of the Gestapo, Diels, met with Göring to discuss the difficulties which the storm troopers were causing. Special attention was paid to conditions in Breslau, where the behaviour of the SA and the 'excesses' of Heines in particular had aroused grave concern. According to Diels, informants who travelled to Berlin to give evidence against Heines needed to remain in the capital under assumed names since they dared not return to Breslau.

Despite the concern of the authorities, 1934 brought little change in the conduct of the storm troopers. Drunken fights and large-scale brawls were common, and SA men frequently used their positions to settle scores.² Far from diminishing as a result of the warnings of Nazi leaders, the number of violent incidents in which storm troopers were involved seems to have increased; in Greifswald, for example, the legal advisor of the area SA-Standarte admitted a 'constantly rising number of violent and dishonourable offences by SA men' during the first six months of 1934.³ Especially disconcerting was the tendency for SA rallies to degenerate into fights among storm troopers. In one instance, in Rummelsburg in eastern Pomerania, a Nazi gathering developed into a drunken brawl in which the storm troopers thrashed their own Standartenführer; in another, in the village of Penkun (about 25 kilometers southwest of Stettin), a heated exchange after a dance between SA

1. See, for example, R 43 II/1202, ff. 195-8: Inspekteur der Geheimen Staatspolizei to Staatssekretär Lammers, Berlin, 17 Feb. 1934; Diels, Lucifer ante Portas, pp. 275-6.

2. See, for example, WAP Szczecin, RS/14, ff. 198-9: The stell. Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Barth, 17 May 1934.

3. BDC, SA-Akte, Arwed Theuermann: Dr. Bartels to the komm. Führer der Brigade 10, Greifswald, 7 Aug. 1934.

leaders from Stettin and officials of the NSDAP 'Gau Leadership School' (Gauführerschule) in nearby Wartin ended in a melee during which the interior of a tavern was wrecked and a number of shots fired.¹

By mid-1934 the SA had succeeded in alienating not only a large proportion of the German population in general; it had managed even to arouse the hostility of many of its own members. The disaffection within the SA was due to a number of factors, including the disappointment of storm troopers who remained unemployed, the tension between veteran SA men and the new members who came into the organisation via the Stahlhelm, and the extreme insensitivity of many local SA leaders. Perhaps the most serious example comes from Kreis Bomst in the Border Province. Here, according to a report by the Landrat in early May, the local SA leadership had forced 'all sections of the population capable of bearing arms' into the SA and then staged numerous rallies, marches and night-time exercises, although many of the SA men, who were either farmers or farm labourers, had to work twelve hours per day in the fields.² In one case a local SA leader dragged from their beds at gunpoint those SA men who failed to appear at exercises. SA leaders, whose sole employment was with the SA, would drive cars during night exercises, watching men tramp on foot who already had

1. See BDC, SA-Akte, Max Heydebreck, f. 21: 'Einige Ausschnitte seines bisher gewohnten Auftretens', Rummelsburg, 22 July 1934; WAP Szczecin, RS/25, ff. 147-8: Gendarmerieposten Penkun to the Landrat des Kreises Randow, Penkun, 24 June 1934; *ibid.*, f. 151: The Beauftragte des Chefs des Ausbildungswesens der SA to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 2 Aug. 1934.

2. WAP Poznań, OPS/153, ff. 310-13: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Züllichau, 8 May 1934.

worked a full day. The Landrat concluded:

That such a situation will produce great bitterness among the people is obvious. In this way one will neither convince a single member of the working population to support the state nor produce in him a love of National Socialism.

The Regierungspräsident in Schneidemühl, who noted that a number of such reports had reached his desk, dutifully informed the Gestapo.¹

After the seizure of power the SA manifestly failed to adapt itself to the new circumstances. While Röhm's unsuccessful pursuit of his military aspirations for the SA was alienating the Reichswehr and other powerful interests, the continuing violence of the storm troopers on the ground was alienating the population at large.² It is difficult to say what proportion of the SA actually was involved in this violence; probably it was relatively small. What was important, however, was the atmosphere which was created, in which many conservative citizens, who otherwise supported the new government, did not feel secure.

For the most part the violence was not aimed against the Nazis' political opponents, nor was it directed particularly against the NSDAP. Indeed, rather than the SA leadership feeling 'increasing resentment' against the Party chiefs,³ it appears that relations between the SA and the NSDAP in eastern Germany were better, on the whole, after January 1933 than be-

1. Ibid., f. 314: The Regierungspräsident to the Landrat des Kreises Bomst, Schneidemühl, 31 May 1934.

2. This was not unique to eastern Germany; SA members were committing similar offences throughout the country. See Jamin, 'Die Rolle der SA', pp. 10-11.

3. This has been asserted by Dietrich Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party 1933-1945 (Newton Abbott, 1973), pp. 106-7.

fore - presumably because the principal source of conflict, finances, no longer posed a problem. Furthermore, calls for a 'second revolution', to which historians examining the 1934 purge have attached such significance,¹ were conspicuously absent until the eve of the purge.² The continuing SA violence was a consequence of an aggressive propaganda which convinced the Nazi movement's most active supporters that after the seizure of power they would be able to do what they liked, a rapid growth which made adequate control of the organisation virtually impossible, and a failure of the leadership to bring this behaviour to a halt. The threat which this violence posed to the organisation was expressed prophetically by Heinrich Schoene, the leader of the East Prussian SA, in February 1934. In an attempt to impress upon the men under his command the need for discipline, he warned that through the unruly conduct of its members 'the SA could appear unworthy of its lofty duties and thereby lose the trust of the Führer'.³ This was, in fact, roughly what happened.

1. See, for example, Mau, 'Die "Zweite Revolution"'; Bloch, Die SA und die Krise des NS-Regimes.

2. This observation is supported by the work of Karl Martin Graß, who points out that the 'second revolution' was essentially a slogan used not by the SA but by its conservative opponents. See Graß, 'Edgar Jung', p. 181.

3. StAG, Rep. 10/30, f. 322: The Führer der Obergruppe I, 'Betr. Disziplin in der SA', Königsberg, 22 Feb. 1934.

Chapter VIII

THE PURGE OF THE S.A. IN 1934

The purge of the SA in 1934 marked its end as a force in German politics.¹ What had seemed one of the most powerful political organisations in Germany offered virtually no resistance as its leaders were dismissed, arrested and murdered. Almost overnight the SA, which little more than a year before had played so crucial a part in the seizure of power, was transformed into a powerless mass organisation limited largely to ceremonial functions. Although the history of this purge at the national level has been subjected to detailed investigation, the development and effects of the purge at local and regional levels have received relatively little attention.² Yet the purge of the SA leadership not only removed a threat to the development of the armed forces as envisaged by Hitler and the Reichswehr; it also freed many cities, towns and villages of the SA bullies who had terrorised their populations.

1. For accounts of the purge, see Mau, 'Die "Zweite Revolution"'; Helmut Krausnick, 'Der 30. Juni 1934. Bedeutung - Hintergründe - Verlauf', Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament, xxv/1954; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, pp. 934-66; Weißbuch über die Erschießungen am 30. Juni 1934; Bullock, Hitler, pp. 284-309; Heinrich Bennecke, Die Reichswehr und der 'Röhm-Putsch' (Munich and Vienna, 1964); Bloch, Die SA und die Krise des NS-Regimes; Bracher, The German Dictatorship, pp. 298-305; Kurt Gossweiler, 'Die Rolle des Monopolkapitals bei der Heißeiführung der Röhm-Affäre' (Humbolt Univ. Berlin Phil. Diss. 1963); Graß, 'Edgar Jung', pp. 171-98, 246-85.

2. Recently, however, the history of the purge in Pomerania has been examined in more detail. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 39-53.

Of course, the threat which the SA posed to law and order, serious though it was, did not form the basic reason for the bloodbath in the summer of 1934. The key issues revolved around the future of the SA and the army. From late 1933, when Hitler opted for the expansion of the Reichswehr and closed the door to the transformation of the SA into Germany's armed force, Röhm became increasingly isolated. The SA leader's unwillingness to accept Hitler's decision, the declining health of Reich President von Hindenburg and the concomitant problem of succession, and the hostility of a number of Nazi leaders (including Himmler and Göring) to Röhm, as well as the behaviour of the storm troopers, paved the way for the radical and bloody solution to the problem posed by the SA.

During the first half of 1934, as dissatisfaction and tension built up within the SA¹ and the question of what should be done with the organisation became increasingly pressing, Röhm made a series of well-publicised 'inspection' tours of SA units. Speaking at SA marches and mass meetings, the Chief of Staff attempted to buttress his position and criticise the Nazi Party and Reichswehr leadership; in fact, however, he succeeded in providing his enemies with further ammunition for their campaign against him.² The last of these tours was a trip to Pomerania in late May, which occasioned great fanfare and extensive press coverage spotlighting Röhm personally and emphasising 'revolutionary National Socialism'.³ Accom-

1. See Bennecke, Die Reichswehr, p. 37; BDC, Führer-Akte, Peter Vogt: Deutsche Arbeitsfront, Abteilung Abwehr, 9 June 1934.

2. See Bennecke, Die Reichswehr, p. 43.

3. Stettiner Abendpost, 26/27 May 1934, pp. 1-3; *ibid.*, 28 May 1934, p. 3.

panied by his 25-year-old adjutant Hans Erwin Graf Spreiti — who also was murdered in the purge — Röhm spent a number of days in the province and spoke at mass rallies and parades in Stettin and Kolberg.¹ The SA chief's visit added to the tension among the Pomeranian SA, and afterwards it was alleged that during the tour Röhm had plotted with Pomeranian SA leaders, a number of whom suffered merely because they had had contact with him at this time.²

Soon after his visit to Pomerania, Röhm announced that, on doctor's advice, he would take an extended rest at Bad Wiessee, to the south of Munich.³ At the same time he ordered the SA to take leave during the month of July, but warned that the 'enemies of the SA' would be disappointed if they hoped that the organisation would not re-emerge afterwards. As elsewhere in the Reich, in eastern Germany the SA registered the tense political atmosphere, and numerous reports detail the disquiet among the storm troopers. Although most of these reports were made after 30 June by people with little affection for the purged SA leadership, nevertheless they appear plausible in the light of the previous, independent accounts of SA behaviour during late 1933 and early 1934; thus they probably reflect fairly accurately attitudes within the SA at the time. According to one report filed by a former Stahlhelm member in the SA-Reserve, the SA-Standartenführer from Stolp, Lenk, asserted

1. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), p. 40.

2. This happened, for example, to Erich von Neindorff, leader of the SA-Brigade in Schivelbein, who was arrested on 30 June. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Quellen), pp. 299-307.

