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PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS IN GERMANY FROM 1871–1945

by

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This thesis analyzes the rise of paramilitary organizations in Germany from the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, through World War I, into the Weimar Republic, and finally in the Third Reich. The crisis of domestic politics as well as the Treaty of Versailles played an important role in this expansion. These factors limited Germany's military force and opened the door for military desperados to control the security of the nation.

Paramilitary organizations grew throughout the interwar period, eventually growing into major political forces, most notably the Sturmabteilung (SA) of the Nazi Party. As the Nazi Party gained power, the SA, and later the Schutzstaffel (SS), occupied an important role within the totalitarian state. As the violent arm of the party, the SA and SS carried out the will of Adolf Hitler, whether running concentration camps or entering combat in World War II.

By the end of World War II, paramilitary organizations proved to play an important role in Germany's history, especially for the rise of Hitler and the atrocities of the war. The purpose of this thesis is to show the effects that mass politics, military professionalism gone wrong and war termination can have on a nation and how this can spiral out of control as it did in the case of Germany.

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PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS IN GERMANY FROM 1871–1945

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AHS	Adolf Hitler Schools
BDM	*Bund Deutscher Mädchen,* League of German Girls within the Hitler Youth
DAP	German Workers' Party
DJV	*Deutsche Jungvolk,* Hitler Youth formation for boys ages 10-14
DJM	*Deutsche Jungmädel,* Hitler Youth formation for girls ages 10-14
HJ	*Hilter-Jungend,* Hitler Youth formation for boys ages 14-18
Jungdo	Young German Order
KPD	Communist Party
NPEA/Napola	*Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalt,* National Political Education Institute
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party)
NSDFB	National Socialist German Frontsoldiers' League
Org. Pi	Organization Pittinger
RHSA	Main Office of Reich Security
RKFDV	Reichskommissariat for the Strengthening of German Nationhood
SA	Stormtroopers or *Sturmabteilung*
SD	*Sicherheitsdienst,* SS intelligence organization
SPD	Social Democratic Party
SS	*Schutzstaffel*

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

Paramilitary organizations have played an important role in the civil-military and political relationship in Germany in the pivotal period from 1871 until 1989 when one includes the extension of these themes in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). The focus of this study, however, is on the epoch until 1945, wherein such paramilitary organizations in central Europe formed a significant and generally destructive feature of mass politics and military organization. From the creation of the German Empire under Emperor Wilhelm II, through the Great War, subsequent transformation into the Weimar Republic, and finally the rise of National Socialism and the Second World War, paramilitary organizations transformed the political landscape of the German state and eventually the face of Europe. A view of these national experiences expands the understanding of paramilitary organizations and civil military relations and as the relationship of the soldier to mass politics in the European past and present. Such an examination is not without relevance at a time when, in the year 2014, such paramilitary or party militia organizations associated with extreme nationalist political parties have reappeared in Europe in crisis.

In this connection, several sub questions to the central issue emerge. How did these organizations shape the German and Austrian nations over the course of three governments from the late nineteenth century until 1945? What impact did World War I have on the foundation and expansion of such paramilitary organizations, and how did that influence the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime in 1933? How did the veterans organizations following the Franco-Prussian War by whatever means evolve into the Freikorps, *Sturmabteilung* (SA), *Schutzstaffel* (SS), and the other paramilitary groups of the Weimar Republic and Third Reich?

B. RELEVANCE TODAY

Although much research exists with regard to Germany's history, particularly in the inter-war period of 1919–1939, a comprehensive look at the paramilitary history from

post-Franco-Prussian War to World War II is necessary as an examination of civil military relations in central Europe and as a means to understand mass politics and the role of soldiers in them. Much of the research has focused on Hitler and his role in the rise of fascism and German aggression in the 1930s. The paramilitary aspect in his career and those around him has played a key role and should be explored especially by those interested in civil military relations and security affairs in Europe in a general sense. While some authors have focused on paramilitary organizations, most are limited to a particular group or a specific epoch. This thesis aims to bridge the gap between the different groups and eras with generalizations and an overview.

A look into the underlying roles and missions, esprit de corps, and collective biographies behind the rise in paramilitary organizations in Germany, namely the Treaty of Versailles provides a place for pause in war termination planning and the need to disarm irregular paramilitary units in post conflict reconstruction, a contemporary issue of no small import. The effects of the victors' decisions can have greater consequences than intended, and the rise of the Nazi party and ability to stay in power is a potential example. Poorly understood in general staffs and defense think tanks are the demobilization of defeated but also politically radicalized soldiers and the impact of the same on mass politics in a post conflict environment. The Iraqi episode as well as others begs the question of what happens when a state and its army collapse, and how do these entities adjust and regroup, especially in political turbulence. Knowledge of how these forces operated in the past offers a good basis for reflection, analysis, and even planning. Especially relevant in today's world is the drawdown of over a decade of constant conflict and subsequent reduction in military forces around the world. A reduction in force in the worst possible circumstances occurred in Germany in the late nineteenth century, as well as after World War I. This led to the rise in paramilitary organizations comprised of returning soldiers. While the present does not easily resemble post war Central Europe in 1919, a study of the self-image, ethos, and the reasoning behind the paramilitary problems, both social and economic, offers the regional specialist a needed field of inquiry against the most serious ruptures of civil military relations, crises of

democratic government, and the forces of nationalism and militaristic desperation that have given rise to war in the past and might do so in the future.

C. SCHOLARSHIP ON PARAMILITARIES IN GERMANY

The literature on paramilitary organizations throughout German history is widespread, with more available for the post-World War II, Third Reich Germany, and far less for the pre-1918 German Empire. James M. Diehl's *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* provides a comprehensive review of the rise of paramilitary organizations and the role these groups played in the eventual fall of the Republic. His idea that block-building (*Blockbildungen)* was a link between the German Empire and the Weimar Republic, and it was the militarization of these militant groups in the Weimar Republic that led to the removal of the monopoly on violence by the Reichswehr and opened the door for the paramilitary groups to fill this void.[1] Furthermore, Diehl shows that the increasing role of paramilitary groups in the Republic allowed the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) to rise to power.

Diehl also published an article in the *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, outlining the organization on veterans groups in Germany from 1917–1919. "The Organization of German Veterans, 1917–1919" explains how initially the groups were in stark opposition to the Social Democrats due to the anti-monarchists views of the democrats. The *Kriegervereine* was started prior to World War I after the Franco-German War in 1870–1871, but grew in size and influence after the influx of returning veterans from World War I. Diehl attributes the increasing power of the Kriegervereine to the inclusion of Social Democrats during World War I.[2] His article is a great look at the transformation of the Kriegervereine from a non-political group, into a champion for social and economic welfare for veterans, to a political organization in opposition to the *Reichsbund*, the Social Democrat's veterans organization.

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[1] James M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), 4, 18.

[2] James M. Diehl, "The Organization of German Veterans, 1917–1919," *Archiv Für Sozialgeschichte* 11 (1971), 146, http://library.fes.de/jportal/receive/jportal_jparticle_00012833.

Peter H Merkel's *The Making of a Stormtrooper* examines why Germans joined the paramilitary groups during the end of the Weimar Republic and throughout the Third Reich. A look into initial reasoning behind the massive increase in *Sturmabteilung* (SA) and *Schutzstaffel* (SS) members led Merkel to determine that the depression in the 1920s was a deciding factor.[3] A change in attitude towards the Nazi paramilitary groups occurred once the Nazi Party partnered with the Communist Party (KPD) and secured a majority in the *Reichstag*. Initially, "both the *Reichswehr* and the Prussian police would meet any strong-arm attempt by the NSDAP with armed force."[4] A half a year later, it was determined that "the Reichswehr would be physically unable to keep the stormtroopers and Communists under control in a state of emergency."[5] The paramilitary groups were no longer regulated to underground operations and began to be a violent presence throughout Germany. Merkel continues by examining where the NSDAP and SA/SS members came from. He concluded that Nazi and stormtrooper members came from different social and economic backgrounds, with many being blue collar workers. Each group had different motivations to join the Nazi Party, with many stuck between social classes, feeling exasperated, detested, and thus more easily recruited.[6] After Hitler's imprisonment and release, he set out to ensure all paramilitary groups were under NSDAP control. All stormtroopers had to join the NSDAP, and the SA was closely controlled. Merkel further expounds the rise of the stormtrooper's power and the rise of Nazism in Germany. He also compares the rise of fascism in many European countries, including Austria.

C. J. Elliott's article, "The Kriegervereine and the Weimar Republic," delves into the German veteran organizations and the evolution from simple groups designed to ensure tradition, comradeship, and welfare for ex-soldiers, into more politicalized and

[3] Peter H. Merkl, *The Making of a Stormtrooper* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 4–7.

[4] Ibid., 24.

[5] Ibid., 25.

[6] Ibid., 144, 155.

militarized units.[7] The Kriegervereine were non-political when they were first formed in the late eighteenth century, but became increasing political in the nineteenth century. The *Kyffhäuserbund*, the overarching organization of Kriegervereine, was created in 1892, which gave the groups a common leader and platform. Prior to World War I, these groups were opposed to the SDP and were primarily used in propaganda and recruiting efforts for the army.[8] It transformed into a highly patriotic and monarchist organization. Elliott describes the impact the Treaty of Versailles had on the Kyffhäuserbund, namely that they were not allowed to receive weapons or training from the army, although it still occurred regularly. He also provides insight into the problems the Kyffhäuserbund faced, especially when the local Kriegervereine caused incidents. In the end, Elliott determines that the veteran organizations had a political effect due to a lack of government control, but this effect could have been greater with more support for monarchism throughout Germany.[9]

Gordon Craig's *The Politics of the Prussian Army* is a comprehensive history of the Prussian/German political journey from 1640–1945. Particular importance for this thesis is his sections concerning post-World War I Germany. He examines the beginning of the *Freikorps* that developed after the war and gave the returning soldiers an opportunity to continue the militaristic jobs they were doing before. The Treaty of Versailles plays an important role in Craig's examination of post-World War I Germany. The treaty played a direct role in the uprising of anti-republic sentiment and subsequently led to the failed Kapp Putsch of 1920.[10] Craig's work also explains the rise and fall of the SA. From its rise in power in the 1920s, to the Night of the Long Knives on June 30, 1934, the SA was the largest paramilitary group and had great political power. The SS took its place when Hitler determined that they were too powerful for him to control.

[7] C. J. Elliott, "The Kriegervereine and the Weimar Republic," *Journal of Contemporary History* 10, no. 1 (Jan. 1975), 109–129.

[8] Ibid., 110.

[9] Ibid., 109–29.

[10] Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army: 1640–1945* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 374–7.

Overall, Craig's book provides a great look into the political transformation in Germany, especially during the tumultuous inter-war period.

Studying an organization that was somewhere between the true paramilitary nature of groups like the SA or SS and the professional German Army, David Yelton's *Hitler's Volkssturm: the Nazi Militia and the Fall of Germany* shows the importance the *Volkssturm* played in the final months of World War II.[11] It explains why the militia fought with intensity, even though the war was clearly lost from any other point of view except from the Nazi lens. It also shows how much the Nazi party trusted the army, where they created a militia comprised of those not fit for military service. Yelton's book also expertly examines the relationships between the Volkssturm and other paramilitary groups, notably the SA and SS. He shows the increasing power of the Volkssturm may point to a decreasing role of the SS.[12] Yelton concluded that the Volkssturm failures were less the result of it being a militia and more rooted in the hasty and disorganized creation of the force.[13]

Finally, Peter Fritzsche's *Germans into Nazis* traces the evolution of the German people from "patriotic enthusiasm to Nazi revolution, from 1914–1933."[14] With regard to paramilitary organizations, emphasis is placed on the Freikorps morphing into other groups, notably the *Stahlhelm* and *Jungdeutscher Orden*, which pushed the Nazi message. Fritzsche shows the nationalistic nature of Germans through World War I and how this affected the susceptibility of the German people to Nazism after the war. Particularly, the returning veterans and those too young to fight were easily brought into the Freikorps and Home Guard units, paving the way to Nazism. At the heart of his argument is that Germans were patriotic and it was this patriotism that the Nazis capitalized on to draw more into their party. The paramilitary groups, specifically the SA and SS, played a crucial role in supporting and enforcing party politics.

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[11] David K. Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm: The Nazi Militia and the Fall of Germany, '44–'45* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2002), 155.

[12] Ibid., 155–6.

[13] Ibid., 162.

[14] Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 9.

D. GERMANY: A CHANGING NATION

Over the course of 74 years from unity until the epoch of total war, Germany went through tremendous changes, capped with two World Wars and the greatest case of nationalism and mass movement in recent history. What started as groups of veterans returning from the Franco-Prussian War transformed into large political fighting forces that would push the agenda of leftist and rightist political parties. How were these groups able to achieve this level of power? The major shift can be seen following World War I and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. The connection between the military restrictions on Germany following the war and the subsequent rise in power by the Freikorps and other paramilitary organizations is clear. The lack of the government to control these groups also played into their eventual control of the nation. Evident by the multiple putsch attempts by different paramilitary groups, the government was not able to maintain order in the tumultuous post-War era.

The paramilitary organizations adapted to the changes within the Weimar Republic, maintaining power, even when they were officially dissolved. They used youth organizations to ensure their political agenda would continue in the next generation. By the time the Nazis took control in 1933, paramilitary organizations had supplanted the German Army as the holder of power. Over the next few chapters, the rise of the paramilitary groups will show how the Allies' demands following the war had a marked impact on their success. Also, the change of the paramilitary groups from simple veterans groups to the military arms of various political parties can be explained through the increased nationalism and anti-Republic sentiment felt throughout the many organizations and the youth of Germany.

It is important to establish the underlying causes of the great number of Germans that chose to join paramilitary groups in order to understand how they became political forces in Germany. Once these paramilitary groups were established, why were some more successful than others? The effect these organizations had on the politics of inter-war Germany is significant in the study of both the rise of Nazism and of World War II. Most importantly, research into the role World War I had on paramilitary membership will establish a critical transformation point in German history.

Research into the prevalent paramilitary organizations will show that the Allies' military restrictions imposed on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles were critical factors in the explosion of membership into these organizations. This would lead to the eventual takeover by the Nazis and subsequent terror imposed by Hitler and his SA/SS forces. The nature of paramilitary organizations in Germany will be examined and how they played a crucial role in the history and political development of the nation.

II. ORIGINS OF THE PARAMILTARY SPIRIT

A. THE EMERGENCE OF THE FREIKORPS, 1890–1918

Although the Freikorps units grew and prospered after 1918, the origins of these volunteer forces lie in previous events. As Robert Waite describes, two key events shaped the populous into being drawn into the paramilitary groups. First, the prewar Youth Movement placed the idea of revolt against the bourgeois into the minds of the German youth. Second, World War I brought a new type of combat troop, the stormtroopers, which would see itself manifested in the Free Corps units of post-war Germany.[15] The Young German League (*Jungdeutchlandbund*), founded in 1911, was created by the government to provide training to the youth of the Empire. Comprised of over 750,000 members by the onset of World War I, the Jungdeutchlandbund "was a sort of militarized Boy Scouts, providing premilitary training and imparting military and 'national' values to its young members…and was a significant factor in furthering the militarization of German society."[16] This organization set the stage for the future youth organizations in post-War Germany.

B. WORLD WAR I

1. Stormtroopers

As World War I became more of a war of attrition rather than a traditional war that had been seen previously in history, a new type of soldier as athlete and high tech combatant was needed to effectively engage the enemy and break through the lines. The stormtrooper fit this role perfectly. Captain Willy Rohr first formed a group of highly trained, elite soldiers that would break through the enemy's lines. These troops had special equipment, including flamethrowers, smaller carbines, and steel helmets. The stormtrooper would undergo intense training before being put into battle, leading to

[15] Robert George Leeson Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism: The Free Corps Movement in Post-War Germany, 1918–1923* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 16, 18, 24–26.

[16] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 9–10.

immense success. Stormtrooper soldiers were the best German fighters, and as a result, held privileges that others in the army did not. For example, they had special uniforms, generous leave, and better food and equipment.[17]

The leaders of the storm trooper units were young and ambitious, leading to a feeling of superiority over the normal army. This feeling was not exclusive to the officers; with the poet laureate and literary exponent, Ernst Jünger describing the stormtroopers as "the New Man…a completely new race, cunning, strong, and packed with purpose,"[18] and Franz Schauwecker labeling them as the "Troops of Destiny."[19] Another key difference between the stormtroop units and the regular army that would translate into the paramilitary units in post-war Germany was the officer-enlisted relationship that was not hide bound and broke the bonds of society. There was a more familiar relationship between the officers and their men, something that was unheard of in the regular army. It was based on loyalty rather than fear. This is exemplified in an excerpt from W. Hoeppener-Flatow's *Stosstrupp Markmann*, where he described the relationship between Markmann, a stormtroop officer, and his men. He wrote:

> Markmann knew precisely how he stood with his men. To them he was not their commanding officer; he was their Leader! And they were his Comrades! They trusted him blindly and would have followed him into hell if it were necessary.[20]

This was the standard in these units, which would be carried over into the Freikorps units in later years. These young officers returned from war with these ideas of how an elite military unit should be run and applied the same process when they joined the paramilitary groups during the inter-war period.

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[17] Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 24–5.

[18] Ernst Junger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, 5th ed., 40th thousand (Berlin, 1933) quoted in Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 28.

[19] Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 28.

[20] W. Hoeppener-Flatow, *Stosstrupp Markmann greift an! Der Kampf eines Frontsoldaten* (Berlin, 1939), quoted in Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 27.

2. Treaty of Versailles

On June 28, 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was signed and would unknowingly lay the groundwork for the eventual rise of German paramilitary organizations, including the SA and SS that would exemplify evil in the Third Reich. This was not the intention of the allies, but more of an unforeseen side effect of limiting German military strength. The allies' intentions were to punish the Germans for starting the war and to ensure that they would not be able to build up the forced necessary to go to war again.

From Article 163 of the Treaty of Versailles:

> The reduction of the strength of the German military forces as provided for in Article 160 may be effected gradually in the following manner:
>
> Within three months from the coming into force of the present Treaty the total number of effectives must be reduced to 200,000 and the number of units must not exceed twice the number of those laid down in Article 160.
>
> At the expiration of this period, and at the end of each subsequent period of three months, a Conference of military experts of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers will fix the reductions to be made in the ensuing three months, so that by March 31, 1920, at the latest the total number of German effectives does not exceed the maximum number of 100,000 men laid down in Article 160. In these successive reductions the same ratio between the number of officers and of men, and between the various kinds of units, shall be maintained as is laid down in that Article.[21]

Germany was forced to downsize from a strength of over a half-million men to 100,000 in less than one year. Hundreds of thousands of young men returning from war were met with unemployment. These veterans found work doing what they knew best, fighting, in Freikorps units throughout Germany. The new German army, reduced to a shell of its previous self, was unable to ensure order, leaving the door open for other entities to capitalize on the weakness of the army. The paramilitary groups that developed did so in an effort to maintain order where the army could not. "Thus in a certain respect the requirement that Germany disarm fostered the rebirth of that militaristic spirit which the

[21] Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, "The Versailles Treaty June 28, 1919: Part V," Article 163, The Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partv.asp, accessed October 10, 2013.

conquerors had tried so hard to exorcize."[22] A government that was accustomed to a great military force at its disposal was now left with no real army and hundreds of thousands of returning veterans that just finished years of intense fighting. Diehl described the nature of paramilitary forces after the Paris treaty as the following:

> As a result there arose alongside the Reichswehr an unofficial military force, an extensive network of paramilitary organizations, whose rank were filled by the militarily disenfranchised, the 'military desperados' of the postwar years, who were either unable or unwilling to demobilize psychologically.[23]

Expecting soldiers returning from over four years of never-ending warfare to immediately detach mentally from the military mindset is a sure fire way to create problems between the government and veterans.

a. The Stab in the Back

It was not only the reduction in force that contributed to the rise in paramilitary participation; the feeling by many veterans that they were stabbed in the back by their new democratic government played a very important role in the increasing number of volunteers. Regardless of how the surrender of the Germans actually happened, the majority of soldiers believed that the government turned on them. The German Reich did not make this rumor easy to dismiss, especially when their propaganda to the soldiers is examined. A pamphlet issued to returning soldiers explains:

> A new Germany greats you!...Perhaps you do not return as victors who have completely crushed the enemy to the ground…But neither do you return as vanquished, for the war was stopped at the wishes of the leadership of the Reich (*Reichsleitung)*…so you can hold your head high.[24]

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[22] Erich Eych, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, trans. Harlan P. Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), 111.

[23] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 18.

[24] *Deutchland als freie Volksrepublic*: *Den aus dem Felde heimkehrenden Volksgenossen* (n.p., November, 1918) qouted in Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 31.

The government appears to have given up without giving the front-line soldiers a chance for victory. The German soldiers were a very proud group and to be told that they were surrendering by civilians, not in the fight, was a powerful blow. As Robert Waite pointed out:

> Most volunteers wanted nothing more than to continue their military careers. The functional loyalty of the volunteers, especially the Free Corps, was in large part sustained by the expectation that they would find a place in the new Reichswehr. Had this been possible, their tenuous loyalty might have been maintained, but the harsh military provisions of the peace settlement made the fulfillment of such expectations impossible.[25]

Although the government's reason for surrendering was far from hurting the veterans, the returning soldiers only saw the failure of the government to look out for them. They were forced back into a defeated society without any work. These war veterans wanted to continue working in a profession that they had come to perfect over the past many years, and without the German Army as a choice, the paramilitary organizations filled the void.

C. WHO JOINED THE *FREIKORPS?*

While many older veterans, especially those of the Franco-Prussian War joined *Kriegervereine* (veteran's organizations) or other nationalistic groups that more or less remained in familiar social and political boundaries, the younger population flocked to the more activist and modern Free Corps organizations, which burst these boundaries in the post war world.[26] The anti-Republican sentiment was strong among the youth of Germany, and the Free Corps units provided the outlet to take action on those views. The youth, those not old enough for war during the Great War, missed out on the experience of great combat and found the Free Corps units to be the perfect outlet to live out their fantasies of violence.[27] Instead of consorting with the pacifist government that had betrayed them, returning veterans also found comfort in Free Corps units. The returning

[25] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 47–8.

[26] Diehl, "The Organization of German Veterans, 1917–1919," 182.

[27] Robert Gerwarth, "The Central European Counter-Revolution: Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria and Hungary after the Great War," *Past and Present* no. 200 (Aug 2008), 181.

soldiers found "comradeship, understanding, economic security, and a continuation of the military life he had learned to love."[28] The Free Corps units were made up of likeminded soldiers who knew nothing but war. These units gave them all a sense of belonging that they did not have with the reduction of the military force.

It was not only the enlisted soldiers that found comfort in the Free Corps units; officers were instrumental in Free Corps success. A major reason for the major influx of officers into volunteer units was rooted in the transformation the officer corps underwent during the war. At the start of the war, the German Army had just over 50,000 officers, when at the end, due to the rise in Storm Troop units and the overall expansion of the Army, reached over 270,000.[29] An even larger change occurred that led to increased officer participation in paramilitary activities after the war. At the start of the war, the Officer Corps was comprised of older, veteran officers in turn drawn from the traditional social and even cultural sources of such men. Throughout the war, over half of those officers were killed, leading to a need for officers to be created quickly and to a kind of revolution in the officer corps that mirrored the radicalization of German society in total war. The Supreme Command used hastily created officers, usually young and inexperienced, who were commissioned after a few months of service at the front. These officers were not regarded highly by the enlisted men; however, they were continually pumped out and sent to lead soldiers. Also, the Supreme Command created some officers through promotion from the enlisted ranks. These "officers" came from the front-line troops and were seen as lesser officers than the regular Officer Corps, even as far as to have separate officer ranks for those men.[30] Regardless of how an officer became an officer, they all felt they were real officers. They had enjoyed the privileges and increased social status as a result of their commissions, and when the war ended they were reluctant to give it up.

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[28] Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 42.

[29] Ibid., 45.

[30] These officers were given the temporary ranks of either *Feldwebel-Leutnant* (Sergeant-Major-Lieutenant) or *Offizierstellvertreter* (Deputy Officer). Ibid., 46–7.

The problem these "lesser" officers faced stemmed from the Paris Peace Treaty's restrictions on officer strength. The treaty stipulated that "the total effective strength of officers, including the personnel of staffs, whatever their composition, must not exceed four thousand."[31] With over 270,000 officers created during the war, and with the generals being from the old-school Officer Corps, these new officers were left out of the new army. It was primarily those new officers, the lieutenants and captains, which made the transition to the Free Corps movement after the war. The junior officers wanted to remain part of the military enterprise, but were relegated to the paramilitary world. This turned out to be a promotion for most of these officers. These were now commanding more troops and did not have to rely on the government to assign them men, allowing them to recruit and train their troops as they saw fit. As Waite explained, "the life of the *freikorpsfürer* was eminently satisfactory."[32] The young officers maintained their military officer lifestyle without the problem of intervention from the government.

[31] Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, "The Versailles Treaty June 28, 1919: Part V," Article 160, The Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/partv.asp, accessed October 10, 2013.

[32] Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 49.

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III. PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS IN WEIMAR GERMANY

A. FORMATION OF VOLUNTEER FORCES, 1918–1919

After the November Revolution in 1918, Social Democrats were concerned with increased violence at home. To combat an uprising, they planned to use returning troops, but those troops were burnt out from fighting and were not useful in maintaining order. General Wilhelm Groener, the First Quartermaster General, advocated the creation of a volunteer force that could quell the revolutionary violence. The Supreme Command agreed and approved the creation of three types of volunteer forces at the end of 1918. The Free Corps (*Freikorps*), Auxiliary Volunteer Units (*Zeitfreiwilligenverbände*), and Civil Guards (*Einwohnerwehren*) groups successfully maintained order, but began to politicize and push beyond the regulation of the government. As James Diehl described,

> By creating or, better, by supporting the creation of a system of volunteer forces and then failing to control it, the new government lost—or failed to achieve—an effective monopoly of armed force and sowed the seeds for the later paramilitary activity that was to plague the Republic.[33]

The government has lost the "monopoly of the legitimate use of force,"[34] which the German sociologist Max Weber describes as the unique claim of the state.