3. Bennecke, Die Reichswehr, p. 81.

in Rummelsburg (eastern Pomerania) in mid-June that 'the new state will be an SA-state; whoever wants to have a post will have to come from the SA'.¹ At that point Max Heydebreck, the SA-Standartenführer in Rummelsburg, arrived and allegedly announced that according to Röhm 'something will happen in the near future'. From Greifswald came a similar report, that SA-Brigadeführer Arwed Theuermann had confided to a group of storm troopers that within a short time they would be called upon to sacrifice their 'possessions and blood'.² And from Stralsund came the report that in late May a local Sturmführer spoke to his SA unit in positive terms about the 'second revolution' and an imminent 'night of long knives', while on 27 June a secret meeting of local Stralsund SA leaders was informed by another Sturmführer that there soon would be 'three nights of long knives'.³

Most serious were the mounting tensions between the Reichswehr and the SA, particularly in Pomerania and Silesia, during the late spring of 1934.⁴ For example, shortly before the purge the SA leaders in the western portions of the Regierungsbezirk Köslin discussed SA-Reichswehr relations and concluded, perceptively, that 'the Reichswehr stands in opposition to the SA

1. BDC. SA-Akte, Max Heydebreck, ff. 11-12: report dated Rummelsburg, 24 July 1934.

2. BDC, SA-Akte, Arwed Theuermann: Frhr. von Forstner, Stettin, 22 July 1934.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/32, ff. 149-52: Staatspolizeistelle to the Regierungspräsident, Stettin, 25 July 1934. Where the term 'night of long knives' originated is impossible to say. It seems fairly clear, however, that it was used among the SA at the time of the purge.

4. For an account of the tension between the Reichswehr and the SA in various parts of Germany, see Graß, op. cit., pp. 185-93.

and is trying to influence the Führer so that he will reduce the SA'.¹ According to a farmers' leader in Kreis Kolberg, Fritz Molzahn (the SA-Sturmführer killed during the confrontation with NSDFB members at Quetzin on 23 June) had talked of the coming 'second revolution' and asserted that when this 'second revolution' came his task would be to occupy the Reichswehr barracks at Kolberg.² In Rummelsburg SA-Standartenführer Max Heydebreck was accused of having informed two Reichswehr soldiers in the spring of 1934 that once 'Papa Hindenburg' was dead 'then the SA will march against the Reichswehr', adding: 'What will the 100,000 man Reichswehr do then against so overwhelming a force of SA men?'³ And in Breslau three days before the purge a 'political instruction evening' was held for a Standarte in the SA barracks in the city, during which the speaker discussed the possibility that the Reichswehr might be called upon to fire on SA men.⁴ Perhaps most ominous were reports of interference by SA patrols of Reichswehr supply transport shortly before the purge.⁵ On the night of 28/29

1. BDC, AOPG, Erich von Neindorff, ff. 125-8: Gaugericht, 'Beschluß', Stettin, 7 Aug. 1936.

2. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Quellen), pp. 286-7.

3. BDC, SA-Akte, Max Heydebreck, f. 17: report of evidence given by Reichswehr soldier Kurt Hoffmann, dated Rummelsburg, 24 July 1934.

4. BA/MA, RW 6/67: The Oberstaatsanwalt to the Reichswehrministerium, the Reichsjustizminister and the Preußischer Justizminister, Breslau, 2 Aug. 1934.

5. See WAP Wrocław, RO I/1797, ff. 607-9: Kommandatur Oppeln to the 2. Kavallerie-Division in Breslau, Oppeln, 29 June 1934; *ibid.*, ff. 615-17: The Regierungspräsident to Gruppenführer Ramshorn, Oppeln, 30 June 1934; *ibid.*, f. 619: The Regierungspräsident to Standartenführer Metz, Oppeln, [?] June 1934.

June a Reichswehr supply lorry, travelling from Gleiwitz to Oppeln and back, was stopped repeatedly by armed SA patrols, and on one occasion weapons it was carrying were confiscated and its leader threatened by the head of the SA patrol.

Calls for a 'second revolution' and hostility towards the Reichswehr appear to have arisen in response to the mounting tensions on the eve of the purge. Such sentiments had not been a notable feature of the rowdy behaviour of the SA during the previous months, and seem to have been a result rather than a cause of the political isolation of the SA in mid-1934. Nevertheless, they aroused considerable concern among the Reichswehr and Nazi leadership. The spectre of millions of storm troopers challenging the Reichswehr, although rather unrealistic, was worrying, and it appears that the reactions of many SA leaders to rumours about the hostility of the Reichswehr led them to make statements which aroused fears all the more.

That the Reichswehr and the SA were being set against one another at this time has been established conclusively. During the week before the purge rumours of an SA Putsch were rampant, particularly in Silesia. On 24 June the Reichswehr commander in Silesia, Ewald von Kleist, was warned by the Chief of the Army Command (Chef der Heeresleitung), General Werner von Fritsch, of an 'imminent attack of the SA on the army', and was instructed to place his forces on alert.¹ During the fol-

1. See the affidavit of von Kleist presented to the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1946, printed in Bennecke, Die Reichswehr, p. 85. See also Mau, 'Die "Zweite Revolution"', p. 131; Krausnick, 'Der 30. Juni 1934', p. 321; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, pp. 957-8; Robert J. O'Neill, The German Army and the Nazi Party, 1933-1939 (London, 1966), p. 47.

lowing days von Kleist received 'a flood of reports' 'which gave the picture of feverish preparations on the part of the SA', and observed that 'in some garrisons there has developed dangerous tension between [the Reichswehr] and the local SA'. According to von Kleist, 'a spark would be enough to send the powder keg sky high', and in order to avoid bloodshed he decided to approach Heines. When von Kleist confronted the SA leader on 28 June with the reports he had received about SA preparations for a coup, Heines replied that he had been aware of preparations being made by the Reichswehr - which he had assumed were for an assault on the SA. Thereupon Heines gave his 'word of honour as an officer and SA leader' that he had neither planned nor prepared an attack against the Reichswehr.¹ Then on the evening after their meeting Heines telephoned von Kleist to report that not only in Silesia but throughout Germany the Reichswehr was 'on the alert for an SA Putsch'. The next day Heines flew to Munich to see Röhm, while von Kleist went to Berlin to inform Generals von Fritsch and Beck of his discussion with the Silesian SA leader. Von Kleist reported that he had 'the impression that we - the Reichswehr and the SA - are being egged on against each other by a third party', namely Himmler. At the request of von Fritsch and Beck he repeated his report to General von Reichenau, who answered ominously, 'That may be true, but it is too late now'.²

At the same time the SS and the police were making their

1. Similarly, in Schweidnitz SA-Brigadeführer Wilhelm von Grolmann gave a written declaration of loyalty to the Reichswehr commandant in the city. See Mau, loc. cit., p. 132.

2. See von Kleist's affidavit in Bennecke, Die Reichswehr, p. 85.

final preparations for the suppression of the coup allegedly planned by the SA. On 23 June the head of the political police in Breslau was ordered to file a report on roughly 15 individuals, including Edmund Heines.¹ On 24 June, the same day on which von Kleist received orders to take precautions against a possible assault by the SA, Himmler called a meeting of regional SS leaders (Oberabschnittsführer) at his office in Berlin.² The leader of the Silesian SS, Udo von Woyrsch, arrived in Berlin too late to attend, and met privately with Himmler the following morning. Repeating the message he gave to the meeting the previous day, Himmler informed von Woyrsch that the SA was planning a revolt and that Silesia in particular was a centre of unrest. Von Woyrsch was to ensure that this 'revolt' would be suppressed, and would be responsible for law and order in the region. Close contact was to be maintained with the Reichswehr, which in the event of serious trouble would take SS men into its garrisons and provide them with arms, and if necessary a special SS formation in Dresden could be called upon.

Once back in Silesia von Woyrsch passed on Himmler's orders to his subordinates.³ Then the SS leader contacted von Kleist, and preparations were made at the Breslau SS headquarters and its guard strengthened. Local SS leaders were

1. Krausnick, 'Der 30. Juni 1934', p. 321.

2. Ibid., p. 321; 'Urteil des Schwurgerichts beim Landgericht Osnabrück vom 2. August 1957 in der Strafsache gegen Udo von Woyrsch und Ernst Müller', p. 17; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, op. cit., p. 955-6; Graß, 'Edgar Jung', p. 255.

3. 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', p. 18. See also BDC, Mord-sache Kamphausen, ff. 379-84: SS-Gericht, 'Vernehmungsschrift', Munich, 23 Mar. 1936.

informed that Hitler was planning to move against an SA 'mutiny', that 30 June was to be the 'decisive day', and that contact had been made with the Reichswehr. Lists were to be prepared of people judged 'politically unreliable', and it was emphasised that only orders emanating from the SS should be obeyed. That the SS would be involved in bloodshed was made clear as well; in Hirschberg, for example, the head of the area SS informed local SS leaders that it would be necessary to arrest many SA members, that the SS would be called upon to kill, and that the 'slightest resistance' was to be met with the use of arms.¹ In the meantime the Reichswehr had received orders to make its garrisons ready for the SS, and in Berlin the chief of the 'Security Service' (Sicherheitsdienst = SD), Heydrich, set up a direct telephone link with the Silesian capital. On 29 June Ernst Müller, the head of the SD in Breslau, was ordered to Berlin, where he received a sealed letter containing orders to be delivered personally to von Woyrsch, and was then sent back to Breslau - in a private plane provided by Göring - to await further instructions.² The pieces were being moved into place.

The most important eastern German SA leaders killed in 1934 met their deaths in Munich. Among the SA leaders shot at Stadelheim prison on 30 June were Edmund Heines, Hans-Peter von Heydebreck and Hans Hayn, the leader of the SA in Saxony

1. IfZ, MA 198/2, microfilm of DZAM, Rep. 77, tit. 4093, Nr. 483: The Oberpräsident, 'Betr. Verhaftung verschiedener Persönlichkeiten in Bunzlau durch SS', Breslau, 29 Aug. 1934.

2. 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', p. 19. Unfortunately records of preparations for the purge in the other eastern regions are not available. It would appear, however, that preparations in Silesia were the most extensive, since there the greatest difficulties were foreseen.

and formerly Heines' Chief of Staff. Heines, who had joined Röhm at Bad Wiessee, was arrested there by Hitler, who discovered the Silesian SA leader in bed with a young man.¹ Heydebreck was arrested along the road from Munich as he was travelling to meet Röhm, brought to Stadelheim, and shot together with Heines.² On the same day the leader of the 'SA-Gruppe Ostmark', Siegfried Kasche, was arrested and brought to Göring in Berlin.³ Unlike Heines and Heydebreck, however, after energetic protestations of innocence Kasche managed to save his life. Of all the leaders of 'SA-Gruppen' in the eastern Prussian provinces only Heinrich Schoene, the SA leader in East Prussia who had taken up his duties in Königsberg only a few months before, was spared arrest.

Hitler had arrived at Bad Wiessee to begin the purge at approximately 5.00 in the morning on 30 June, and soon thereafter the suppression of the SA 'revolt' was underway throughout Germany. In Silesia the mobilisation of the SS began at roughly 7.00 a.m., when Heydrich telephoned Ernst Müller and ordered him to take to von Woyrsch the sealed letter he had been given.⁴ Should Müller be unable to find von Woyrsch, then he was to take the letter to the SS-Abschnittsführer in Breslau, Berkelmann, and then to ensure that the Breslau

1. After Heines was executed his homosexuality was discussed openly in the press, in order to emphasise his unfitness as an SA leader. See, for example, Oberschlesische Tageszeitung, 2 July 1934, p. 2.