1. Rise of the *Freikorps*

The Freikorps were the primary paramilitary groups in early Weimar Germany. Many young people joined Freikorps units because of rising unemployment and their ambition to remain in the military atmosphere. Many units existed prior to World War I, but most formed in late 1918 and early 1919. The primary unit was the *Freiwilligen Landesjaegerkorps*, formed by General Ludwig Maercker in December 1918. His formation of a Freikorps unit was the standard used by others in the coming years. Forces were raised quickly, and had the finances to support them with the backing of the

[31] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 28.

[32] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 78.

Supreme Command. Maercker's unit was the ideal; most were less organized and professional, leading to less reliability for the Supreme Command. The slow progress of raising Freikorps units quickly reversed after an incident in January 1919.[35]

2. Spartacist Week

On January 6, 1919, 200,000 workers, backed by the Communists and Independents, took to the Berlin streets to protest the formation of the volunteer Freikorps units.[36] At the time, the Freikorps units were not fully prepared for an uprising of this magnitude, forcing Gustav Noske, the minister in charge of military affairs, to leave the city. A few days later, the revolutionary mood waned giving the government the opportunity for reclaiming the city. After the rebellion was initially overwhelmed, Freikorps troops entered the city and proved their worth. The Reinhard Brigade attacked the Spartacus headquarters in Spandau on January 10, and Stephani's Potsdam Free Corps attacked the Belle-Alliance-Platz and forced the surrender of revolutionaries from the *Vorwärts* newspaper building.[37] The next morning, Noske entered the city leading 3,000 members of Maercker's unit and the Iron Division that Noske formed in Kiel. These units quickly occupied and restored order to Berlin, returning it to the hands of the government. They also captured and killed Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the leaders of the Spartacus League. After this victory, Freikorps units had little problem in recruiting more members, turning them into a force that would be able to quell and resistance throughout the Reich. The use of the Freikorps as a police force against workers and the left-wing parties set a precedent that would be repeated over the next months.[38]

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[35] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 29–30; Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 355–6.

[36] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 32.

[37] Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 355–6.

[38] Ibid., 358–60; Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 38–9; Francis L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 22–3.

3. Ludwig von Maercker's *Landesjaegerkorps*

Following the crushing of the Spartacus uprising in January 1919 and another conflict between government forces and Communists, Independents, and some Majority Socialists in March of that year, Maercker took his forces throughout central Germany to restore order in areas threatened by leftist revolts. His forces were organized in "small, self-sufficient units precisely as the Storm Troops of the war had done."[39] As he pushed through Germany, Maercker formed Auxiliary Volunteer and Civil Guard units to support his Freikorps units. The Auxiliary Volunteer units were not continuously activated, being called up when needed by the Freikorps units. They were a reserve force that could be used in emergencies, when the Freikorps units were insufficient. These Auxiliary Volunteer units were composed primarily of students due to the part-time nature of the units. This resulted in school closings when those units were activated. Until the Treaty of Versailles curtailed Germany's plan to use the Freikorps as a reserves force, the Reichswehr Ministry fully supported the Auxiliary Volunteer units. As General Maercker described, the purpose of those units was "to close the gaps within the Reichswehr."[40] The Civil Guard units on the other hand were created to establish law and order in their local area. The greatest difference between the Freikorps units and the Civil Guard was the demographics of its members. While the Freikorps and Auxiliary Volunteer units consisted of ex-officers and students, the Civil Guard units had all areas of society in its membership, especially the middle class. The Civil Guards specific tasks were:

> to strengthen local police by taking over guard and patrol duties and providing auxiliary personnel; to cordon streets and public places; to protect train stations and other public buildings; to support troops in house searches; to strengthen regular troops by providing shock troops recruited from regular members; and finally, to provide a last reserve in the event of house-to-house fighting.[41]

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[39] Ibid., 36.

[40] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 31.

[41] Ibid., 36.

These organizations allowed Maercker to crush leftist revolts and restore order without having to leave his troops behind. He would create Civil Guard units, made up of mostly middle-class citizens, which would maintain order while Maercker's troops would move on to the next city.

4. Other Paramilitary Units

Along with Maercker's Volunteer Rifles, many other paramilitary groups formed in the immediate post-war epoch. The most powerful units were Reinhard's Brigade, the Suppe Free Corps, the Third Naval Brigade, and Ehrhardt's Brigade. Colonel Wilhelm Reinhard founded his Brigade on December 26, 1918. Although Reinhard claims responsibility for the innovations in the Free Corps movement, he pulled many ideas from Maercker's success. For example, both Maercker's *Landesjaegerkorps* and Reinhard's Brigade used the *Vertrauensleute*, "'Trusted Men' to serve as intermediaries between officers and men,"[42] as well as using very similar regulations. Another revolutionary Free Corps unit was the Suppe Free Corps, founded by Sergeant-Major Suppe. This unit was unique in that it was commanded by a non-commissioned officer. Even after Suppe's Free Corps were integrated into the Reinhard Brigade, he maintained command of a battalion. The Third Naval Brigade, created by Admiral Wilfred von Loewenfeld, was composed of many highly decorated U-boat commanders along with other naval war veterans.

In January 1919, Hermann Ehrhardt struck down a Sparticist uprising in the naval town of Wilhelmshaven with the help of fellow naval officers. After this great success, Noske authorized him to create his own volunteer organization. The turnout for his Brigade was overwhelming and Ehrhardt had the pick of the best men for his outfit. Ehrhardt had one of the best trained and elite Freikorps unit in 1919, which proved itself time and again in Upper Silesia fighting nationalistic Polish groups. Upper Silesia was a contentious area, which required the use of both military and paramilitary units to restore order. T. Hunt Tooley recognized the importance of the paramilitary groups when he stated that, "Only the rapid action of the German military and paramilitary auxiliaries had

[42] Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 35.

saved the region."[43] After battling in Upper Silesia, Ehrhardt's Brigade was then called to Berlin to suppress Communist uprisings, but were ordered to disband by Noske while outside of Berlin.[44] This did not sit well with Ehrhardt and would contribute to his participation in the Kapp Putsch.

B. THE KAPP PUTSCH 1920

1. Four Days until Failure

Although the initial coup succeeded, and Kapp was able to establish himself as chancellor, many reasons led to the eventual defeat of the putsch. First, the "lack of preparation and coordination of the Free Corps must be considered and essential cause of the failure of the coup."[45] From the volunteers being drunk throughout the putsch, to lack of communication about the putsch attempt, the Free Corps were not ready to effectively overtake and retain Berlin. The main reason that they were successful in occupying Berlin was that the troops in the city would not fight their German brothers. Along with the failures of the Free Corps, poor planning and ineptitude on the part of the new government played into the failure of the putsch. Kapp, Ludendorff, Pabst, Lüttwitz, and the other leaders did not plan the new government, but rather acted on a whim. In addition, the majority of the German people did not support the new government. The people had seen many changes in government over the recent years and were not willing to give up on the new Republic. Most importantly, however, was Noske and other Social Democrats calling upon the workers to stand up and strike. Everything in the city stopped; water, gas, trash, and transportation services ceased. Over the next few days, more and more supporters deserted the cause and by March 17, Kapp was forced to resign. The rest of his government followed shortly after and fled Berlin. The Ehrhardt Brigade left Berlin that afternoon, killing some civilian hecklers on their way out. Thus the Kapp Putsch came to an end a mere four days after it had begun.[46]

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43 T. Hunt Tooley, "German Political Violence and the Border Plebiscite in Upper Silesia, 1919–1921," *Central European History* 21, no. 1 (Mar. 1988), 64, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4546111.

44 Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 150–1.

45 Ibid., 158.

46 Ibid., 158–63.

2. Buildup to the Putsch

After the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, many of the Freikorps units were forced to disband in order to comply with the size limitation placed on the German Army. The Freikorps units were becoming more revolutionary, as their initial reason for creation, crushing leftist uprisings, had become obsolete. The talks of a coup had been discussed in the senior Freikorps ranks since the signing of the treaty. This all came to fruition in the spring of 1920. When Noske ordered the disbandment of Ehrhardt's Brigade and Lowenfeld's Brigade on February 29, 1920, the stage was set for a putsch attempt. Ehrhardt refused to disband his unit and staged a parade the next day without inviting Noske, but instead had the support of General Walther von Lüttwitz, the commander of all regular troops in and around Berlin. In a meeting that occurred between Lüttwitz and Chancellor Ebert, Lüttwitz demanded that the order to disband the units be cancelled, as well as the National Assembly be dissolved and new elections take place. Ebert and Noske rejected these demands and subsequently demanded Lüttwitz's resignation. Lüttwitz did not resign, but rather went to Ehrhardt to see when his troops could occupy Berlin. Ehrhardt planned to enter Berlin on March 13, 1920 to facilitate the establishment of a new government. At this point, Lüttwitz brought in the namesake of the putsch, Wolfgang Kapp, as well as Erich Ludendorff and Waldemar Pabst, members of the political club, the *Nationale Vereinigung*, to plan the new authoritarian government. Lüttwitz did not enjoy the full support of all Freikorps leaders; Maercker and von Seeckt were against the putsch idea.[47] Regardless, the units that he did have support from, namely Ehrhardt's Brigade, prepared for the march on Berlin.

3. Taking Berlin

Late on March 12, 1920, Ehrhardt marched his troops toward Berlin, planning to take the city and overthrow the sitting government. After talks with two Reichswehr generals, Ehrhardt agreed to not enter Berlin until 7:00 A.M. to give the government time to accept the demands of Lüttwitz. At 1:00 A.M. on March 13, 1920, Noske met with the

[47] Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 374–7; Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 67–8; Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 142–53.

military leaders in Berlin in what would be "one of the most decisive conferences in the history of the Weimar Republic,"[48] and concluded that the army in Berlin was not prepared to fire on other Germans, even if they were trying to overthrow the government. Only General Reinhardt and Noske's chief of staff agreed that a fight was necessary. The rest turned to General Seeckt, who would make a statement that would lead to the government's evacuation of the city:

> Troops do not fire on troops. Do you perhaps intend, Herr Minister, that a battle be fought before the Brandenburger Tor between troops who have fought side by side against the common enemy? … When Reichswehr fires of Reichswehr, then all comradeship within the officer Corps has vanished.[49]

After this meeting with the military commanders, Noske met with the cabinet at 4:00 A.M. to discuss their options. They decided on two courses of action. First they were going to flee the city, with the exception of a few members that wished to stay behind to negotiate with the putschists. The fleeing of the city occurred rather quickly, having to interrupt their meeting at 6:15 A.M. do to the impending Free Corps units. Second, the cabinet called for a general strike from all workers in the city. Minutes after Noske and the cabinet left, Ehrhardt's Brigade made its way through the Brandenburg Gate and took control of the Reich Chancellery. Kapp then declared himself Chancellor and set up his new government. Noske and his officials fled to Dresden and were met by General Maercker, who informed them that he was ordered to arrest them all. Maercker was loyal to the Ebert government and vowed to support them in any way. The same was proclaimed by General von Bergmann, the Reichswehr commander. There was now a divide between the Volunteer units, with some supporting Kapp's regime and others supporting the legal Ebert government.[50]

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[48] Ibid., 154.

[49] Hans von Seeckt quoted in Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism* and Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 377.

[50] Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 155–6.

4. Fallout from the Failed Putsch

The primary outcome of the failed Kapp Putsch would show itself in the coming decade, namely with the increasing distrust of the civilian government by Freikorps members. Many Volunteers believed that, "Politicians of the traditional type had forfeited forever their chance to govern Germany because they had shown that they lacked what… [they] considered the one primary essential of the new government: ruthless action."[51] The Free Corps soldiers were moving from being simple soldiers doing their job to a politicized force that had the power to enact change.

Immediately following the putsch, Communists across the country took advantage of the strike initiated by the Republic and stirred up unrest and disorder. The Republic was forced to call in the same Free Corps units that had just overthrown the government. They performed admirably, crushing revolts from Berlin across the Reich. In the Ruhr, Communists controlled the majority of the region, battling Free Corps units that were not prepared. By April 1920, the Free Corps units were ready to launch an attack on the Communists, and on April 3 under General Freiherr von Watter, they did just that. Within five days, the Free Corps units controlled the Ruhr. After the battle in the Ruhr and defeat of the Communists uprisings, the Free Corps units across Germany were dissolved by Ebert's government.[52] The Free Corps units had gone from being supported by the government, to overthrowing it, reintegrating into the Republic, defeating the Communists, to being tossed aside. They had been through a roller coaster ride of change in 1920, and this would lead to politicization and radicalism in the coming years. German officer and journalist Frederick Wilhelm von Oertzen recognized the impact of the Kapp Putsch on the future rise of National Socialism and subsequent SA and SS rise to power. He stated, "Everything that the Free Corps experienced in the bloody spring of 1920 may be considered the preparation of the soil for the seed which was planted by National

[51] Ibid., 166.

[52] Ibid., 168–82.