2. According to one account, Heydebreck had come to Bavaria merely to discuss outstanding financial problems of his SA group. See Weißbuch über die Erschießungen am 30. Juni 1934, p. 95. Unfortunately, it is impossible to substantiate this.

3. See Bennecke, Die Reichswehr, p. 61.

4. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', pp. 21-3; Graß, op. cit., pp. 280-1.

Police Präsidium and communications centres in the city were seized by the SS. Failure, warned Heydrich, would cost Müller his head. Müller then drove to the Breslau SS headquarters, where he handed the sealed letter to Berkelmann. The order contained therein was written on the stationery of the Prussian Ministerpräsident (Göring), was dated 30 June 1934, and outlined the purge action in Silesia: Röhm, according to the document, had planned a coup, but this had been prevented by Hitler; a state of emergency was in effect and Göring had been given overall executive power in Prussia to deal with the crisis; and in Silesia this executive power rested in the hands of von Woyrsch. Enclosed was a list of SA leaders 'to be eliminated' (auszuschalten), including Edmund Heines, his brother Oscar (an SA-Obersturmbannführer in Breslau), Ramshorn, Freiherr von Wechmar (who only two months before had replaced Karl-Heinz Koch as SA-Brigadeführer in Liegnitz), and a number of other leading figures in the Silesian SA. The SA staff guard were to be placed under arrest, the Police Präsidium was to be occupied immediately, contact was to be established with the commander of the state police (Landespolizei), and a barge on the Oder carrying weapons belonging to the SA was to be 'secured'. Berkelmann contacted SS headquarters in Brieg which passed the message on to von Woyrsch at his estate in nearby Schwanowitz. Von Woyrsch came directly to Breslau, set up office in the Police Präsidium - which had been Heines' headquarters - and ordered his SS staff in Brieg to report to him in the Silesian capital. By 11.00 a.m. von Woyrsch was joined by a staff of SS officers and was ready to establish order in Silesia.

During the afternoon of 30 June von Woyrsch visited both the Reichswehr garrison in Breslau and the city's SS headquarters, but spent most of his time directing operations from the Police Präsidium. Müller took control of the telex in the police headquarters and established contact with the SD in Berlin.¹ From Berlin came the order to shoot the SA leaders on the list which Müller had brought with him the previous day, to arrest all SA leaders from the rank of Standartenführer upwards, and to use arbitrary powers of arrest should public security appear threatened. Thereupon a special formation placed at the disposal of von Woyrsch, the Feldjäger,² occupied the headquarters of the Silesian SA; however, since the SA was on leave very few SA leaders were there.

Late that same morning Brückner, who had received notification of the 'revolt' and instructions to arrest Heines should he be found, tried to contact Graf Friedrich Karl Pückler, the Silesian SA Chief of Staff and head of the 'SA Reserve I'. Reaching Pückler's deputy instead, Brückner passed on the news of the 'Putsch', and it was agreed that SA leaders throughout Silesia should be instructed to report to their headquarters in Breslau. Thus during the afternoon of 30 June SA leaders obediently reported to the organisation's Breslau offices, and then were not permitted to leave. In addition to imprisoning much of the Silesian SA leadership in its own headquarters, the Feldjäger also occupied the offices of the local SA-Brigade

1. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', pp. 24-9; Graß, op. cit., pp. 281-2.

2. The Feldjäger were especially reliable members of the SA and SS, charged with 'police duties' vis-à-vis members of Nazi organisations.

in Breslau and arrested a number of other SA leaders who then were brought to the Police Präsidium.

While a large portion of the SA leadership were being arrested in Breslau, orders were received from Göring naming the regional police commander (General der Landespolizei) Niehoff 'Special Commissar' for the provinces of Upper and Lower Silesia.¹ Niehoff was instructed to inform Brückner of his appointment, disarm and arrest Heines' staff and occupy their offices, arrest Hans Ramshorn, send police officers to take over the Police Präsidien in Gleiwitz and Oppeln, occupy an SA work camp (Hilfswerklager) in Breslau and disarm and intern its occupants, secure all airports and radio transmitters, take control of all weapons stores of the SA, cooperate closely with the SS, and maintain close contact with the army. However, Niehoff, who had not been given advance notice of the 'revolt', was away in Oppeln on official business and had to be called back to Breslau.² In mid-afternoon the Landespolizei under Niehoff began to carry out their orders and, with the help of the camp commander - who was able to maintain order and disarmed the occupants in order to prevent trouble - , occupied the Breslau SA Hilfswerklager.

The most important arrests, however, were reserved for the SS itself.³ The chief quarry, Hans Ramshorn, telephoned the Breslau Police Präsidium on the morning of 30 June, spoke with von Woyrsch's chief of staff, Maak, and agreed to come to Bres-

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/402: The Pr. Ministerpräsident, 'Befehl an die L.P.J. Südost', Berlin, 30 June 1934.

2. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', pp. 29-33; Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, p. 960.

3. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', pp. 33-8.

lau. Taking no chances, Maak then sent out an SS commando unit which intercepted the Upper Silesian SA leader in Ohlau, arrested him and brought him back to the Breslau police headquarters. The Lower Silesian SA-Brigadeführer, von Wechmar, was brought to Breslau by a similar deception. Pückler, who at this point was working closely with von Woyrsch, telephoned von Wechmar in Liegnitz, informed him that Röhm and Heines had been arrested and that he, von Wechmar, should come to Breslau to take Heines' place at the head of the Silesian SA. On the outskirts of Breslau von Wechmar stopped to telephone the SA headquarters in the city, and was told 'Do not come here; we are occupied!' before the connection was cut. Due to the rumours which had been circulating during the preceding weeks, von Wechmar concluded that the Reichswehr had occupied the SA offices. Thus he proceeded directly to the Oberpräsidium building, where he met Brückner and Pückler. Soon Maak appeared and announced that he had orders from von Woyrsch to arrest all the SA leaders in the building. After initial protests, Brückner convinced von Wechmar and two other SA leaders present to accompany Maak, who took them to the Breslau SS headquarters. The SA leader in Schweidnitz, Brigadeführer von Grolmann, also was brought to Breslau by a telephone ruse, and together with his adjutant, Rudolf Exner, he travelled to the SA 'Gruppe' offices, where the two men were arrested. By late afternoon the arrested SA leaders had filled the cells of the Breslau police headquarters as well as its canteen, a nearby restaurant and rooms in the SS headquarters, and Müller, who in the meantime had been appointed head of the Breslau Gestapo office by Göring, began to release some of those taken

into custody who were seen to pose no serious threat.¹

As arrests were being made during the afternoon of 30 June, Heydrich asked repeatedly from Berlin whether the executions had been carried out.² After some confusion over whether the marked SA leaders should be killed in Silesia or Berlin, orders were received to shoot the victims in the vicinity of Breslau. The men to be executed were assembled in the SS headquarters, and that evening, after their insignia had been torn from their uniforms, they were handcuffed, herded into a van, and brought to a forest near Deutsch-Lissa where they were shot by an SS commando unit in the early morning hours of 1 July. Among those murdered were four men on the Berlin death list, including Ramshorn and von Wechmar, as well as three others not on the list who held lower-rank positions in the Silesian SA hierarchy.

On Sunday, 1 July, the arrests continued. Oscar Heines was taken into custody at the Breslau police headquarters when, after hearing on the radio that his elder brother had been shot, he turned himself in. Another Silesian SA-Obersturmbannführer whose name was on the death list, Engels, was brought to the Breslau Police Präsidium from Cologne, where he had been arrested while on holiday. Yet another SA leader, the head of the Silesian 'mounted SA' (Reiter-SA) Gerhard von Klitzing, was arrested personally by von Woyrsch, who met him by chance at a Breslau racecourse where the SS leader was scheduled to receive an honorary prize. Both Oscar Heines and Engels were shot near Deutsch Lissa in the early morning

1. Ibid., pp. 38-9.

2. Ibid., pp. 40-4.

hours of 2 July, and with these killings the work of the SS in the Silesian capital was completed. Significantly, there had been no resistance. Indeed, it was indicative of the political sense of a number of SA leaders that they failed to grasp what was happening on 30 June and meekly offered themselves, in an act of naive loyalty, to their murderers.

Elsewhere in Silesia there was also bloodshed, and the opportunity was taken to settle personal grudges. One example was the case of Emil Sembach, the Reichstag deputy for Brieg and an SS-Oberführer until February 1934. Sembach, who had been expelled from the SS for alleged embezzlement, had aroused the enmity of von Woyrsch - to such an extent that during the spring of 1934 Sembach had asked Frick for special police protection because he feared the Silesian SS leader.¹ During his meeting with Himmler before the purge von Woyrsch had discussed Sembach's fate. Although Himmler decided that Sembach should be sent to Berlin, on the afternoon of 30 June he was arrested with his wife while bathing in Brieg and brought to the local SS office. That night he was taken to Oels, where he remained until Sunday evening, when he was driven by an SS commando unit into the Riesengebirge and shot. For Udo von Woyrsch, the task of purging Silesia of allegedly rebellious elements had provided the opportunity to eliminate his own enemies as well as Röhm's friends.

Not only active supporters of the Nazi movement but also completely innocent members of the public were murdered during

1. For background on the relations between Sembach and von Woyrsch, see BDC, Mordsache Kamphausen, ff. 2-4: The Oberpräsident to Major Buch, Breslau, 17 Feb. 1934; *ibid.*, ff. 9-12: 'Denkschrift des schlesischen Gauleiters und Oberpräsidenten' (written in late 1934).

the purge. In Lower Silesia, where the SS-Abschnittsführer Berkelmann and Hildebrandt had let it be known that the SS would 'clean things up', local SS leaders willingly used the purge to settle scores and terrorise the population.¹ In Hirschberg nearly 40 people were earmarked for arrest, and four of them - a Jewish lawyer, a Jewish businessman, a Jewish doctor, and the doctor's non-Jewish wife - were shot 'while trying to escape'.² In Bunzlau and the surrounding area the SS arrested a large number of people, particularly leading local conservatives and estate owners, and mistreated them in a manner which resembled the unruly behaviour of the SA.³ In Landeshut the local SS-Standartenführer ordered two innocent workers arrested and later shot, one in his cell because he had been making noise, the other in the town forest.⁴ In Glogau the local SS arrested a number of SA leaders, all of whom were released within a matter of days, as well as the leader of the Jewish veterans' league in the town, who was driven to a nearby wood and shot.⁵ And in Waldenburg a local SS leader, a master butcher named Deponte, used the opportunity to take

1. See Graß, 'Edgar Jung', p. 284.

2. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', pp. 53-4; Graß, op. cit., pp. 283-4.