Socialism and harvested under Adolf Hitler."[53] Over the coming years, paramilitary activity would disappear from the public realm, where the government could exercise some control, and into the underground.

C. "THE WAR IN THE DARKNESS"

After the failed Kapp Putsch, General Hans von Seeckt took command of the Republic's Army and began forming it to comply with the Treaty of Versailles while still being a capable force despite its small size. He sought to build an army of highly trained, specifically selected soldiers. A man of the guard and the general staff, the revolutionary soldiers of the Free Corps units did not fit into Seeckt's mold of the perfect soldier, and were thus left out of the *Reichswehr*. Seeckt did not trust the Free Corps soldiers, especially after their participation in the Kapp Putsch and their overall revolutionary mindset. He stated in an order he sent to the army on April 18, 1920:

> Those that do not condemn the unfortunate attempt made during the month of March at overthrowing the government, and those who believe that a repetition would end in anything but new misfortune for our people and for the Reichswehr, should decide on their own that the Reichswehr is not for them.[54]

This is not to say that Seeckt was a staunch supporter of the Republic, but rather he wanted to use the existing structure to elevate his army to a position of control to a level above the government in the hope that the republic would eventually vanish and the old army would reassert its primary role in the state. His loyalty was to Germany, not necessarily the Weimar Republic, which he saw as potential transitory regime. Many of the Free Corps members distrusted Seeckt as well; they felt betrayed and did not understand his plan for the army. Some of the more organized Free Corps units did enjoy a spot in Seeckt's new army. This included Maercker's Volunteer Rifles, the Reinhard Free Corps, and the Von Epp Brigade. These units remained virtually unchanged when they became units of the Reichswehr. Even as these units became part of the German Army, their founders still maintained some of the Free Corps spirit that led to their

[53] Frederick Wilhelm von Oertzen quoted in Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 140.

[54] Hans von Seeckt quoted in Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 386.

success. Maercker founded another unit later in his life that was an affiliate of the *Stahlhelm,* one of the large underground paramilitary groups. Reinhard created another Reinhard Free Corps in retirement, and used his new unit to fight in Upper Silesia in 1921. Finally, von Epp used his place in the Reichswehr to recruit for and fund other paramilitary organizations that were anti-Republic.[55]

1. The Rise of the Black Reichswehr: Labor Associations

Once Free Corps units were forced by Seeckt to dissolve in order to comply with the Treaty of Versailles, the leaders had to find new ways to organize their men. Instead of simply dissolving their units, many commanders covered up the true nature of their Free Corps units by organizing labor associations. Throughout Germany, labor associations popped up, giving the Free Corps units a place to continue their revolutionary talks while staying under the government's radar. One of the most obvious examples of the lengths that a Free Corps unit would undergo to remain together is the case of the Rossbach Sturmabteilung. After being incorporated into the Reichswehr and helping quell the Kapp Putsch and strike that followed, von Seeckt ordered Rossbach to disband his unit. He refused and instead organized an agricultural organization that saw his men placed on estates in Pomerania and West Prussia. Weapons were shipped under the guise of "machine tools" after his men were settled. Rossbach then opened a nightclub in Berlin that would serve as his headquarters. This allowed him to receive than distribute weapons to the estates where his men were. His organization built up their stockpile as well as suppressing the other labor unions in the region, using stormtroopers to arrest vocal workers and trying them in an internal court, which usually resulted in a death sentence. After participating in fighting in Upper Silesia with other non-existent Free Corp units, they resumed their work on the farms, while still stockpiling their weapons. In November 1921, the *Arbeitgemeinschaften* (labor associations) were declared illegal, but that did not deter Rossbach. He created "Detective Bureaus" as well

[55] Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism,* 183–7; Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 382–9.

as a "Savings Society" as fronts to his Free Corps unit. Those were outlawed as well, so Rossbach changed the name of the "Savings Society" to the "Union for Agricultural Instruction."

No matter what organizations the government banned, the name could be changed without changing the internal workings of the group. The government was not too concerned with these groups, as long as they were not attempting to overthrow the government. It knew the German Army was incapable of defeating a large Bolshevik uprising from Poland, so "Government officials therefore closed at least one eye to illegal Free Corps activity."[56] Free Corps units remained underground, but not so far where they could not be easily mobilized if the opportunity presented itself. The Free Corps units were also resourceful in acquiring financing. The Republic would compensate anyone for surrendering weapons. The Free Corps would then steal weapons, some from the government, then turn them in for profit. Rossbach took a different approach. He would sell arms to the Poles, then send his troops in to reacquire them. He would then resell them to another Polish group. It created a never-ending stream of revenue for his organization.[57]

2. The Civil Guards

In addition to the labor associations, other veterans of the Army and Free Corps units joined organizations that allowed them to stay in contact with their brothers-in-arms and keep their connection to the military profession. One such type of these organizations was the Civil Guards (*Einowohnerwehr)*. Civil Guards were not a new creation, they had been used since the November Revolution in 1918–1919 with the support of the government. They also recalled entities created by citizens in the 1848 revolution. This did not change as the effects of the Treaty of Versailles were seen. To appease the Allies, the German government told them that these Einowohnerwehr were not militaristic but rather were just like a private club. In reality, they were very military oriented with regular drilling by Reichswehr officers. A circular letter, sent to Einowohnerwehr leaders

[56] Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 194.

[57] Ibid., 191–4.

by the Minister of Defense, illustrated that those units were militaristic and would even by incorporated into the Reichswehr if an emergency arose. A separate circular, issued after the Allies became wary of the true nature of the Civil Guards, however, talked of civil authorities taking over the organizations, but still retaining military officers to act as advisors. Also, oral orders, as opposed to written orders, were to be used, presumably to avoid showing the true nature of the Civil Guard units. Even though technically illegal under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the government continued to support the Einowohnerwehr organizations by providing arms and training.[58]

3. Youth Movement

In order to further the revolutionary ideals of the Free Corps, numerous youth organizations were created. First, the *Schilljungend* was founded by Rossbach, "in order to carry on the tradition of the Free Corps directly," and to "purge from the old established youth movement all purely intellectual elements and attract all the most activist element."[59] Second the Hitler Youth (HJ) would grow to become a feeder for the SA and SS. Along with these two youth organizations ran by paramilitary groups, the *Kyffhäuserbund*, the collection of veterans organizations originally created in the late 19th century, created their own youth organization. The Kyffäuserjugend, founded in 1922 did not enjoy the spotlight like the HJ or *Jungstahlhelm* did later in the decade. Nonetheless, it had 150,000 members and "was to play a not insignificant part in the courses run by the later Reichskuratorium für Jugendertüchtigung."[60] The Reichskuratorium für Jugendertüchtigung, created in 1932, was an organization aimed at providing military education for the youth of Germany. The Jungstahlhelm, created in late 1923, trained young men aged 17 to 23. It prepared them for service in the Stahlhelm, which was losing its veteran base. The *Jungdeutscher Orden's* youth organization, the *Knappenschaften* began in the early 1920s, but split into rival groups and ultimately forgotten until 1925. In 1925, the Jundgo restarted their youth

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[58] Ibid., 197–201.

[59] Arnolt Bronnen, *Rossbach* (Berlin, 1930) quoted in Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 210.

[60] C. J. Elliott, "The Kriegervereine and the Weimar Republic," 116.

organizations, setting up two different groups, one for 12 to 15 year olds and the other for16 to 21 year olds. Many other political combat leagues created their own youth organizations, which would feed into the parent organizations, providing a constant source of anti-Republic influence.[61] As Diehl explained:

> In terms of the crucial problem of winning youth over to the ideals of the Republic, the youth organizations of the Political Combat Leagues, like their parent organizations, provided an organizational heaven for those who could not or would not come to terms with the realities of the Weimar Republic. The functioned, in a very real sense, as negative schools of politics.[62]

The existence of these youth organizations ensured the continued growth and success of the parent paramilitary groups. Although most of these youth organizations existed immediately following World War I, they took off after 1923 with the reorganization of the paramilitary enterprise.

4. Jungdeutscher Orden, Stahlhelm, and the Beginning of the SA

The *Jungdeutscher Orden* (Jundgo), or Young German League, was one of the largest military associations in Germany. It existed before the war, but grew substantially from about 100 men in 1919, to 70,000 when it was temporarily disbanded in 1921, to 400,000 in 1922.[63] The Stahlhelm, like the Jundgo, started earlier but grew after the war during the reduction in force to comply with the Treaty of Versailles. It was founded on the basis of organizing front-line veterans. This morphed from supporting returning soldiers financially and promoting law and order, to radicalizing and politicalizing.

In Bavaria, the paramilitary groups had much more influence on politics than those in the north. The Bavarian Civil Guards and other paramilitary groups were relied upon by the Minister President, leading to the inability to dissolve those units without problems. In addition, Bavaria believed it was above the Republic and refused to dissolve the Civil Guards and the Orgesch, a conglomerate of many paramilitary groups aimed at

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[61] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 171–3.

[62] Ibid., 173.

[63] Ibid., 97–99.

rebuilding the Empire. Unfortunately, those organizations were ordered to dissolve in May 1921. Like the paramilitary groups in the north, the Civil Guards and the Orgesch attempted to find ways around the order.

Initially, two plans to counter the requirement to dissolve these groups were laid out by Hans Freiherr Riedel, the secretary of Escherich, and Otto Pittinger, a high official in Civil Guard in Oberpfalz and the Orgesch. Riedel suggested that compromise with the Allies should be the initial goal, but if that failed, then the groups should go underground and form secret organizations. On the other hand, Pittinger advocated flat out refusal of dissolution and suggested a war with Poland or Czechoslovakia to unite Germany under a new government and force France to either mobilize, which he felt was unlikely, or back down. If this action was not taken, he thought that the Civil Guards should disband themselves in order to form a secret organization, but this should only be done as a last resort. The actual course of action taken was just that; the Civil Guard dissolved itself in June 1921 and went underground, eventually being run by Pittinger under the name Organization Pittinger (Org. Pi). By the next year, Pittinger realized that an underground organization would not work for the political ambitions he had for the group. In order to further his political ambitions, he founded the *Bund Bayern und Reich*, a paramilitary organization similar to the Stahlhelm or Jungdeutscher Orden. Just like in the north, the group operated in politics as well as conducted military training. The Bund Bayern und Reich would remain the largest paramilitary organization in Bavaria until it merged with the Stahlhelm in 1929.[64]

Along with the Bund Bayern und Reich, other organizations were growing, with the divide between them being the social and political status of its members. According to Diehl, "While the bourgeois-conservative forces tended to join Bayern und Reich, the *völkisch*, proto-fascist elements joined the *Bund Oberland* or the paramilitary units associated with the fledgling German National Socialist Workers' Party (NSDAP)."[65] The NSDAP was on the rise under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, and in 1920 the precursor to the SA, the *Turn-und Sportabteilung* (Gymnastic and Sport Detachment) was

[64] Ibid., 100–3.

[65] Ibid., 104.

founded with Emil Maurice as its leader. As Hitler gained more control of the party in 1921, he transformed the now know SA into a robust organization. By receiving financing and officers from Captain Hermann Ehrhardt as well as recruits from the recently disbanded volunteer organizations, the SA was rapidly growing and gaining power. There was a major difference, however, between the veterans' organizations and the SA. The SA was not a military association, but rather an arm of a political party, an organization created purely for political means instead of a collection point for war veterans. As Diehl described the SA, "Initially, its purpose was not to maintain order, or to defend Germany against external attack, but to combat specific political opponents within the context of day-to-day political activity."[66] The SA would continue to grow as Hitler's power grew and he used them as his strong arm.

D. THE CRISIS OF 1923

In January 1923, after Germany failed to provide reparation payments on time, France took this opportunity to move into the Ruhr, Germany's industrial hub. France was going to get their payments by force if needed. This marked a turning point for German paramilitary participation and for the Nazi SA organization. Once again, the Republic realized that it could not protect Germany with the 100,000 man army and called on the Free Corps to help. In an agreement between Ebert (President of Germany), Seeckt (Commander in Chief of the German Army), Carl Severing (Minister of the Interior), Braun (Prime Minister of Prussia), and Wilhelm Cuno (Chancellor), the labor associations and sports societies that formed after the dissolution of the Free Corps units would form a reserve force of labor troops to assist the Reichswehr.[67] This would become to be known as the black Reichswehr. By the summer, former Free Corps soldiers, as well as students swelled the number in the Black Reichswehr to between 50,000 and 80,000 men. No one within the government would publicly admit that this group was anything more than a labor force used to destroy German arms. In reality, most knew that this was the making of a reserve army and they were stockpiling weapons, not destroying

[66] Ibid., 106.

[67] Ibid., 117; Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 240.

them. The Black Reichswehr would not last long however, as it was dissolved in September 1923 after a failed putsch attempt by the group. Afterwards, most of the leaders found a home with the NDSP and the SA.[68]

Although the occupation of the Ruhr by French forces was not met with active fighting, mass recruitment into paramilitary groups continued. This resulted in both extremes, the far right (NSDAP) and the far left (SPD and KPD), expanding their paramilitary organizations. Both sides were becoming more active in their use of their respective paramilitary organizations, with clashes between the groups happening more frequently. The right wished for increased clashes between the left and right, in hopes that the government would call on them to restore order as had happened in the past. Both sides wanted to push their political agenda; "While the right demanded a war of liberation and the establishment of a national dictatorship, the Communists declared that the time for the 'German October' had come."[69] When the government put an end to the passive resistance in the Ruhr, both sides planned to execute their political plans. The Communist paramilitary groups prepared for their uprising planned for October, while the right held demonstrations and demanded a dictatorship. The SA's political strength was growing with the help of the Ruhr occupation. "The occupation of the Ruhr district ultimately had great significance for the development of the Nazi Sturmabteilung (storm troops). In the spring and summer of 1923 the reorientation of the S.A. toward a military fighting organization made great strides."[70] Hitler's NSDAP paramilitary wing, the SA, had become more militaristic during the occupation, starting down a path that would lead to a putsch attempt in November 1923.

On November 8, 1923, in a beer hall in Munich, Adolf Hitler and his colleagues interrupted Gustav Ritter von Kahr, a right-wing politician who was Hitler's rival, and announced the start of the revolution to replace the Bavarian government. Hitler had his SA men surround the hall to prevent any escape by Kahr and his men. The next day,

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[68] Ibid., 241–54.

[69] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 138.

[70] Royal J. Schmidt, *Versailles and the Ruhr: Seedbed of World War II* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), 135.

Hitler marched with his men, even though he knew the putsch attempt would not succeed. When his Nazi soldiers were met by the Bavarian police, shots were fired, Nazis died, and Hitler fled quickly. Two days later, he was arrested, thus ending the short-lived Beer Hall Putsch.[71] The tumultuous 1923 year showed the inability of paramilitary organizations to stage a revolution and it appeared that paramilitary groups were heading to failure.

E. POLITICAL COMBAT LEAGUES AND PARAMILITARY ACTION AFTER 1923

After 1923, paramilitary organizations could no longer focus primarily on military activity, but rather focus on politics. The groups transformed into political combat leagues to better align their new priority of political positioning. As Diehl explained it, the military associations "sought to transform…from a military organization with a political character…into a political organization with a military character."[72] The SDP and KPD created their own combat leagues to counter the combat leagues of the right. This created political violence that would increase over the rest of the decade. Many paramilitary organizations were dissolved or transformed into the new political combat leagues, most notably the SA and the Bund Bayern und Reich.[73]

The SA, severely impacted by the failed Beer Hall Putsch, banned, and with Hitler and Ernst Röhm in prison, looked destined for oblivion. After Röhm's release from prison in April 1924, he traveled through the country to resurrect SA units. Röhm structured his revived paramilitary group as the *Frontbann*, as a counter to the Reichswehr's own organization, the *Notbann*. The Frontbann "was to serve as the backbone and support for the National Socialist political movement."[74] When Hitler was released from prison in 1925, the end of the Frontbann was near. Röhm wanted to absorb the SA into the Frontbann under the National Socialist movement and have himself remain the leader of the group at the disposal of Hitler. However, Hitler planned to have

[71] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 148–50; Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism*, 258–9.

[72] Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany*, 162.

[73] Ibid., 152–4.

[74] Ibid., 159.

the Frontbann and SA integrated into the NSDAP directly under the control of Hitler. Röhm was offered the leadership of the SA, but declined and resigned as head of the Frontbann, and thus the Frontbann soon ceased to exist. He left Germany to become a military advisor to the Bolivian government[75]

While the SA and the Frontbann stood opposed to the government, the Bund Bayern und Reich aligned itself with Kahr and the Bavarian government. While some members of the organization did not agree with this, and subsequently left for more radical groups, the majority remained. In addition, members of the Bund were encouraged to join the Notbann to receive military training. The main reason for pushing of Bund members to join the Notbann had less to do with military training and more to do with weapons acquisition. As weapons disarmament took place, the Notbann retained their weapons, thus the Bund members who were also part of the Notbann would retain their weapons, which could be used in the Bund's military endeavors. Through the end of 1923 and early 1924, the relationship between the Bund and the Notbann grew increasingly stale. The Bund realized that they would not be able to control the Notbann, and the Notbann became increasingly skeptical of the Bund's motives. Like the far right, the Bund wanted to see the end of the Republic, but unlike Hitler and other rightist groups, wanted to avoid forced takeover. The Bund realized the way to restore the German Fatherland was to become a patriotic organization and become involved in state politics instead of party politics. They would build the patriotic spirit so when the time came to liberate Germany only the military aspect would need to be mobilize.[76]

As the 1920s continued, the political combat leagues became more involved in the politics of the Republic. From demonstrations, security at meetings, and distribution of leaflets, it was only a matter of time before clashes between leftist and rightist political combat leagues would occur. Meeting and conventions were constant sources of violence between groups, with each trying to counter the other. The combat leagues were not interested in overthrowing the government, but violence still occurred. Diehl explained, "Putschism may have been replaced by politics, but the violent and aggressive hostility of

[75] Ibid., 161.

[76] Ibid., 162–8.

the members of the Combat Leagues remained; instead of being focused directly against the state, however, it was directed against rival Combat Leagues."[77] Although the political combat leagues had abandoned their radical putschist ideals, at their heart, they were still made up of militaristic men who were vying for power in a weak nation. This became the standard; clashes between different groups happened regularly. These clashes would paved the way for greater violence that the NSDAP and SA would use in the coming years. Diehl recognized this and stated, "The 'normalization' of political violence during the Republics' middle years did much to prepare the way for the massive onslaught of the NSDAP/SA after 1930."[78] The Reichstag was not able to control the political arena with all of these organizations, which had their own political mindset. The political combat leagues could not leverage their power into any discernable political power during the second half of the 1920s.

One of the key reasons the political combat leagues lost some of their power had to do with Germany's attempt to join the League of Nations in the second half of the 1920s and the normalization of politics in the years of stability more or less in a period from 1924 until 1929. When Paul von Hindenburg became President of Germany in 1925, he actively sought to get Germany included in the League of Nations. If this became a reality, war with France was off the table, ruining the paramilitary organizations' wishes for liberation. By allying with the "enemy," secret paramilitary organizations would not occupy the same level of acceptance in the government as they did previously. All of the combat leagues' attempts to persuade the government to reject the Locarno Treaties failed, and at the end of 1925, Germany signed the treaties, setting up admittance into the League of Nations. Over the next year, paramilitary violence reduced as the combat leagues focused more on politics and less on violence. They realized that the way to make change was to infiltrate the politics of the state and not to use force. Some combat leagues made the transition easier than others; the Stahlhelm transformed into a political organization relatively easy, although they did not have a

[77] Ibid., 194.

[78] Ibid., 196.

clear method to acquire the power they wanted.[79] On the other hand, "the Jungdo's refusal to participate in the existing political system reinforced its members' alienation from the Republic and kept them from coming to terms with it," and later the "young, radicalized youth either left or bypassed completely such organizations as the Jungdo in favor of the NSDAP/SA, which seemed the promise many of the advantages of the former while at the same time offering to prospect of tangible political power."[80] The inability of some groups to adapt to the changing political landscape led to many ditching their former organizations in favor of the more radical Nazi movement. Over the next year or so before the Reichstag elections of 1928, combat leagues, particularly the Stahlhelm, attempted to pressure to political parties to adopt their wishes. This was met with little success, as all the rightists groups were forced to vote the way the parties wanted to avoid a leftist victory. Even with 500,000 members, the Stahlhelm was unable to influence the election in any meaningful way.[81]

The elections of 1928 proved to be a failure on the part of the rightist combat leagues; the republic had gained ground and further alienated the right's goal of a dictatorship. This played into the hands of the NSDAP and SA. As Diehl pointed out:

> The Republic's triumph, more apparent than real, proved to be short lived; yet it produced a crisis on the right which was to prepare the way for the phenomenal rise of the NSDAP/SA and its emergence as the dominant political force on the right by 1930.[82]

Again, the failures of the combat leagues drove people into the waiting arms of the NSDAP and SA. The constant competition with the political parties of the right caused division on the right, opening the door for the Nazi Party to seize power. Over the year or two after the Reichstag elections, the Stahlhelm attempted to get a foothold in the political parties, but was unsuccessful. Furthermore, their constant conflict with the

[79] Ibid., 220–1.

[80] Ibid., 227.

[81] Ibid., 241–3.

[82] Ibid., 259.

Jungdo caused a split on the right that left both the combat leagues and political parties at a standstill, leaving room for the NSDAP to step up.[83]

The success of the NSDAP and SA after 1925 hinged on the ability of Hitler to reform the organization into a perfect mix of both a political party and a Combat League with a remarkable energy as well as delegation of authority within the Fuehrer Principle to lower echelons—a combination that always bulked crisis in it, however. "The NSDAP/SA combined the militaristic activism of the Combat Leagues with the electoral possibilities of a political party."[84] Hitler's time in prison, in which he wrote *Mein Kampf*, was valuable in developing the role the SA would play in the reorganized Nazi Party. Instead of succumbing to the failures of 1923, where the SA dictated what the party would do, the Nazi Party would control the SA. This was cemented in 1926, when Hitler named Captain Franz Pfeffer von Salomon as Supreme SA Leader, and Salomon subsequently issued a series of orders that laid out the subordinate nature of the organization to the Nazi Party. Instead of conducting military training like other paramilitary groups, the SA emphasized sports and focused on propaganda for the Party. The Party also put specific requirements on the political affiliation of the SA members. All SA members were members of the Nazi Party and members of the party could only join the SA, not any other organization. Over the next few years, the SA had grown from "a small, variegated troop of approximately 6,000 at the end of 1925," to a "well-disciplined and centralized force of over 60,000"[85] at the end of 1930. Once Hitler took an electoral process to power in 1927–28, the Nazi Party rapidly gained support from across Germany. Within this epoch, the SS became organized within the SA, and in 1929, Heinrich Himmler became Reichsfuehrer SS of a small organization within the SA Although many in the Party did not agree with this decision, it would pay off over the next five years as the NSDAP gained more and more power through elections. Finally, in 1933, the NSDAP gained full control of Germany and the SA then became the militant arm of the most powerful political party in the nation.

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[83] Ibid., 265–76.

[84] Ibid., 276.

[85] Ibid., 280.

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IV. NAZIS AND PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE THIRD REICH

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was named chancellor of Germany, which resulted in the SA and SS being elevated into a prominent position in the new Nazi state with its dual institutions. At the time, the SA was the main paramilitary arm of the Nazi Party, with the small SS designated as the party's security force. The evening of January 30, a parade was held through the center of Berlin comprising of SA, SS, and Stahlhelm members.[86] This showed that the paramilitary organizations were going strong, even though they had been dissolved or morphed into other organizations during the previous decade. The Nazi Party brought extreme nationalism to the forefront of the German stage. As Peter Fritzsche described it:

> On the evening of 30 January German nationalism may have triumphed, a sweet vindication against Versailles, but it was a very different, much more revolutionary kind of nationalism than the sumptuous pageantry of Imperial Germany. Nearly one million Berliners took part in this extraordinary demonstration of allegiance to a party that promised to do away with both the sentimental bric-a-brac of the prewar past and the clutter of Weimar democracy and to establish strong-willed and strong-armed racial state, a very new twentieth-century Germany.[87]

The paramilitary arm of the Nazi party would come to have a major impact on the transformation of Germany into Nazi Germany. In the short amount of space allocated for this great expanse of events and knowledge, focus will be on three main areas: the Hitler Youth and its role in the Nazi Party, the SA and its rise and fall, and finally the SS and its role in the German state. Within these three areas of focus, some of the key players will be detailed as well as the role they played in the overall paramilitary movement in Nazi Germany.

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[86] Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 139–40.

[87] Ibid., 141–2.

A. HITLER YOUTH

The Hitler Youth (HJ), was officially established in May 1922, but rose to dominance in the early 1930s. A major change to the organization of the Hitler Youth took place in October 1931. Hitler released a directive effectively placing the HJ under the direct control of the SA, whereas before the HJ were an independent group that worked closely with the SA.[88]

1. Organization and Education

The overarching Hitler Youth was organized into different sub-organizations based on age and sex. Initially, young boys and girls would enter school at the age of six and finish at age 15. The Nazi Party revamped the educational system to focus more time on physical training, as Hitler believed that "In general a healthy and strong intellect will normally be found only in a healthy body,"[89] and that "the *Völkisch* state has to adjust its educational work not merely to the indoctrination of knowledge but in the first place to the production of bodies physically sound to the very core."[90] Sports were emphasized, especially boxing, which promoted quick thinking and courage. The material studied in school was taught with a National Socialist twist, pushing the idea of the master race concept.

When the children reached age ten, they entered either *Deutsches Jungvolk* (DJV) for the boys or *Deutsche Jungmädel* (DJM) for the girls. They would be part of these organizations until they were 14. At age ten, the children were also tested for entrance into grammar school and the *Nationalpolitsche Erziehungsanstalt* (NPEA or Napola). The NPEA were schools "designed…to produce an elite which could fill posts in all spheres of German life, including the academic sphere."[91] The NPEA would become a recruitment base for future *Waffen*-SS officers under Heinrich Himmler in the late 1930s

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[88] H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922–1945* (New York, NY: Cooper Square Press, 1975), 79.