3. See BDC, Mordsache Kamphausen, ff. 256-9: list of people arrested by the SS, Munich, 30 Aug. 1934; *ibid.*, f. 286: W. Pohl to the Treuhänder der Arbeit in Görlitz Dr. Zinnemann, Bad Elster, 9 July 1934; *ibid.*, ff. 314-17: 'Bericht über die Verhaftung des Rittmeisters a.D. Karl von Eggeling vom 1.7. bis 4.7.34', Giessmannsdorf, 16 July 1934; *ibid.*, ff. 320a-1: Frhr. von Wrangel to Hermann Göring, Rothlach, 31 July 1934; IfZ, MA 198/2, microfilm of DZAM, Rep. 77, tit. 4043, Nr. 483: The Oberpräsident, 'Betr. Verhaftung verschiedener Persönlichkeiten in Bunzlau durch SS', Breslau, 29 Aug. 1934.

4. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', pp. 54-6.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.

revenge on a former building inspector and Centre Party member named Kamphausen, whom he blamed for preventing his appointment as a supervisor of the city abbatoir: on 30 June Deponte led an SS squad which snatched Kamphausen from his home, drove him towards Schweidnitz, shot him and dumped his body on the side of the road.¹

In addition to the arrest and execution of SA leaders, the occupation of SA offices and the securing of buildings which might be important in a rebellion, special effort was made to disarm the SA.² Particularly after January 1933 the Silesian SA had gathered arms, as the organisation increased its emphasis on military training.³ In Upper Silesia, for example, according to a report filed on 5 July the following, most of which had belonged to the SA, had been seized: 298 rifles, 111 carbines, 24 miscellaneous weapons, 80 hunting rifles, 70 small-calibre rifles, 381 pistols, 37 'drum revolvers', over 16,000 rounds of ammunition, two kilogrammes of explosives and parts of a machine gun.⁴ Frequently the police confiscated everything belonging to the SA which might conceivably be used in the event of an uprising. Thus in Groß Strehlitz

1. Ibid., pp. 52-3; BDC, Mordsache Kamphausen, ff. 106-10: letter to the Reichsführer SS, Berlin, 9 Jan. 1935. The men involved in the killing were convicted and sentenced to prison terms, as it was determined that their motives had been personal. However, von Woyrsch actively intervened to secure pardons. See ibid., f. 123: The Führer des SS-Oberabschnitts Südost to the Reichsführer SS, Brieg, 28 Nov. 1934.

2. See BA, Sammlung Schumacher/402: The Pr. Ministerpräsident, 'Befehl an die L.P.J. Südost', Berlin, 30 June 1934.

3. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', pp. 12-13.

4. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1799, ff. 3-4: 'Zur Nachweisung der von Revierpolizei, Gemeindepolizei und Gendarmerie im Regierungsbezirk Oppeln beschlagnahmten Waffen einschl. P.O. Waffen', Oppeln, 5 July 1934.

in addition to arms the police seized steel helmets, field telephones, a condensor, regular table telephones, instruction booklets for setting up field communications and containers for electrical equipment.¹ Although weapons stores of this scale may have provided handy post hoc justifications for the action against the SA, they seem to have been amassed essentially for training exercises and were hardly sufficient for a coup against the army and the state; in the entire province of Upper Silesia the SA apparently did not possess even one complete machine gun.

The purge of the Silesian SA met with little opposition. In the one instance where there was a measure of resistance, in Leobschütz, this seems to have been due more to misunderstanding than rebellious intent.² There the storm troopers, inside a disused factory which served as an SA headquarters and an arms store for the Reichswehr, apparently fired on an SS unit and police who had been ordered to secure the building. The police then reached by telephone the SA men, who surrendered their weapons and were brought first to the local Reichswehr garrison and then to the Leobschütz jail. The following day all those involved, except the two SA officers in charge at the time, were released. In the meantime, however, news of the incident had been reported to Berlin and Breslau, and von Woyrsch ordered that the two men be killed. After some delay -

1. Ibid., ff. 40-2: report of materials seized from the SA in Groß Strehlitz, undated (from August 1934).

2. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', pp. 44-8; WAP Wrocław, RO I/1930, ff. 197-201: The Landrat to the Staatspolizeistelle, Leobschütz, 2 July 1934; BDC, SA-Akte, Alois Bittmann, ff. 13-14: The Führer der Gruppe Schlesien to the Oberste SA-Führung, Breslau, 11 Nov. 1935.

there was reluctance to execute the obviously innocent young men - an SS commando unit took the two from their cells, stood them against a wall, blindfolded and shot them.

Among surviving SA leaders the reaction to the purge was to assert their 'absolute obedience' and loyalty to Hitler and to distance themselves as far as possible from Röhm and the 'unheard-of state of affairs' which had existed before 30 June.¹ Within the SA public discussion of the purge was forbidden, and loyalty to the murderers of their erstwhile leaders became the watchword for the storm troopers.

In Pomerania the purge proceeded rather differently than in Silesia. Since the leadership of the Pomeranian SA had changed often, there was not a counterpart to the especially brutal Edmund Heines, who had been able to place his own men in leading positions over the years. The role of the SS was less important in the purge in Pomerania; there was not the violence against innocent members of the public as had taken place in Silesia; and, although the purge of the SA leadership in the province was thorough, only two leading members of the SA - Pomeranian SA leader Hans Peter von Heydebreck and his adjutant Walter Schulz - were killed. On the other hand, those murdered in Pomerania included former members of the SS who had been dismissed from the organisation for their involvement in the concentration camp set up in the Stettin docks: Joachim Hoffmann, the former camp commandant; Gustav Fink, a former guard at the camp; and Fritz Pleines, the former deputy head

1. See, for example, PAP Bytom, Gemeinde-Verwaltung Miechowitz/G.M. 123: The Führer der SAR I Brigade Schlesien to the 'Führer und Männer der schlesischen SA-Reserve I', Breslau, 1 July 1934.

of the camp.¹ Despite the suspicions aroused by Röhm's visit to the province a few weeks before, Himmler and Heydrich did not take such care to eliminate the SA leadership in Pomerania as in Silesia. The leader of the SS in Stettin, Robert Schulz, did not play an important role in the purge, and emergency executive powers for dealing with the 'revolt' were granted not to Schulz but to the head of the police in Stettin (General der Schutzpolizei Stettin, Kommandant der Landespolizei-Inspektion Nord), Strecker.

The purge in Pomerania began in the early afternoon of 30 June. At about 1.00 p.m. notification arrived that Röhm had been arrested, and roughly one hour later the Regierungspräsident in Stettin was informed that emergency police powers had been delegated to Strecker.² Soon thereafter Strecker issued to the various civil and military authorities in the province - the Oberpräsident, the Regierungspräsidenten, the Police President in Stettin, the SS, the Gestapo offices in Stettin and Köslin and the regional Reichswehr command - guidelines for the action which was to follow.³ News of the planned 'attempt on Hitler and the Reich' was relayed, together with the information that Röhm, Heines and other SA leaders had been

1. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 287, 292, 301. For a list of victims killed on the weekend of 30 June-1 July, see BA, NS 23/474, ff. 103458-64, copied in Bennecke, Die Reichswehr, pp. 87-8.

2. See WAP Szczecin, RS/120, f. 7: Landespolizei-Inspektion Nord, Stettin, 30 June 1934; *ibid.*, ff. 65-7: The Regierungspräsident to the Oberpräsident, Stettin, 1 July 1934. The text of the report of 1 July is copied in Drewniak, Początki ruchu hitlerowski, pp. 274-5, and in Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 40-1.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/120, f. 7; Drewniak, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

arrested. Since the Pomeranian capital had not yet been notified of Heydebreck's arrest, specific orders were issued for his capture and the police searched for him feverishly until they learned that their quarry had been shot in Bavaria.¹ At the same time SA headquarters in Stettin were to be occupied; all SA weapons' stores were to be taken over by the police together with the SS; and all airports and radio transmitters were to be secured. As in Silesia, all necessary precautions were made to forestall a coup which never had been planned.

During the afternoon and evening of 30 June the police arrested those SA-Brigadeführer they could find, as well as many other SA leaders and a number of people who 'might use the present situation for reactionary purposes'.² In addition to rounding up a large portion of the Pomeranian SA leadership, the police also took control of government buildings in Stettin, as well as the SA headquarters and, for a short period, the Stettin radio transmitter.³ Among those arrested in the Pomeranian capital on 30 June and 1 July were the SA-Brigadeführer in Stettin Werner Naumann, the head of the Marine-SA in the city Hans-Dietrich Harries, the Stettin SA-Standartenführer Wilhelm Leuschner, the deputy provincial leader of the NSDFB Günther Rohleder, and Heydebreck's adjutant Walter Schulz. Altogether more than 50 SA men - most of them members of the

1. See *ibid.*, p. 203; Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), p. 42.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/120, ff. 65-7.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/122, f. 1: Landespolizei-Inspektion Nord, 'Lagebericht', Stettin, 30 June 1934; WAP Szczecin, RS/120, ff. 87-8: The Polizeipräsident, 'Lagemeldung Nr. 1', Stettin, 1 July 1934; *ibid.*, ff. 89-90: The Polizeipräsident, 'Lagemeldung Nr. 2', Stettin, 2 July 1934; Drewniak, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-8.

guard at the Pomeranian SA headquarters - were taken into custody in Stettin on 30 June alone. Those arrested were held in police cells and offices until the evening of 2 July when, on the order of the Berlin Gestapo headquarters, the 20 most important prisoners were transported to the Reich capital.¹ A special order came regarding Walter Schulz, who had earned a reputation for drunken, rowdy and brutal behaviour and who was shot after arriving in Berlin.² Many of the other Pomeranian SA leaders transported to Berlin remained in custody for most of the summer, but they survived.

As in Stettin, throughout the province the purge proceeded without serious problem. Public buildings were secured and suspect individuals arrested, many of whom were not members of the SA.³ Particularly common were arrests of former Stahlhelm members, a consequence of the tensions in Pomerania before 30 June. In Kreis Anklam, for example, by early morning on 1 July five people had been arrested, four of whom were described as 'Stahlhelmer' (a civil servant in the finance office in Anklam, a coal merchant, a former secretary of the Landbund, and a 'reactionary' estate owner) and one who was a Communist worker; in Kreis Demmin four individuals were ar-

1. WAP Szczecin, RS/120, ff. 91-2; *ibid.*, f. 93: 'Namentliches Verzeichnis der am 2.7.1934 - 19.55 Uhr - von Stettin nach Berlin mittels Kraftwagen überführten festgenommenen Personen'; *ibid.*, ff. 129-30: The Regierungspräsident to the Pr. Minister des Innern, Stettin, 3 July 1934.

2. For evidence of Schulz' behaviour during 1933 and 1934, see BDC, SA-Akte, Max Heydebreck: SS-Sturmführer Braasch to 39 SS-R-Standarte in Lauenburg, Rummelsburg, 3 July 1934.

3. For a list of the people in the Reg. Bez. Stettin who had been arrested by the morning of 1 July, as well as of buildings occupied and weapons seized, see WAP Szczecin, RS/120, ff. 31-6: The Regierungspräsident, 'Lagebericht', Stettin, 1 July 1934.

rested, three SA members and the wife of one suspect who could not be found; in Kreis Swinemünde two were taken into custody, a teacher (an ex-member of the Stahlhelm) and a legal consultant whose political affiliation was not made clear; and in the Greifswald area, in addition to SA leaders arrested in the city itself, six people were taken into custody including a police officer and a dentist who had been a local Stahlhelm leader. The crack-down in Greifswald, however, was less the result of an attempt to quell the imaginary revolt than of the brutal behaviour of a young SS leader who arbitrarily suspended a number of police officers and arrested people (including the elderly mayor of Wolgast) at his whim.¹

As in Silesia, special efforts were made in Pomerania to confiscate the weapons belonging to the SA. On 1 July Strecker issued a decree in which he ordered that weapons in the possession of the SA be surrendered to the police.² Considerable numbers of arms were collected, although the amounts hardly would have been adequate for a coup.³ In Kreis Anklam, for example, the SS confiscated 94 rifles and two pistols; in Greifswald 58 rifles, one carbine, roughly 750 rounds of ammunition and communications equipment were seized; in Kreis Demmin the police confiscated 30 rifles and two machine guns; in Pyritz 11 rifles, four carbines, two light machine guns and

1. See BDC, SA-Akte, Arwed Theuermann: The Führer der SS-Reserve Rügen, 'Lagebericht', Greifswald, 2 July 1934; WAP Szczecin, RS/18, ff. 213-15: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Greifswald, 14 July 1934.

2. WAP Szczecin, RS/121, ff. 13-14: Landespolizei-Inspektion Nord, 'Sonderbefehl für die Entwaffnung der SA', Stettin, 1 July 1934; *ibid.*, f. 17: Landespolizei-Inspektion Nord, 'Be trifft: Entwaffnung der SA', Stettin, 2 July 1934.

3. WAP Szczecin, RS/120, ff. 31-6.

a few other small arms were collected. The disarming of the SA continued during the first week of July, but without revealing the quantities of weapons which would have been necessary were a coup actually planned.¹

The ease with which the arrests and the confiscation of weapons were carried out in Pomerania allowed a relatively rapid return to normal life. Already on 1 July Strecker regarded the situation peaceful enough to permit those meetings, rallies and marches which already had been scheduled, insofar as they did not involve the participation of the SA.² During the first week of July the reports from Stettin painted a picture of continuing calm,³ and on 2 July the press could report truthfully that, according to the police, 'the overall situation in the whole of Pomerania is calm. The SA stands firm and united behind the Führer Adolf Hitler.'⁴ For the murdered SA leaders there was not a trace of support.

On Monday, 2 July, the first steps were taken to reorganise the SA in the wake of the purge. Hitler, acting as 'Supreme SA Leader', empowered SS-Gruppenführer Kurt Dalwege to make the necessary preparations for the planned reorganisation of SA 'Gruppen' in eastern Germany.⁵ In Silesia and Pomerania

1. See *ibid.*, ff. 129-30: The Regierungspräsident to the Pr. Minister des Innern, Stettin, 3 July 1934; *ibid.*, ff. 131-2: The Regierungspräsident to the Pr. Minister des Innern, Stettin, 4 July 1934.

2. *Ibid.*, f. 37: The Kommandeur der L.P.J. Nord, Stettin, 1 July 1934.

3. *Ibid.*, ff. 129-32.

4. PT, 2 July 1934, p. 1.

5. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/402: The Oberster SA-Führer, 'Verfügung', Berlin, 2 July 1934.

Daluege had a particularly large task. Nevertheless, he could be confident of the passive acceptance of the reorganisation by the SA membership.

In Silesia the SS alert had been lifted by the morning of 3 July,¹ while in Berlin Brückner conferred with Daluege about the 'reconstruction of the Silesian SA' and met with Göring and Hitler.² Among the first decisions taken was to replace Heines as Breslau Police President, and Göring instructed Brückner to entrust a Nazi civil servant, Regierungsrat Schmelt, with the leadership of the Breslau police. On the following day Hitler named Otto Herzog, until that time leader of the SA in the Gau Weser-Ems, to lead the Silesian SA in Heines' place.³ Herzog began his new duties immediately, and on 6 July he called a meeting of all Silesian SA leaders from Sturmbannführer upwards in order to 'thank the faithful' and to introduce himself to his new subordinates. In Upper Silesia the position left by Hans Ramshorn at the head of the SA was filled by SA-Standartenführer Metz, the Police President in Oppeln, as a 'reward for loyalty'.⁴ With the top leadership positions quickly filled, it was then possible to put the rest of the Silesian SA in order and to deal with the SA leaders who remained in custody.

In Pomerania too the process of reorganising the SA began

1. See 'Urteil gegen Udo von Woyrsch', p. 56.

2. Deutsche Ostfront, 4 July 1934, p. 1. According to Peter Hüttenberger, Brückner was arrested in connection with the purge. See Hüttenberger, Die Gauleiter, p. 200. This remains unsubstantiated, however, and appears doubtful.

3. BA, NS 23/1: The Oberster SA-Führer, Berlin, 4 July 1934; Deutsche Ostfront, 6 July 1934, p. 1.

4. Ibid., 7 July 1934, p. 1.

as soon as the arrests ceased. On 2 July Strecker appointed a provisional leader for the 'SA Gruppe Pommern', Brigadeführer Palm, to supervise the filling of posts left empty by the purge, and then handed back his emergency police powers to the regular civil authorities.¹ Although the reorganisation started almost immediately after the purge, a permanent successor to Heydebreck was not named until two weeks later, when Hans Friedrich was appointed.² Thus for a second time within little more than three years Friedrich was called upon to lead the Pomeranian SA after an unsuccessful 'revolt'.

A belated casualty of the purge in Pomerania was Wilhelm Karpenstein. Friedrich's appointment seems to have signalled the demise of Karpenstein, who had been at odds with the SA leader ever since being named Gauleiter in 1931. Certainly the purge weakened Karpenstein's position, as he had enjoyed good relations with the murdered Heydebreck. Probably with this in mind, while the purge was still in progress Karpenstein made repeated effusive declarations of loyalty to Hitler, distancing himself from the dead SA leaders.³ These efforts proved in vain, however, and in late July Karpenstein was dismissed because of his 'repeated refusal to follow the orders of the Party leadership' and replaced by the former mayor of Koburg, Franz Schwede.⁴ The purge apparently had offered a

1. PT, 2 July 1934, p. 1; WAP Szczecin, RS/120, f. 53: The Kommandeur der L.P.J. Nord, 'Sonderbefehl Nr. 8', Stettin, 2 July 1934.

2. Stettiner Abendpost, 16 July 1934, p. 3.

3. See WAP Szczecin, RS/122, f. 1; Stettiner Abendpost, 2 July 1934, p. 5; PT, 3 July 1934, p. 1; Die Voz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 42-3.

4. Stettiner Abendpost, 23 July 1934, p. 2.

welcome opportunity to unseat Karpenstein, whose autocratic behaviour had earned him many enemies, and he was arrested, taken to Berlin and held in custody for a period at Gestapo headquarters.¹

By late July the initial phase of the purge had been completed. The top leadership of the SA in Pomerania and Silesia had been either liquidated or arrested; the loyalty of the storm troopers to Hitler had been confirmed; and any capacity of the organisation for independent initiative had been destroyed. There then began the consolidation of the purge. This meant a thorough cleansing of SA ranks as well as the processing of the cases of SA leaders still imprisoned, and involved the dismissal of many of the local SA leaders who had caused such trouble during the previous 18 months.

The suppression of the 'revolt' offered the Nazi leadership a belated opportunity to discover its moral standards. While the purge was still under way, for example, Göring asserted piously that 'the Führer will no longer tolerate that at the leadership of the state and the movement stand men who due to unfortunate inclinations have become asocial and amoral elements'.² And when he named Viktor Lutze to replace Röhm as Chief of Staff, Hitler stressed that the behaviour of SA leaders, like that of Party functionaries, had to be 'exemplary'; he stipulated further that drunken leaders 'who thereby conduct themselves in an unworthy manner in front of the public, who are rowdy or cause excesses, are immediately to be thrown out of the SA', and that 'offences against § 175 [homosexuality] will

1. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Darstellung), pp. 44-5.

2. Oberschlesische Tageszeitung, 2 July 1934, p. 6.

be answered with immediate expulsion from the SA and the Party'.¹ In early August Lutze ordered that each SA 'Gruppe' set up an 'investigation committee' which, like the 'SA Special Court' in Munich, was to concern itself 'not only with the events which led to 30 June', but also the general 'disorderly conduct, immorality, chasing after posts, materialism, embezzlement, drink-excesses, ostentatiousness and gluttony, etc.' of SA leaders.² Behaviour which had been tolerated for years by the SA, NSDAP and Hitler himself was not to be condemned.³

In Pomerania Friedrich, with the support of Gauleiter Schwede, energetically sought to keep undesirable elements out of the SA, and at the end of July he appealed to the Gauleitung to expel from the NSDAP 15 SA leaders involved in the action of 30 June.⁴ By late August many of those arrested had been released from custody, but Friedrich tried to ensure that they nevertheless remained cut off from their former bases of support. On 24 August he ruled that the suspended SA leaders were forbidden to wear their uniforms, enter their old offices, contact SA or Party members with regard to the charges against them, or to leave their homes without first reporting to the local SA leader.⁵ For good measure, all members of the SA were warned not to make contact with the suspended leaders.

Valuable insight into the nature of the purge is offered

1. See Engelbrechten, Eine braune Armee entsteht, p. 293.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/403: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Säuberungsaktion innerhalb des SA Führerkorps, Untersuchungsausschüsse bei den Gruppen', Munich, 9 Aug. 1934.

3. Jamin, 'Die Rolle der SA', pp. 10-19.

4. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Quellen), pp. 279-80.

5. Ibid., pp. 288-9.

by examination of some cases of SA leaders who lost their positions. One such was Wilhelm Leuschner, who had been an SA-Standartenführer in Stettin until 30 June. Leuschner, a machine fitter born in Bremen in 1907, joined the NSDAP and SA in July 1929 and rose quickly through SA ranks in Stettin, becoming head of the 'Standarte 2' in August 1931.¹ He remained Standartenführer until January 1933, when he fled Stettin to avoid prosecution for his part in the bombing of the SPD newspaper Volksbote during the previous summer. Upon his return he came into conflict with Hans Friedrich, then leader of the 'Untergruppe Pommern-West' and with whom he had been at odds during 1932. In August 1933 he managed to secure a position on Heines' staff in Breslau, but returned to Stettin in October after Heydebreck took command of the Pomeranian SA. On 1 July 1934 Leuschner was arrested; the following evening he was sent to Berlin; and he remained in custody for two months. At the end of August he was brought before the Pomeranian SA's investigation committee, where he was accused of having had close contact with Heines, Heydebreck, Walter Schulz and Graf Spreti, having known about 'Röhm's plans', having expressed the desire to kill Friedrich, involvement in the Stennes 'mutiny', homosexuality, drunken excesses and brutal behaviour toward his SA men.² Although it noted that Leuschner's knowledge of the 'plans' of Röhm and Heydebreck for a 'revolt' could

1. See BDC, SA-Akte, Wilhelm Leuschner, ff. 58-9: Wilhelm Leuschner to the Oberste SA-Führung, Steinseiffen Rsgb., 4 Mar. 1935.