[89] Ibid., 162.

[90] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* quoted in H. W. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development 1922–1945*, 162.

[91] Koch, *The Hitler* Youth, 179.

and early 1940s. At age 12, those students not selected for grammar school had another chance as well as the possible acceptance to Adolf Hitler Schools (AHS), an institution similar to the NPEA but completely under the control of the NSDAP instead of the Ministry of Science and Education. At age 14, the DJV and DJM members would transition to the HJ for the boys and the *Bund Deutscher Mädchen* (BDM) for the girls.

Those not selected for Grammar school, NPEAs, or AHSs would then enter a trade school. At 18, all members of the HJ and BDM would become part of the NSDAP. Students in the NPEAs and AHSs would begin university, which would be followed by a period of labor service for the party and then more professional training. NPEA and AHS graduates, as well as other suitable students, had the opportunity to enter the *Ordensburg*, a course of study at training castles that prepared students for service in the Nazi Party administration. After this school, the most highly qualified could attend the *Hohe Schule*, the party's highest educational institution, which prepared students for the highest positions within the party.[92] As H. W. Koch explained, "In practice this model was never fully implemented except at NPEA and AHS level. Moreover there were numerous *ad hoc* 'training courses' which allowed such stages as the AHS and *Ordensburg*…to be bypassed."[93] A diagram of the ideal path from age six through the educational milestones and Hitler Youth memberships can be seen in Figure 1.

[92] Ibid., 196, 199, 275–6.

[93] Ibid., 276.

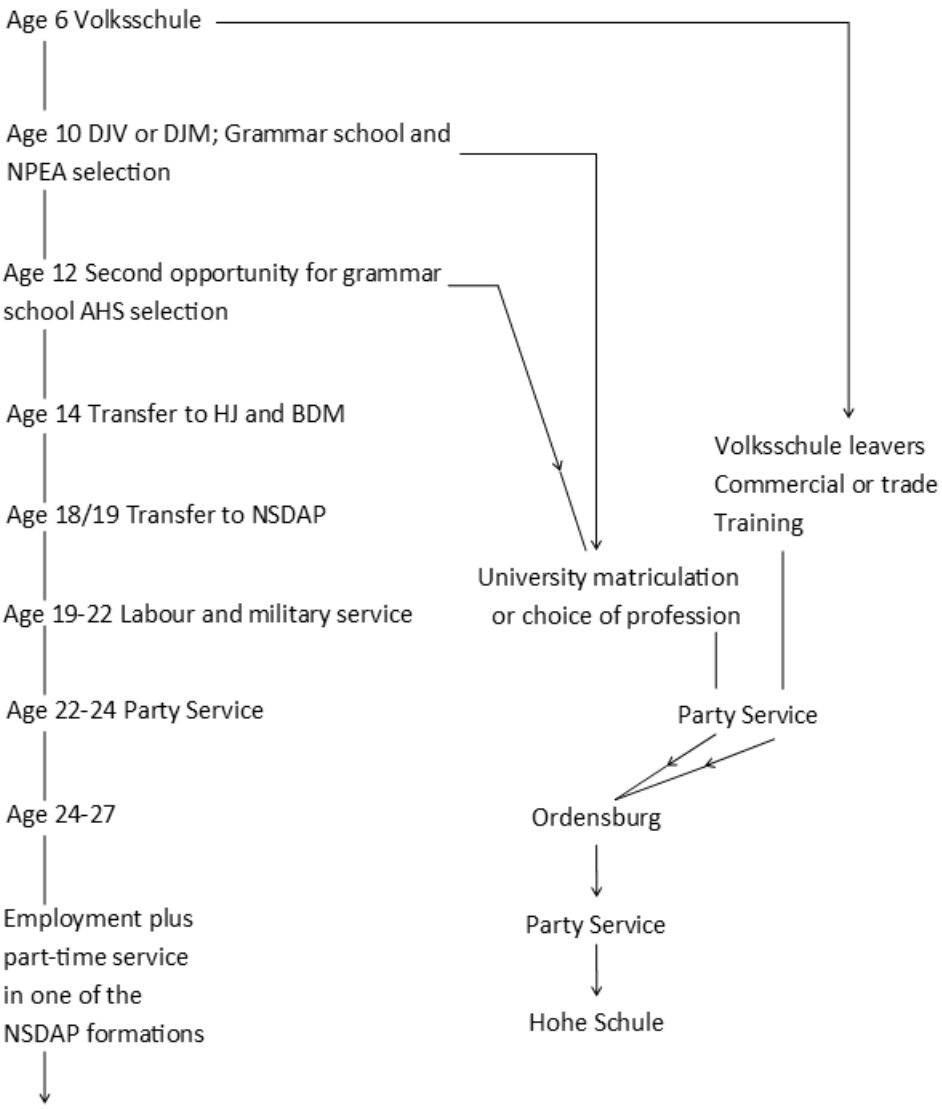

Figure 1. Model of the Educational Pattern of the NS-State.[94]

Paramilitary training became more prominent in the NPEAs as Himmler exercised more influence in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As World War II began, SS officers started to oversee paramilitary training at the NPEAs. As war waged on, a more military approach to training occurred at the NPPEAs, with the children being taught how to use whatever weapons they could physically handle. Along with propaganda indoctrination, paramilitary training set up many of the students for service in the SS under Himmler.[95]

[94] Koch, *The Hitler Youth*, 276.

[95] Ibid., 193–5.

2. Growth and Monopoly

In 1932, the Hitler Youth grew substantially, growing from only 28,000 members in 1931 to over 100,000 by the end of 1932. The increasing power of the Nazi Party contributed to the success of the Hitler Youth, as well as the attraction to an illegal organization. Early in 1932, the Brüning government prohibited uniformed branches of the NSDAP, after Hitler refused to merge his paramilitary units into a singular paramilitary arm under the Reichswehr. As with most kids, if something is not allowed, they will want to do it, and the Hitler Youth was no exception. Although the Hitler Youth changed its name and cut ties with the SA to stay legal, the youth was drawn to the perceived illegal group, boosting its membership numbers. In June 1932, Brüning was replaced by Franz von Papen as Chancellor, and the Hitler Youth was allowed once again.[96] After Hitler came to power in 1933, the Hitler Youth began absorbing other youth organizations and establishing itself as the only youth organization in Germany. Over the first half of 1933, the Hitler Youth intimidated its way into acquiring control of many of the youth organizations throughout the nation, and in June 1933, Baldur von Schirach, then the *Reichsjugendführer* of the NSDAP, was given the title of *Jugendführer des Deutschen Reiches* (Youth Leader of Germany). He was not only in charge of the Hitler Youth, he was now in charge of all youth organizations throughout the country. Any potential new organizations needed his blessing, which he would not give, forcing those youths to join the HJ.[97]

Over the course of the 1930s, the Hitler Youth made great strides in taking over the education system in Germany, as well as many other youth organizations. Hitler Youth radio speakers, specially trained in a Hitler Youth Institute, forced change in a class-based education system. Special school caps were worn by those in grammar school to set them apart from other students; after the radio speakers confronted this practice, the caps were banned from the schools. In addition, schools which had a significant population of Hitler Youth members were awarded a special Hitler Youth banner.[98]

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[96] Ibid., 89–90.

[97] Ibid., 96–100.

[98] Ibid., 107.

Both the Protestant and Catholic churches had their own youth groups, which posed a threat to the Hitler Youth. With the Protestant groups, the Hitler Youth made deals with them that opened the door for the eventual full control of these groups by the Hitler Youth. Initially, the Protestant groups worked with the Hitler Youth at the regional level, but this just made it easier for the Hitler Youth to recruit new members. Eventually, by December 1933, the Protestant youth groups were under full control of the NSDAP and Hitler Youth. The Catholic youth groups proved to be more difficult. Even as a concordat was in the works between the Holy See and Nazi Germany in July 1933, the NSDAP was set on controlling the Catholic youth groups. Over the next few years, constant debate over what the Catholic youth groups could teach occurred between the Catholic Church and the Hitler Youth leadership. Over time, the Catholic youth groups became less influential as the NSDAP outlawed more and more of their actions. Finally, in 1936, a law requiring all youths to join the Hitler Youth removed any chance for the Catholic youth groups to survive.[99]

In 1934, a new unit within the Hitler Youth was established. The *HJ-Streifendienst*, a police-type group that, according to Koch, was "to see that law and order were upheld within the ranks and to combat any illegal opposition."[100] The *Streifendienst* worked closely with the SS and would become the breeding ground for SS recruits, including the units used for guarding concentration camps.[101] The Hitler Youth was extremely successful in raising future SA and SS members, leading to the fast rise in the numbers of the organizations in the 1930s.

In the lead up to World War II, the Hitler Youth became more paramilitary oriented, opening HK rifle schools in 1937 and taking the view that that marksmanship is as important as academics in the youth of Germany.[102] By 1938, at least 1.5 million of the 8.7 million Hitler Youth members were trained in rifle shooting.[103] Along with the

[99] Ibid., 108–11.

[100] Ibid., 111.

[101] Ibid., 112.

[102] Ibid., 114.

[103] Ibid.

compulsory service in the Hitler Youth, the increase in paramilitary training for German youth ensured the Reich had a substantial pool of soldiers for action in the next war. From the beginning of World War II, Hitler Youth members were mobilized for the war effort. Some acted as couriers, while other manned anti-aircraft batteries.[104] A key example of the role the Hitler Youth played in World War II is seen in the 12th SS-*Panzer Division Hitlerjungend*, a special division comprised of 17–18 year old boys (and sometimes younger) that prepared to go to battle. This division saw action in June 1944, attacking and destroying many Canadian tanks while taking many loses. Over the month of June, 60 percent of its members were killed, missing, or wounded.[105] Its final stand came in September, when the remains of the division were destroyed in its retreat from the Normandy campaign. This is just an example of the sacrifice the Hitler Youth made during the war. Many other children were killed or wounded during the war while serving in direct and support roles. As the war progressed, younger and younger children were recruited into direct combat, with some as young as 12 manning posts during the final stand in Berlin as Hitler committed suicide and ended Nazi control of Germany.[106]

B. STURMABTEILUNG

The SA was originally founded in 1921 by Adolf Hitler as a paramilitary organization and strong-arm wing of the Nazi Party.[107] Throughout the 1920s, Hitler maintained his view that, should the Nazis come to power that the SA should remain an auxiliary to the German Army, while such high officials in the SA as Ernst Röhm, believed it should form the vanguard of a new people's army. At the beginning on 1931, Ernst Röhm took over as Chief of Staff of the SA and almost immediately started to plan the folding of the SA into the Army without the knowledge of Hitler. He reorganized the SA to parallel the army, and made secret deals with General Kurt von Schleicher that would have the SA fall under German Army control in the case of a communist

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[104] Ibid., 231–41.

[105] Ibid., 247.

[106] Ibid., 245–52.

[107] John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *The Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics 1918–1945* (New York, NY: St Martin's Press Inc., 1954), 163.

uprising.[108] The SA continued to grow in the early 1930s, with the exception of a short period in 1932 when the SA was dissolved as part of a plan by von Schleicher to force Brüning and Groener out of the government.[109] Röhm had built an organization of over one and a half million men by January 1933 and set it up to be the future army under Nazi rule. By the spring of 1934, the SA had grown to about 4.5 million men.[110] Hitler did not completely agree with Röhm and his plans for the SA. Hitler preferred to maintain a good relationship with the army, as it may prove useful as he gained more power after the 1932 elections and became Chancellor. As Hitler concentrated on his role as Chancellor, Röhm continued to win over the loyalty of the SA, causing a crisis for Hitler. As John Wheeler-Bennett pointed out:

> The SA were indeed rapidly establishing within the Party the position of an *imperium in imperio* not dissimilar from the status which the *Reichswehr* had achieved for itself within the Weimar Republic, with the same potential menace to the central authority.[111]

Hitler understood that the SA was gaining power and tried to ensure he was on good terms with the army, which would be beneficial in the case of a fallout with Röhm and the SA. Röhm saw the SA as the force that would lead the Nazi revolution. Over the course of 1933 and the beginning of 1934, Hitler and Röhm were locked in a battle over the future of the SA. Röhm pressed for consolidation of the army and the SA under him as the Minister of Defense, while Hitler maintained that the army and the paramilitary groups were spate and would remain so. Others within the Nazi Party saw an opportunity and tried to persuade Hitler to get rid of the SA. The most notable of these men was Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the elite SS organization. He saw a chance to move his organization into the void a destroyed SA would create.[112] Over the first half of 1934, Himmler, Göring, and Werner von Blomberg, Hitler's Minister of Defense, pressed for permission to exterminate the SA, namely some key figures in its ranks. Finally on June

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[108] Ibid., 204, 227.

[109] Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 446–53.

[110] Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 171.

[111] Wheeler-Bennett, *The Nemesis of Power*, 306.

[112] Ibid., 314–7.