2. Ibid., ff. 3-4: 'Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der SA-Gruppe Pommern in Sachen des beurlaubten Standartenführers Leuschner z.Zt. in Haft', Stettin, 16 Aug. 1934; *ibid.*, ff. 14-15: 'Zusammenfassender Bericht über die Beschuldigungen gegen den ehem. SA-Standartenführer Wilhelm Leuschner'.

not be proved, the committee upheld many of the charges - including those of brutality, the alleged threat against Friedrich, and the close contact with Heines - and Leuschner was expelled from the SA.¹ The case against Leuschner involved a number of typical accusations against purge victims: close contacts with the murdered SA leaders, brutal behaviour, drunkenness and allegations of homosexuality.

Another fairly typical case was that of Arwed Theuermann, until the purge the leader of the SA-Standarte headquartered in Greifswald. Like Leuschner, Theuermann was arrested on 1 July, taken to Berlin the following evening, and held there through August; his case too was reviewed in late August, and he too was expelled from the SA.² Theuermann stood accused on two basic counts: his close contacts with Heydebreck and his past behaviour. Among the allegations made against Theuermann were that he had served in the Russian army during the War (he was a Baltic German), that he had played a cowardly role in the Greifswald shootings of July 1932, that he had neglected his SA duties and spent too much time in taverns, and that he had spoken out against the Reichswehr. A key accusation was that Theuermann had lost contact with his SA men, particularly after the absorption of the Stahlhelm by the SA, and had failed to prevent indiscipline and acts of violence

1. Ibid., f. 37: 'Abschluss-Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der SA-Gruppe Pommern in Sachen des Standartenführers Leuschner', Stettin, 1 Sept. 1934.

2. See BDC, SA-Akte, Arwed Theuermann: 'Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der SA-Gruppe Pommern in Sachen des Oberführers Theuermann z.Zt. in Berlin in Haft', Stettin, 22 Aug. 1934; *ibid.*: Obersturmführer Rudolf Holland, 'Bericht über Oberführer Theuermann und die Verhältnisse bei der SA-Brigade 10 in Greifswald'.

by storm troopers under his command.¹

A third example is the case of Max Heydebreck, the leader of the SA-Standarte headquartered in Rummelsburg. Heydebreck (no relation of Hans-Peter von Heydebreck), the owner of an oven-construction business and member of the NSDAP since 1930, also was arrested during the purge and held in custody in Berlin for an extended period.² Among the charges levelled against him were that he had been a member of a workers' council in Rummelsburg in 1918/1919,³ that he had been friendly with Gruppenführer von Heydebreck, Karpenstein and Walter Schulz, and that he had been instrumental in preventing the police from combatting the excesses of SA members, in particular Schulz.⁴ In addition to the usual accusations of unfortunate friendships and improper conduct, however, Heydebreck also faced the hostility of the local SS leader in Rummelsburg, who used the purge to rid himself of a troublesome SA officer.

As Friedrich stipulated, none of the Pomeranian SA leaders taken into custody as a result of the purge were allowed to return to their old posts. Most were expelled from the SA after their cases had been reviewed. A few, however, were judged

1. Ibid.: 'Bericht des SA-Truppführers Koschinsky, Wolgast'; ibid.: Dr. Bartels to the komm. Führer der Brigade 10, Greifswald, 7 Aug. 1934.

2. See BDC, SA-Akte, Max Heydebreck: The Führer der Gruppe Pommern, Stettin, 27 July 1934; BDC, AOPG, Max Heydebreck: statements of SS-Untersturmführer Paul Braasch and Max Heydebreck before the Pomeranian Gaugericht, Stettin, 18 Feb. 1935.

3. Heydebreck insisted he had become a member only to defend the nationalist point of view. See BDC, SA-Akte, Max Heydebreck: statement by Heydebreck, dated Stettin, 11 Sept. 1934.

4. See ibid.: statement by Otto Schulz, dated Rummelsburg, 24 July 1934; ibid.: SS-Sturmführer Braasch to the 39. SS-R Standarte, Rummelsburg, 3 July 1934.

innocent of the most serious charges against them and either given jobs elsewhere in the SA or administered a reprimand and a demotion.¹ For example, Hans-Georg Will, the former chief of staff of the 'Gruppe Pommern', was exonerated of wrong-doing because, although he was involved in financial irregularities of the 'Gruppe', it was considered he had acted on the orders of the murdered Gruppenführer; since he could not return to his old position, he was given other tasks in the SA. On the other hand, Sturmführer Hans Gotthard von Arnim, an SA leader from Stolp, was dismissed because of involvement in financial irregularities, heavy drinking and his 'extraordinarily friendly relationship' with von Heydebreck.² Hans-Dietrich Harries, former leader of the Marine-SA in Stettin, was dismissed after having been found guilty of falsifying and misusing SA documents. Hans Viewig, the Standartenführer in Stolp, was expelled from the SA for wasting the organisation's funds. Altogether, by the end of 1934 15 cases stemming from the purge had come before the investigation committee. While purging SA ranks certainly did not solve all the problems of indiscipline and rowdy behaviour in Pomerania, it proved an effective means of removing some of the most troublesome and disruptive individuals from the organisation.

Significantly, the SA leaders disgraced and expelled during the purge did not face criminal charges, and they were not brought before regular courts. Indeed, when setting up the SA investigation committees Lutze had stipulated that the Ger-

1. See BA, NS 23/210: 'Zusammenstellung betr. Pommern-Fälle', 21 Dec. 1934.

2. Ibid.; BDC, SA-Akte, Hans Gotthard von Arnim: The Führer der Gruppe Pommern, Stettin, 27 July 1934.

man penal code would not be employed and that the hearings were to remain short.¹ The failure to bring disgraced SA leaders before the courts exposes the difficulties which faced their accusers. Firstly, many NSDAP members still at large were equally guilty of brutal and rowdy conduct. Secondly, treating the transgressions of SA leaders as an internal Party affair, away from public scrutiny, may have been necessary to help separate them from their followers. And finally, since the 'revolt' was a fiction, airing the affair in the courts - which would have given the accused a chance to speak up in public - might have proved extremely embarrassing for the Party and the government.

As in Pomerania, in Silesia the new SA leader took the opportunity to cleanse his organisation. However, unlike Friedrich, who had had a long and chequered association with the Pomeranian SA, Otto Herzog was completely new to the Silesian storm troopers' organisation and had no particular scores to settle. Perhaps for this reason, when at the end of July he compiled a list of former members of the Silesian SA who were under suspicion, Herzog did not order that they had to lose their posts; rather, he recommended merely that they be placed on 'leave' until their cases were heard.² Nevertheless, the charges brought against SA leaders in Silesia were very similar to those faced by their Pomeranian counterparts, and confirm the accounts of SA misconduct which had

1. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/403: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Säuberungsaktion innerhalb des SA Führerkorps, Untersuchungsausschüsse bei den Gruppen', Munich, 9 Aug. 1934.

2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/402: The Führer der Gruppe Schlesien to the Oberste SA-Führung, Breslau, 26 July 1934.

been accumulating in police files during the previous year. One SA-Brigadeführer, for example, was accused of being 'strongly alchoholic' and having taken part in 'many excesses'; another faced similar charges, together with accusations of financial irregularities; a Sturmbannführer was accused of alcoholism, 'excesses' and having 'tyrannised the population'; one Standartenführer faced not only charges of alcoholism and 'tyrannising the population', but also of having a 'completely immoral private life'; another was accused of 'suspicion of § 175', of having had contact with Communists in early 1933, and of having played an 'unclear role' during the 'revolt'. The catalogue of alchoholic excesses, financial irregularities, tyrannical and rowdy behaviour and the alienation of the public provides a revealing picture of life in Germany between January 1933 and June 1934, and helps explain why the purge did not stop with the murder of Röhm and his lieutenants but also involved so many SA officers at local and regional levels.

It was this aspect of the 1934 purge - the removal from public life of rowdy, unreliable and brutal SA members - which struck the most responsive chord among the population. Many communities which had suffered for months at the hands of local SA leaders were relieved to see the storm troopers' organisation humbled. The fact that this had been accomplished outside the law, by murder, mattered little. Indeed, immediately after the purge the Regierungspräsident in Stettin reported that 'the news of the drastic action of the Führer has evoked general satisfaction and relief among the population', and added that 'even the news of the shooting of Gruppenführer

von Heydebreck led to no disturbances whatsoever'.¹ There was even criticism that the SA leadership had not been purged earlier.² According to the Gestapo office in Stettin, the reaction of the population to Hitler's Reichstag speech of 13 July, in which he discussed the 'Röhm revolt', was particularly positive.³ From Kreis Cammin, north-east of Stettin, came the report that not only did 'every sensibly-thinking citizen fully and warmly greet the liberating act of the Führer', but also that the population in the district 'now expects the government and the police to continue the purge down to the districts and the villages, down to the lowest levels of the Party and the Labour Front'.⁴ There were isolated instances where the public disapproved of the more brutal and blatantly unjust killings, as for example in Silesia where the murders of Emil Sembach and the two SA men in Leobschütz aroused indignation.⁵ On the whole, however, the purge seems to have been genuinely popular, and was indicative of the extent to which the SA had isolated itself politically.

In the other eastern Prussian provinces the course of the purge was quite different from that in Pomerania and Silesia.

1. WAP Szczecin, RS/120, ff. 65-7.

2. Ibid., ff. 131-2.

3. Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Quellen), pp. 31-4.

4. WAP Szczecin, RS/9, ff. 339-45: 'Lagebericht Monat Juli 1934', signed by Kreisbauernführer Mildebrath, Kahlen, 19 July 1934. For evidence of similar sentiments in East Prussia, see BA, R 18/5643, ff. 83-5: The Landrat to the Staatspolizeistelle in Königsberg, Pr. Eylau, 12 July 1934.

5. BA/MA, RW 6/69: Abwehrstelle Schlesien, 'Betr.: Stimmen aus dem Volke zur innenpolitischen Lage Deutschlands', Breslau, 3 Aug. 1934.

East Prussia and the Border Province largely were spared the bloodshed that occurred elsewhere, although the purge did not pass these provinces by entirely. The leader of the 'SA Gruppe Ostmark' was arrested and held in custody for a time, and Anton von Hoberg und Buchwald, the leader of the SS 'cavalry' (SS-Reiterführer) in East Prussia was taken from Königsberg to his estate near Preußisch Eylau and shot on the orders of the East Prussian SS leader Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski.¹ However, the fact that neither Arno Manthey, the SA leader in the Border Province itself, nor Heinrich Schoene, the leader of the East Prussian SA, was among the purge victims, seems to have helped spare the SA in these two provinces. A further important factor appears to have been the relatively good relations between the Reichswehr and the SA; there was, for example, no evidence that in East Prussia and the Border Province the two organisations were provoked against one another (as in Silesia).