21, 1934, Hitler agreed to the plan to remove the SA from its position of power and over the next week or so; the SS, led by Himmler, began preparing for three days of purges.[113]

1. The Night of the Long Knives 1934

In the early morning of June 30, 1934, Hitler, accompanied by Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister; Victor Lutze, Röhm's successor in the SA; Wilhelm Brückner, Hitler's adjutant; Emil Maurice, an SS officer and close friend of Hitler; Josef Dietrich, commander of the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler; and other SS troops descended on Hotel Hanselbauer in Bad Wiessee, where Röhm and his followers were staying. Hitler himself conducted many of the arrests at the hotel. Röhm, Julius Uhl, an SA leader, as well as other senior SA officials were arrested and transported to the Stadelheim Prison in Munich.[114] Along the way, the convoy intercepted and arrested Peter von Heydebreck, a SA leader, along with others who were on their way to meet with Röhm in Bad Wiessee. Once they reached Munich, the convoy stopped at the train station to await a train from Berlin carrying many SA members. Again the SS arrested several SA leaders, including Fritz von Krausser, Hans Hayn, and Georg von Detten among many others.[115]

a. Colibrí

It was barley 10 o'clock in the morning on June 30, a mere three and a half hours after the arrests at Hotel Hanselbauer, when Hermann Göring, a high ranking Nazi official and founder of the Gestapo, and Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Gestapo, received a call from Goebbels consisting of just three syllables, Colibrí. This set off a series of murders and arrests across Germany that would eventually leave an estimated 150–200 people dead, including General von Schleicher, Herbert von Bose and Edgar Jung (both close associates of von Papen), Erich Klausener (director of the organization Catholic Action), and Gustav Ritter von Kahr (who prevented the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923).[116] Most of the names slated for killing by the SS were contained in sealed

[113] Ibid., 315–22; Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 475–7.

[114] Max Gallo, *The Night of Long Knives* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1997), 212–9.

[115] Ibid., 217–8.

[116] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler,* 173.

envelopes that were finally opened upon receipt of the order by Goebbels. Over the next 72 hours, Gestapo agents systematically went through their lists, finding and killing those whose names were inside. Few were arrested, most were shot where they were found. Papen was only protected from execution by Göring, who knew Papen had a good relationship with President Hindenburg and could be useful later. These 72 hours quickly turn into revenge killings for Himmler, Heydrich, and Göring. Anyone who may have posed a threat or had wronged these men previously were hunted.[117] This purge would mean the end of the SA's extreme supremacy (although not the complete disappearance of the SA); the SS would soon take the place of power within the Nazi Party.

2. The SA after the Purge

After the purge in 1934, the SA was dislocated from its pinnacle of power, but it continued in existence in a subordinate role. After the execution of Röhm and other top SA leaders, Viktor Lutze took over and started an internal cleansing of the organization. First, members that were found morally unfit to serve were expelled. This included those with criminal backgrounds, adulterers, and drunks. Second, the SA force was reduced to a more practical size. Most members that left the SA for this reason left voluntarily to pursue other careers or devote time to family. This reorganization was vital in the survival of the SA; it allowed them to create a peacetime structure for the organization. Bruce Campbell recognized the effect these changes had on the SA when he stated, "These changes were quite successful on the whole, and it may even be said that the SA was able to develop much more of a homogeneous corps of leaders than the more glamorous (and amorphous) SS ever did."[118] The SA remained relatively quiet in the first few years after the purge and reorganization. By 1937, the German army had grown past the Versailles Treaty limits and SA members were serving in the expanding German Army. In 1939, Hitler decided to use the SA as the source of pre- and post-military training required for all German men. The SA finally had a renewed purpose for existence. At the onset of World War II, many SA members, especially the leadership,

[117] Gallo, *The Night of Long Knives*, 231.

[118] Bruce B. Campbell, "The SA after the Rohm Purge," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 4 (1993), 661.

joined the army. The SA was also instrumental in conducting auxiliary support for the war. From providing equipment, guards, inspections, and prisoner transportation and interrogation, the SA proved essential in the German war effort.[119] Along with the war support, the SA existed to support the Nazi party and to, as Campbell stated, "perform all those tasks related to the seizure and preservation of power that traditionally-conceived political parties and state regimes could not do or could do only with considerable difficulty in their conventional forms."[120] The SA was used to demonstrate the power of the party and to continue to push the ideals of the Nazi Party to the masses. This role would continue up until the demise of the Third Reich and its associated paramilitary organizations.

C. SCHUTZSTAFFEL 1934

1. Heinrich Himmler

Born into humble beginnings, Heinrich, the son of Gebhard and Anna, a school teacher and the daughter of wealthy merchants, would grow up to be one of the most villainous figures in the Third Reich.[121] From the beginning, Heinrich was obsessed with warfare; he read the latest telegrams and newspapers throughout World War I with awe at the mass mobilization that occurred. He went through officer training towards the end of the war, but the war ended before he could complete his training. This led to a feeling that, as Peter Longerich describes as "the view that he had been prevented from following his true calling, that of an officer."[122] After the war, Himmler, attended university, where he studied agriculture and joined a fencing fraternity, as well as a reserve army unit.

In 1923, Himmler joined the Nazi Party, and held many posts within the party over the years, including leader of the party office in Lower Bavaria. He joined the SS in 1925 and quickly rose to Deputy *Reichsführer*-SS in 1927. This was followed with his

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[119] Ibid., 666.

[120] Ibid., 665.

[121] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 13; Katrin Himmler, *The Himmler Brothers* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2008) 30–1.

[122] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 26.

appointment as *Reichsführer*-SS in 1929.[123] At the onset of the Third Reich, Himmler commanded nearly 100,000 SS members and more than 200,000 by 1934. The small force created to protect Hitler had grown into a substantial organization with great speed.[124] This required a reorganization of the SS, which Himmler undertook over the coming years.

He created three distinct sections of the SS: "the SS-*Verfügungstruppe*, consisting of the armed political squads including the *Leibstandarte*; the SS concentration camp guards; and the General SS, to which all other members of the SS belonged."[125] Along with creating the different sections of the SS, Himmler reorganized the SS headquarters; he created new offices for the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD), the SS intelligence organization; the SS office; and the Race and Settlement office. Even with all of these changes at his headquarters, Himmler's main focus was maintaining control over the concentration camps.[126] After the purges in June 1934, Himmler acquired more control of the concentration camps, replacing the SA guards with his SS men.

One change Himmler brought to the SS was the transformation of it into a cult-like organization, complete with certain rituals and rules. For example, in order to marry (which all SS men between 25 and 30 were expected to do), proof of the Aryan background of both the man and woman was required, as well as a picture of both in their swim suits. After this is complete, Himmler or one of his subordinates would decide if the couple qualified for marriage in order to produce acceptable offspring.[127] Himmler even created special marriage ceremonies for SS weddings. This was not an ordinary Christian wedding, as Himmler was anti-Christianity. Children born of SS members did not have a traditional baptism, but rather a name consecration held by an SS official. It consisted of reciting passages from *Mein Kampf* and presentation of gifts to the child.[128]

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[123] Ibid., 27–32, 81–8, 110–4.

[124] Ibid., 168.

[125] Ibid., 181.

[126] Ibid., 183.

[127] Graber, *History of the SS*, 88.

[128] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 288–9.

Along with the rituals, a strict set of requirements for new members was instituted. Like with marriage, the prospective member had to prove that they possessed no Jewish blood back to 1800 or 1750 for officer candidates. After this, they had to possess three criteria to move on to the next phase of acceptance. These were, as Graber described: "They must have the correct racial appearance, their physical condition must be such as to satisfy the SS medical inspectors, and their 'general bearing' must be satisfactory."[129] After the candidate passes these requirements, more tests were conducted before he would take the oath and become an SS member.

Himmler had a grand strategy of creating a great German empire that would be racially pure. With the outbreak of World War II, Hitler's plan was to use the SS to get rid of the Jews, whom he saw as the source of all problems, and to resettle Germans on to the newly acquired lands.[130] In August 1939, Himmler, after receiving orders from Hitler, prepared his SS men for war with Poland. There they were to act brutally, killing any armed men on the spot. The goal was to make room for ethnic Germans in the expanding German Empire. [131] He pursued the ultimate objective of Germanizing the empire, that is, turning the whole of Europe into a master race of Aryan Germans.

In addition to the Germanization aims, Himmler set out to expand the Waffen-SS during World War II and use them to purge inferior races from the German empire. It was Himmler, who in 1941, pushed for the complete extermination of Jews in the eastern territories taken over by Germany. Through 1942, Himmler played a key role in furthering the Holocaust by taking over key jobs that allowed him complete control over all aspects of the Jewish problem. Longerich outlined the steps Himmler took to assert control:

> He took over responsibility for 'combating bandits' [insurgents] in the occupied territories, had a complete settlement plan drawn up for the territory under German domination, constantly expanded the Waffen-SS's recruitment opportunities, concerned himself with the integration of the 'Germanic countries' into the new Reich, planned to build up his own

[129] Graber, *History of the SS*, 82.

[130] Ibid., 146.

[131] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 428.

> arms business, tackled the systematic removal of 'asocial' elements, and, under the banner of 'extermination through labour," ensured the expansion of the concentration-camp system.[132]

Himmler had built himself an empire within the greater German empire, free to do as he pleased within Hitler's ultimate goals for Germany.

On July 20, 1944, an attempt was made on Hitler's life by a group of German army officers. After the failed assassination attempt, Himmler formed a commission that led to the arrest of over 5,000 people and the execution of over 4,900 people. One of those implicated in the assassination attempt was General Friedrich Fromm, the commander of the Reserve Army. Hitler dismissed Fromm and named Himmler as his replacement. Himmler merged the Reserve Army recruitment with that of the Waffen-SS, leading to an increase in the numbers in the Waffen-SS.[133] As the war was coming to an end, Hitler had Himmler create the *Volkssturm*, a last-ditch militia that enlisted all men between the ages of 16 and 60. These men were poorly equipped and trained, leading to the death of many in the final months of the war.[134] In January 1945, Himmler was involved in two operations in the war, both failures. First, he was in charge of Army Group Upper Rhine during Operation North Wind, the German's attempt at penetrating the U.S. and French lines on the Western Front. After that failed, Himmler was sent to the Eastern Front to launch a counter-offensive to stop the Soviet advances. The failure on the Eastern Front caused Hitler to remove Himmler from command.[135]

As Himmler fell out of standing with Hitler after his dismissal and with the end of the war imminent, Himmler sought to protect himself. He attempted to pursue peace negotiations himself through the Swedish Red Cross and the World Jewish Congress. After these discussions, about 20,000 people were released from concentration camps on

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[132] Ibid., 745.

[133] Ibid., 696–702.

[134] Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2008), 675–8.

[135] Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 884–5, 891.

Himmler's orders.[136] On April 28, Hitler found out about the negotiations Himmler was undertaking and, on April 29, in his last will and testament, removed all party and state offices from Himmler, expelled him from the Nazi Party, and stated he was the most treacherous man he had known.[137] This would effectively end Himmler's control over the SS. His saga would end on May 23, 1945 when, after his capture, Himmler bit down on a cyanide capsule hidden in his mouth and was later buried in an unmarked grave.[138]

2. The SS

The SS, although like many of the paramilitary organizations after World War I can draw its beginnings to the Freikorps units and storm troops of the war, can see its true foundation emerge in March 1923. With frequent coups and insurgencies prior to 1933, Adolf Hitler had become uneasy towards the SA, which was too large to be controlled, and recognized the need for his own protection force. He first created the *Stabswache,* a group of a few men that swore complete loyalty to Hitler. Later that year, Hitler formed the '*Stosstrupp* Adolf Hitler' after the members of the Stabswache were pulled back into the SA organization. After the failed Beer Hall Putsch and Hitler's imprisonment in 1924, the unit was disbanded. After Hitler's release from prison in 1925, he formed a new bodyguard that would called the *Shutzstaffel*, the SS for short.[139] At this time, the SS still fell under the purview of the SA.

In 1929, Heinrich Himmler was placed in charge of the SS and the small number of men that it consisted of at the time. Himmler did not want the SS to remain a small, insignificant force and thus set out to slowly build its numbers to avoid suspicion by the SA leadership. By 1930, he had grown the SS from a force of only 280 men to nearly 2,000, and, by October 1931, that number would be over 10,000.[140] As the SS grew, its

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[136] Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *Heinrich Himmler: The Sinister Life of the Head of the SS and Gestapo* (New York, NY: Skyhorse, 2007), 230–3; Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 724.

[137] Manvell and Fraenkel, *Heinrich Himmler: The Sinister Life of the Head of the SS and Gestapo*, 237; Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 947.

[138] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 726.

[139] G. S. Graber, *History of the SS* (New York, NY: D. McKay, 1978), 36–7.

[140] Ibid., 41–2; Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 126.

mission shifted from guarding Hitler to becoming the police force for the Nazi Party. As the SS and SA grew, an internal strife between the two organizations emerged. In late 1930 and again in the spring of 1931, SA and SS members clashed, leading to the replacing of Franz Pfeffer von Salomon as head of the SA with Röhm.[141] Röhm set off to ensure the SA remained above the SS, but Himmler saw his organization as the elite of the two groups. The SS sought out only the best men, mostly from upper-middle class or above instead of the lower-middle and working classes like the SA.[142] Due to the elite nature of the SS, and the smaller, more manageable nature of the organization, Hitler trusted them and held them in high standing. This proved useful in the expansion of the organization and especially with the undertaking of the purge discussed previously.