On the whole, the purge in East Prussia and the Border Province amounted to little more than a short-lived state of emergency. In East Prussia, for example, the SA - like the other Nazi organisations - hurried to assert loyalty to Hitler,² and local Nazi Party groups were put on alert for a short period while efforts were made to collect weapons in the hands of the population.³ During mid-July there were unfounded rumours that Gauleiter Koch had been arrested by the SS - rumours which were

1. See Hertz-Eichenrode, Politik und Landwirtschaft, pp. 264-5; Görlitz, Die Junker, pp. 394-5; Władysław Bartoszewski, Erich von dem Bach (Poznań, 1961), pp. 8, 13.

2. See Königsberger Tageblatt, 1 July 1934, p. 1.

3. See StAG, Rep. 240/C.54.b.: 'Chronik der Ortsgruppe Stein-damm (Königsberg)', p. 54.

made plausible by Koch's close association with the murdered Gregor Straßer and which provoked an official denial.¹ However, this had little to do with the SA, and seems to have arisen from hostility between Koch and the East Prussian farmers' associations.

In his Reichstag speech of 13 July, Hitler admitted that 76 people had been liquidated during the purge - a number subsequently amended to 83. The killings were legalised after the fact, when on 3 July the Reich government passed a law stipulating that 'the measures taken on 30 June and 1 and 2 July to suppress the acts of high treason were legal, being necessary for the self-defence of the state'.² There had been virtually no resistance anywhere, and the purge was welcomed by Reichswehr Minister von Blomberg on behalf of the army, even though two generals - von Schleicher and von Bredow - had been among its victims.³ Within a few days of the killings the cabinet post which Röhm had held - Reich Minister without Portfolio - was abolished, as were the SA commissar posts and both the 'Political Office' and the 'Press Office' which the SA had set up in Berlin.⁴ At a stroke the SA had been reduced

1. See StAG, Rep. 240/B.31.c.: The Kreisleiter, Heiligenbeil, 17 Oct. 1941; StAG, Rep. 10/34, f. 122: The Oberpräsident, Königsberg, 20 July 1934; *ibid.*, f. 137: The Oberpräsident, Königsberg, 19 July 1934; BA, NS 23/210: Obergruppenführer Schoene to the Oberster SA-Führer (undated, from early August 1934).

2. RGBl, 1934, I, 529.

3. For a survey of the more prominent victims, see Bracher/Sauer/Schulz, Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung, p. 961.

4. IfZ, Fa 107, f. 135: The Chef des Stabes, 'Betrifft: Auflösung von Ämtern der Obersten SA-Führung', Berlin, 14 July 1934; Graß, 'Edgar Jung', p. 131.

to political impotence.

Why did the purge take the form it did, and why did it claim so many lives in Silesia and Pomerania? One answer was suggested by Viktor Lutze in a conversation with Pomeranian Nazi leaders on 17 August 1935.¹ Lutze had come to inspect the SA in central and western Pomerania, and that evening he had a long, informal discussion in Stettin with the most important Nazi leaders in the province, including Gauleiter Schwede, SA-Gruppenführer Friedrich and SS-Standartenführer Robert Schulz. According to Schulz, who later filed a report of the conversation with the SS leadership, after having had much to drink Lutze began to discuss the purge, describing his own role in the affair and expressing anger that so many people had been killed. In Lutze's opinion, many killings had been quite unnecessary. He asserted that Hitler originally had wanted only seven people killed; this was increased to 17, and although Hitler had not expressly authorised this he subsequently approved. This, Lutze said, had been already more than enough, 'but then 82 people were simply shot arbitrarily' due to malice and to satisfy personal grudges. Despite Schulz' defence of the purge, Lutze continued, without actually naming names, and made it clear that he held Himmler and, to a lesser extent, Göring responsible for the arbitrary and unnecessary murders.² Lutze's comments caused a considerable stir among his select company, many of whom had profited from the purge,

1. See BA, Sammlung Schumacher/402: 'Bericht', Stettin, 21 Aug. 1935.

2. On another occasion Lutze had described one of the dead Silesian SA leaders, von Wechmar, as 'completely innocent'. See BDC, Mordsache Kamphausen, f. 8: The Chef des Stabes to Walther Darré, Berlin, 12 Nov. 1934.

and his account appears essentially correct. Except for those shot in Bavaria on Hitler's orders, the Silesian and Pomeranian purge victims were selected for murder by the SS, the SD or Göring.

In October 1934 Silesian Gauleiter Brückner had made claims similar to those of Lutze. Two months before he was dismissed from his Party and government posts, Brückner composed a memorandum levelling numerous accusations against Udo von Woyrsch, with whom he had been on bad terms.¹ In addition to making a series of allegations about von Woyrsch's personal and professional conduct, Brückner placed the blame for the bloodshed in Silesia during the purge squarely on the shoulders of the SS leader. Although Brückner tactfully ignored the parts played by Göring, Himmler and Heydrich, he spelled out the role of von Woyrsch in broadening the terms of reference of the purge, helping to turn the planned elimination of a few SA leaders into a bloodbath with scores of victims.

From the evidence from eastern Germany, it hardly seems justified to describe the purge as a 'bloody climax' of a conflict between the NSDAP and the SA.² Rather, the purge appears to have been a climax of conflicts between the SA and the SS, the Reichswehr, the civil authorities and the police, which had taken place as society at large was growing increasingly hostile to the storm troopers. In Silesia and Pomerania, where the purge was most severe, the Gauleiter fell from power soon after-

1. BDC, AOPG, Helmuth Brückner: Brückner to Darré, 'Denkschrift des schlesischen Gauleiters und Oberpräsidenten', Breslau, 10 Oct. 1934. Another copy of Brückner's memorandum may be found in BDC, Mordsache Kamphausen, ff. 9-12.

2. Thus Orlow, The History of the Nazi Party 1933-1945, pp. 106-11.

wards, and in both provinces relations between the NSDAP and SA leaderships immediately preceding 30 June had been relatively good. At the local level as well, conflicts between SA leaders and Nazi Party functionaries seem to have played no significant role; indeed, local Party leaders often had been no less guilty of bullying their communities than their counterparts in the SA. Similarly, the purge of the SA in the eastern Prussian provinces does not appear to have been a campaign against a 'revolutionary' or 'socialist' SA, but rather against an organisation unable or unwilling to control the rowdy and violent behaviour of its members. The threat which the SA had posed to the established order before 30 June 1934 was not the threat of revolutionary transformation but of uncontrolled violence which was incompatible with the smooth functioning of an authoritarian dictatorship.

The purge of the SA exposed its political bankruptcy in the wake of the seizure of power. By 1934 the SA leadership, in its efforts to assert itself, had become thoroughly isolated politically, and the coalition of interests which combined against the SA was a reflection of this isolation. The SA had failed to find a satisfactory political role once street battles with the Left were past, and proved unable to attract allies in 1934. Instead it exhibited an almost total failure to grasp the political realities at the time. While the army, the police and the state were becoming increasingly hostile, the SA membership continued to act in a manner which made it hated by a large proportion of the population. At a time when Hindenburg was on his death-bed, when the problem of succession was plain for all to see, when relations with the army were ob-

viously of crucial importance to the government, the failure of SA leaders to perceive that their behaviour was extremely dangerous betrayed political illiteracy of quite staggering proportions. Having failed to secure an important role in the development of Germany's armed forces, and having blindly cultivated enemies at every turn, the SA was not necessary to any powerful interest within the structure of the 'Third Reich'. Having grown rapidly and haphazardly, it had no particular economic or social base, defended no specific interests, and really was needed by no-one. Indeed, the only reason for its continued existence was that it was there already, a relic of the 'years of struggle' which had become painfully out of place after the Nazi leadership had captured political power.

EPILOGUE: THE S.A. AFTER THE PURGE

After the purge the SA never regained a position of power within the 'Third Reich'. Once the Left was defeated in 1933 the SA no longer served an important political function, and once the SA was defeated in 1934 there no longer was the pretence that the organisation had an important political function to serve. While the purge ended the role of the SA as a major force in German politics, it was also a blow against the uncontrolled violence of the storm troopers and removed from that violence a large measure of its menacing political content. Since the SA no longer was a powerful organisation or a danger to other interests in the 'Third Reich', the conduct of its members could be dealt with more easily as purely criminal behaviour. At the local level, as at the national, the SA essentially had been brought under control.

Although the violence of the storm troopers seems to have diminished after the purge, nevertheless it did not disappear. The violent incidents in which SA members continued to be involved during the mid- and late-1930s resembled much of what had occurred before 1934: brawls, drunkenness and disturbances of the peace. The difference was that now they were at most a serious nuisance, whereas before June 1934 they had constituted a political threat. In some cases the violence was fairly widespread. For example, in December 1934 the Gestapo office in Oppeln reported that Upper Silesian SA men were becoming involved in 'one brawl after another' and that this had given rise to considerable tension between the SA and the general

population.¹ In May 1935 the Stettin Gestapo office reported that in Stralsund the SA had become particularly unruly, causing numerous brawls, criticising the NSDAP leadership and creating difficulties for the local police.² In Breslau SA men were involved in a number of incidents during the summer of 1935, including assaults on Jews and foreigners of allegedly Jewish appearance, and thus aroused much public antipathy and caused complications for the police, especially where foreign nationals were concerned.³ It was the sentiments expressed in such actions which propelled the last major act of political violence in which the SA was involved, the pogrom of 9/10 November 1938. At that time, however, the storm troopers who participated in the burning of synagogues and the ransacking of Jewish homes and businesses did so at the call of the Nazi regime. Far from being a manifestation of spontaneous violence, the 1938 pogrom was carefully orchestrated by the Nazi leadership.⁴ Politically significant, spontaneous SA violence was a thing of the past.

After the purge there was a predictable decline in the enthusiasm of SA members for participating in the activities of the organisation. The fact that the SA had lost its political importance was not lost on the membership. Thus during the spring of 1935 the Stettin Gestapo office reported that

1. WAP Wrocław, RO I/1930, f. 255: Staatspolizeistelle, 'Tagesbericht zum Erlaß vom 24. Mai 1934', Oppeln, 3 Dec. 1934.

2. See Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Quellen), pp. 59-62. See also *ibid.*, pp. 86-95.

3. BA, Sammlung Schumacher/409: The Polizeipräsident to the Regierungspräsident, Breslau, 9 July 1935.

4. See Genschel, Die Verdrängung der Juden, pp. 177-80.

among the storm troopers there was 'a certain lassitude and apathy', 'uncertainty over the purposes and duties of the SA', and 'doubt about the raison d'être' of the organisation.¹ A few months later, after the introduction of conscription in May 1935, the morale problem was described even more explicitly:

There is still generally within the SA a lack of interest in its activities. In the SA one is of the opinion that the tasks of the SA have become redundant through the introduction of conscription. It is in fact the case that the ordinary SA man does not know at all why he is taking part in SA activities. There is a lack of a clear perspective and a firm purpose.²

Conscription, together with the compulsory 'labour service' introduced in June 1935,³ left many young men with little desire to participate in yet another militarised organisation - especially when that organisation appeared to have no clear function. At the same time, many of those who had been pressured into joining the SA during 1933 and 1934 eagerly sought excuses to leave.⁴ By the late 1930s few members of the Hitler Youth bothered subsequently to enroll in the SA, and former SA members frequently did not re-join the organisation after their tour of duty in the Wehrmacht was finished. The SA indeed had become superfluous.

The purge marked the beginning of a long and steady decline

1. Thévoz/Branig/Lowenthal-Hensel, Pommern 1934/35 (Quellen), p. 62.

2. Ibid., p. 94. See also ibid., p. 110.

3. For a discussion of the introduction of the compulsory 'labour service', see Fritz Petrick, Zur sozialen Lage der Arbeiterjugend in Deutschland 1933-1939 (Berlin, 1974), pp. 14-21.

4. See, for example, WAP Poznań OPS/148, ff. 387-413: The Landrat to the Regierungspräsident, Züllichau, 27 Sept. 1934; BA, NS 23/68: The Führer der SA Gruppe Niedersachsen to the Oberste SA-Führung, Hannover, 12 Feb. 1938.

in the membership of the SA.¹ The tumultuous growth which had characterised the SA during 1933 and 1934 was reversed, due partly to the cleansing of SA ranks, partly to the increasing importance of the army, and partly to the fact that there seemed little reason to remain in an organisation which had no political weight. Already during the late summer of 1934 the process of contraction had begun. For example, between August and September more than 100,000 men left the SA throughout Germany - a drop of 3.8 per cent in a single month.² The development in the eastern Prussian provinces matched that in the country as a whole: during August the East Prussian SA lost 4980 (4.1 per cent) of its 120,964 members, the Pomeranian SA 3651 (3.3 per cent) of 111,513, and the Silesian SA 8003 (4.3 per cent) of 184,251. By late 1937 the SA membership was less than half of what it had been before the purge, both in the Reich as a whole and in the eastern regions.³ At the end of September 1937 the SA in East Prussia numbered only 56,680, in Pomerania 63,007 and in Silesia 74,436 members.

This development accelerated during the Second World War, when the great majority of SA men - between 70 and 80 per cent - served in the armed forces.⁴ Those who remained in the SA during the War frequently were called upon by local authorities and

1. Jamin, 'Die Rolle der SA', pp. 20-1.

2. See the reports of SA strength in August and September 1934 in BA, Sammlung Schumacher/415.

3. BA, NS 23/68: The Chef des Führungsamts to the Reichskassenverwalter der SA, Munich, 23 Oct. 1937; *ibid.*: The Chef des Führungsamts to the Reichskassenverwalter der SA, Munich, 10 Nov. 1937.

4. See BA, Sammlung Schumacher/415: The Chef des Dienststelle Schriftum to the Pressestelle des Stabschefs, Munich, 16 Apr. 1943; Jamin, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-4.

the Wehrmacht to guard military buildings, repair bomb-damaged transport facilities, act as air-defence squads and evacuation teams, and assist with the pre-military training of young men. The mobilisation of the population and the preparations for civilian resistance during the final stages of the War, however, were left to other organisations. Except on an ad hoc basis at local level, the SA was not entrusted with important tasks during the War. Thus the SA survived until 1945, but as an empty shell, having lost most of its members and almost totally without power or purpose.

CONCLUSION

Nazism was a political movement which made a cult of violence, and the history of the SA was a history of political violence. The thousands of young Nazi activists in the SA played an indispensable role in the spread of the Nazi organisation and its propaganda, were instrumental in transforming politics during the final Weimar years into the politics of violent street confrontations - politics on the Nazis' terms - and enabled Hitler in 1933 to turn a right-wing coalition government into a Nazi dictatorship. Yet the violence which was so crucial to the rise of the Nazi movement and to the creation of the 'Third Reich' undermined attempts by the SA to acquire power within the new governmental structure which emerged. The character of SA violence left its practitioners incapable of turning their indispensability in 1933 into real political power thereafter. The defeat of the SA in 1934 was closely related to the reasons for its successes in the previous years, and thus offers perhaps the best vantage point from which to assess the entire history of the Nazi storm troopers.

The purge in 1934 was a consequence of the peculiarly apolitical politics practiced by the SA. It was politics without political calculation; in their refusal to obey repeated calls of the Nazi leadership for restraint, their persistent challenging of existing authorities and antagonising of powerful interests, and their nearly total disregard for public opinion, the SA leaders and SA men betrayed a sorry political

illiteracy. The leaders and rank-and-file members of the SA did not realise, and seemed determined not to realise, what forces they were playing with. The fact that the action against the SA leadership in 1934 was so genuinely popular - it was arguably the single most popular domestic political move made by the Nazi leadership since taking office - illustrated how untenable was the position into which the SA had marched. Similarly, the almost completely passive acceptance of the murders of SA leaders exposed the bankruptcy of the politics of violence as practiced by the storm troopers. The SA had alienated whatever potential allies it might have cultivated; yet when it was attacked by the cynical coalition of Hitler, Himmler, Göring and Reichenau, the reaction both of the victims themselves and their erstwhile followers was of total unpreparedness and dumb surprise.

What then did men like Edmund Heines and Hans Ramshorn think they were doing during 1933 and 1934? As became apparent on 30 June 1934, they had managed to squander the advantages gained during the previous eighteen months. Their behaviour, as well as that of the men they led, demonstrated appalling political ignorance, not because they had reached the wrong conclusions about the political situation but because they probably had never bothered to reach any conclusions at all. For the men in the SA, politics was about violence, about demonstrating toughness, guts, and a simple-minded military spirit. It was not about political calculation and careful appraisal of power relationships; and the failure to make careful political judgements is what led SA leaders such as Heines, Ramshorn and Heydebreck to their deaths in 1934. This spirit, which

permeated the SA, was reflected in literature about the organisation published during the 1930s.¹ It was described perceptively by Rudolf Diels, who spoke of the 'simple marchers' in the SA 'who were ready for sacrifice without [demanding] anything in return'.² According to Diels, the storm troopers 'wanted neither to inherit nor to win anything', but were gripped by a vague notion of 'socialism'. While this idea of 'socialism' should not be taken too seriously as a clear political platform — for it is doubtful that there was a clear idea in the SA of what this meant beyond a soldierly comradeship and distaste for politicians — Diels' picture of an organisation motivated by simple ideas of direct action without careful thought of the political consequences seems basically correct.

The SA was composed not of clever politicians but of self-styled men of action for whom political calculation was often foreign and beyond their narrow range of vision. The intelligent people in the Nazi movement, those who were sufficiently cynical and understood political power, occupied positions in the Party apparatus, not in the SA. It is significant that the more astute and successful Nazis, such as Erich Koch, made their careers in the NSDAP, whereas the SA attracted men of the calibre of Edmund Heines, Hans Ramshorn and Wilhelm Leuschner. In the eastern Prussian provinces at least, no Nazi politician whose power-base was the SA later rose to prominence in the 'Third Reich'.

1. See, for example, Gundelach, Vom Kampf und Sieg der schlesischen SA; Engelbrechten, Eine braune Armee entsteht.

2. Diels, Lucifer ante Portas, p. 153.

Part of the SA's allure during the years prior to 1933 had been that it seemed to offer a promise of solving the complicated problems of Weimar politics with the fist. The fact that the SA demanded of its members a minimum of thought and offered a maximum of action proved an important drawing card in recruiting a younger generation profoundly disillusioned with the social and political system of the Weimar Republic. This meant, however, that the SA recruited few men and still fewer officers who could realise that the politics of unthinking, direct action were out of place after Hitler had acquired power. Political violence in the 'Third Reich' was to be planned; there was no room for the outbursts of men like Heines.

Clear evidence of the limitations of the crude, violent politics of the storm troopers is the fact that the SS, rather than the SA, became the elite organisation of the 'Third Reich'. The SS succeeded where the SA failed: its leadership was acutely aware of the political realities which faced it, and its membership did as it was told. Its victims generally were not chosen simply to satisfy desires to assault political opponents or to let off steam; they were chosen with political objectives in view. Thus the SS was able to adapt and become a part of the ruling elite in a manner which the SA never could have done. For the SA such a transformation would have required an appreciation of the political process that neither its leadership nor the rank-and-file storm troopers possessed.

SA violence was not a conscious attempt by the storm troopers to implement precisely the Nazi programme; rather it was the product of crude desires to be rid of a despised political system and its defenders, to smash the opposition and to

put Hitler into power. That the members of the SA involved themselves in partisan politics, and to such devastating effect, does not mean that they necessarily possessed a clear idea of the political programme which might be realised as a result. The activity of the SA was a crudely channelled hatred - a hatred in which the Nazi ideology helped to define the targets for attack - which proved extremely effective in toppling the existing political system but which was ill-suited to the task of replacing it with another. Thus SA violence did not enable the storm troopers to pursue their own political interests; rather, the violence served to clear the decks so that other groups, which understood political power, were able to pursue their interests within the structure of a murderous dictatorship.

Why then did so many thousands of young men join an organisation the main purpose of which was to provoke violent confrontations? One significant aspect of the success of the SA was that it reflected the political culture and the social values of the society in which it grew. Nazi violence was not an alien imposition upon German politics, but an outgrowth of it. This may be seen particularly clearly in the role played by military values. In a society in which military trappings were honoured ostentatiously - except in left-wing and pacifist circles, which were 'unpatriotic and suspect anyway - it was not unnatural that the younger generation would be drawn to an organisation which boasted military-style formations, exalted military virtues, paraded in uniform and offered its members a cheap substitute for service in the armed forces.¹ It was

1. See Bessel, 'Militarismus im innenpolitischen Leben', pp. 218-22.

the ability of the Nazi movement to exploit such values which enabled the SA to become the most powerful paramilitary formation in Weimar Germany.

Yet the paramount reasons for the success of the SA lay in Germany's economic predicament in the years during which the storm troopers' organisation expanded rapidly. Unemployment and underemployment provided the recruits for the SA and left them the time to become 'political soldiers' in the service of the Nazi movement. The bankruptcy of the economic and political system led to a rejection of that system by a younger generation prevented from entering the spheres of economic production and social reproduction. The overwhelmingly bleak outlook facing young men during the economic crisis contributed mightily to the desperate and violent tone of politics at that time. SA violence was, in a sense, a political reaction to the silent institutional violence of a crisis-ridden economic system which left no opening for the younger generation. How many young men felt that, due to the crisis, they were unable to develop a career, to marry, to become accepted members of society according to the social conventions within which they had been raised? And how many then found an outlet for their frustrations in the destructive, almost nihilistic violence of the SA? The answer lies in the hundreds of thousands. The failure of an economic system to satisfy social needs made possible the growth of the SA, and led to political violence and upheaval which had horrific consequences.

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