The SS would soon become a behemoth of an organization; what started as a small elite group soon grew into a mass of hundreds of thousands with a large bureaucratic organization. The basic SS organization was as of 1934 known as the *Allgemeine* SS, or General SS, which by 1939, had about 250,000 men.[143] This was the pool of men that could be used as needed, and during the war, most were called up to the SS Verfuegungstruppe and the SS Totenkopfverbaende—later known as the Waffen SS. By the end of the war, there were barely 40,000 General SS members. Three other branches of the SS, the security service, police, and Waffen SS absorbed many SS men and grew while the general SS shrank. The security service, the SD, was established by Himmler prior to 1933, but it grew rapidly in the years 1933-39. The police consisted of regular and security police, with the regular police split into national, rural, and local police, and the security police split into criminal and secret police (Gestapo). Himmler then put control of the SD and secret police forces under his control with the formation of the Main Office of Reich Security (RHSA) in 1939. Even at its peak, the RSHA had only 70,000 men.[144] Finally, the Waffen-SS, was the Nazi armed force to conduct whatever operations Hitler deemed necessary. The Waffen-SS is where the majority of the General

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[141] Graber, *History of the SS*, 45.

[142] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 121.

[143] George H. Stein, *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War, 1939–1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), xxvi–xxvii.

[144] Ibid., xxviii–xxix.

SS would end up. Within the Waffen-SS, the SS *Totenkopfverbände*, the SS Death's Head detachments were initially formed in the course of 1934-35 to guard the concentration camps.[145]

These guard detachments began in 1933, with the appointment of Theodor Eicke as the commandant of the concentration camp at Dachau. This man and this locale became the base for this paramilitary branch within the SS of a most aggressive kind. He overhauled the guard units at the concentration camp, implementing a new code of conduct for the guards and punishments for the prisoners. His guards were indoctrinated in the belief that, as Charles Sydnor explained, "each prisoner be treated with fanatical hatred as enemy of the State."[146] After his success at Dachau, Eicke moved to Oranienburg/Berlin and took the post of inspector of concentration camps in order to organize and all concentration camps under the SS flag. He started by closing many smaller camps and opening a few large camps to consolidate prisoners. By 1937, all the smaller camps were closed and Eicke had four huge camps under his control with a fifth built in 1938.[147] His Death's Head men ran these concentration camps, and because of this, they were expected to be the most elite and toughest of the SS and any that did not meet this standard was sent back to the General SS. Training for members was conducted three weeks a month, which consisted of military as well as political training. This turned the Death's Head men into political fanatics; they were pure Nazi's just as Eicke wanted. Following their training they guarded the concentration camps for a week before going back to training.[148] When war broke out, the Death's Head detachments were morphed into Death's Head divisions under the Waffen-SS, leaving the concentration camps to the General SS to guard. With this transformation, the original Death's Head detachments

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[145] Ibid., xxx–xxxiii.

[146] Charles W. Sydnor, *Soldiers of Destruction: The SS Death's Head Division, 1933–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 11.

[147] Ibid., 19–9.

[148] Ibid., 26–7.

were no more, but the new divisions did perform well in their new roles and was characterized by a ferocious brutality visible in the Polish and French campaigns, to say nothing of the Russian campaign.[149]

3. Reinhard Heydrich

Reinhard Heydrich was born into a financially well-off musician family in the spring of 1904. His childhood was strict; his parents ran a tough house, ensuring education in both school and church, as well as participation in sports. As a result, Heydrich excelled in school, especially in the sciences.[150] Like many other children at the time, Heydrich was stuck at an age where he could do nothing but watch as World War I raged on. Heydrich's first taste of paramilitary activity came in 1919 when the revolutionary wave made its way to his hometown. Maercker's Rifles came in to recapture the town and once this was accomplished, he set up a Civil Guard unit to maintain peace and security, which Heydrich joined.[151] After his brief stint in Maercker's Rifles, Heydrich joined the navy in 1922. He did well in the navy and only ran into a problem after he met a woman. Lina von Osten, a Nazi and anti-Semite, stole Heydrich's heart and, after a short time, they were engaged. Heydrich's problem was that he was potentially engaged to another woman with whom he had a relationship previously. This woman filed a complaint with the head of the navy, which led the Heydrich's dismissal from the navy in 1931.[152]

Owing to the set of circumstances that fell on Heydrich, he was in search of a new job. The economy had imploded and Heydrich was struggling. Through some family connections, Heydrich found himself working for Himmler on the staff of the SS. This

[149] Ibid., 342; Stein, *The Waffen SS*, xxxiv.

[150] Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 14–24.

[151] Ibid., 29–30.

[152] Ibid., 39–44.

was not out of a strong tie to Nazism, but rather as a way to get back in uniform.[153] So in June 1931, Heydrich started down the path that would have history see him as Hitler's hangman, one of Germany's greatest villains.

Himmler saw potential in Heydrich, especially when it came to the formation of a SS intelligence organization. In August 1931, Himmler put Heydrich in charge of developing a SS intelligence service, later known as the SD. Heydrich quickly rose to the rank of SS-*Sturmbannführer* (major) in 15 months.[154] In March of 1933, after the Nazi takeover of Germany, Heydrich was appointed as the head of the Bavarian Political Police. In this new role, he used the concentration camps to stash his detainees for as long as he wanted without need for a trial.[155] In 1934, Heydrich, with Himmler's help, was made the head of the Gestapo office in Berlin. After this appointment, Heydrich turned his eyes toward the SA, which was gaining power. His SD department provided names to the SS of SA leaders who were to be killed in the purge at the end of June. His Gestapo men were instrumental in that event, carrying out most of the arrests and murders.[156] When Himmler took over the German police in 1936, Heydrich acquired more men in his Gestapo organization. As the Gestapo and SD grew, a division of labor had to take place to ensure both had specific roles and to avoid overlapping responsibilities. Heydrich had the SD run all the large picture state security problems and the Gestapo would be the muscle for the SD.[157]

Heydrich started addressing the Jewish problem in 1935 with measures introduced that put all returning émigrés in concentration camps, as well as keeping track of all Jews living in Germany. In 1936, Heydrich was put in charge of the Foreign Currency Investigation Agency, which gave him the tools to persecute Jews economically if he felt the violated foreign currency regulations. Heydrich was instrumental in the organization of *Kristallnacht*, a pogrom against Jews in Germany and Austria over November 8–9,

[153] Ibid., 47–8.

[154] Ibid., 52, 58.

[155] Ibid., 62, 68.

[156] Ibid., 77–80.

[157] Ibid., 91.

1938. Kristallnacht resulted in 91 deaths, 30,000 Jews being sent to concentration camps, and thousands of Jewish businesses, houses, and synagogues destroyed.[158]

When Hitler decided to invade Poland, he tapped Heydrich's Gestapo and SD forces to hunt out potential resistance and destroy them. The SD then developed a list of 61,000 Poles that would be killed or arrested immediately.[159] During the invasion of Poland, Heydrich was tasked with forming the *Einsatzgruppen* (task forces) that followed behind the army and rounded up Jews to be sent to ghettos.[160] As Germany began its Soviet campaign in 1941, the Einsatzgruppen conducted indiscriminate killing of Soviet Jews. By the end of the year, at least 500,000 Jews were murdered, most shot at close quarters. Heydrich was worried that the face-to-face killings would be bad for his men, so he set out to find a better way to conduct mass killings. He settled on Zyklon B, a chemical fumigant that was initially tested at Auschwitz.[161] After 1941, Jews began to be sent to concentration camps for the expressed reason to either work until they die or be gassed.

Heydrich was just getting started on the master plan to rid Europe of inferior races when he was assassinated. On May 27, 1942, a few Czech soldiers set up along Heydrich's route and attacked his car as it approached. Heydrich was shot and died nine days later at a hospital in Prague.[162] After his death, Hitler ordered reprisals for Heydrich's killing, specifically the total destruction of Lidice, the village where the killers were thought to be hiding. All men were to be killed and the women sent to concentration camps.[163] Retaliation continued for months, with thousands arrested or killed as a result of Heydrich's death. Although the majority of Jewish deaths occurred after Heydrich's death, he was instrumental in the organization and management of the forces that would carry out the horrendous acts over the next few years.

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[158] Ibid., 126–8.

[159] Ibid., 135.

[160] Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 425.

[161] Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 199–200.

[162] Graber, *History of the SS*, 144–5.

[163] Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 280.

4. Waffen-SS

The beginnings of the Waffen-SS can be traced to the beginning of Hitler's reign in 1933. Hitler created "Political Purpose Squads" within the SS as well as the Death's Head detachments that would merge into the Waffen-SS later in the course of 1939/40. Eicke's men, along with other smaller armed SS groups, were the executors of the purge on June 30, 1934 and would pave the way for a growth in armed SS men.[164] After this, Hitler called for the organization of the SS *Verfügungstruppe*, an armed unit that would be part of a larger SS division and whose role was the suppression of a 1918 style revolt at home or abroad. The SS Verfügungstruppe, along with the Death's Head detachments, formed the nucleus of the armed SS, with the former being the more military of the two. At the outbreak of war in 1939, there were only eight to nine thousand armed SS members, but that would quickly change.[165] By 1940, the Waffen-SS had three divisions, including the Death's Head division, but still fought for recognition and men. Finally in March 1940, the title of Waffen-SS became the official name for the armed SS.[166] The Waffen-SS was enjoying a rapid recruiting surge, having more than 125,000 men ready to support the army in its offensive in the west in mid-1940. The Waffen-SS performed well on the western front in 1940, keeping up with the army, although losing more men due to reckless nature of the units. They were trained to not fear death and were lacking in real military training, leading to the unnecessary deaths of many of its soldiers.[167]

After action on both the western and eastern fronts, the SS continued to expand, with new divisions added in 1942. New tank battalions were ordered as the army and SS were entrenched in a brutal battle with Russia. The numbers within the Waffen-SS also expanded significantly in 1942 and 1943. From a force of under 200,000 in September 1942, it grew to over 350,000 by the fall of 1943.[168] As 1943 came to end, the Waffen-SS was being sent from battle to battle, backing up the army where it was weak. Through

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[164] Stein, *The Waffen SS*, 6–7.

[165] Ibid., 27.

[166] Ibid., 49.

[167] Ibid., 89–92.

[168] Ibid., 203.

1943 and 1944, Waffen-SS units were on all fronts, from Italy to the Soviet Union, fighting defensives battles that would test the strongest of military units. After failures on all sides, the Waffen-SS prepared for the final offensive push in the west.[169]

The German army, along with the Waffen-SS, made two last ditch efforts on the western front in the closing months of 1944 and into 1945. First, Hitler threw 20 army divisions, led by four SS divisions into battle in the Ardennes. This offensive was a failure and the German troops were stuck after their initial assault stalled. To help this, Hitler tried a second offensive in Alsace consisting of eight divisions led by a SS division. Again, this offensive failed and would mark the end of attempts to penetrate the western front.[170] In Berlin, the SS did not stand a chance up against the Allied advances. There were practically no divisions left to hold the city and those left in Berlin were crushed. This would spell the end of the Waffen-SS, a force that started from humble beginnings but had amassed a force of 600,000 men at its peak. The Waffen-SS was a strong force, but still not as strong as Himmler had wanted. The army still had control of resources and leadership of the fighting force. The Waffen-SS had ventured far from its initial job of defending Hitler and serving as the Nazi police and into the realm of full combat against state armies.[171]

D. VOLKSSTURM

The Volkssturm was simply Hitler's last ditch effort at saving Germany after a string a bitter defeats on both fronts in the last months of World War II. It was founded on September 25, 1944 and called for the conscription of all men aged 16 to 60 to fight. It was assigned to Nazi Party over the army for one main reason; Hitler knew that in order for the Volkssturm to be successful, they would have to want to fight instead of being forced to fight. He believed the Nazi Party could accomplish this over the army, which had failed in battle recently.[172] Initially, this was a success; the men had good morale and

[169] Ibid., 212–26.

[170] Ibid., 227–33.

[171] Ibid., 227–233, 286–294.

[172] Yelton, *Hitler's Volkssturm*, 1, 19.

went into battle willingly. Armed with minimal military training, the Volkssturm men originally performed support roles such as security, labor, and building defenses. When called upon to support the defense of the eastern front, the Volkssturm had some minor successes, but was ultimately unsuccessful and paid dearly, with losses over 35 percent.[173] On the western front the story is similar; the men lost the will to fight and many were killed or captured. They were armed poorly, had poor weapons, and little support. There were not enough weapons to arm everyone effectively due to the millions of men in the Volkssturm. This resulted in desertions and a lack of effort by many units.[174] Finally, in the battle for Berlin, the Volkssturm had some men, but the Allied forces were too much for the German forces, including the Volkssturm, and they were quickly overrun. In the end, the Volkssturm was ultimately a failure due to the lack of preparation the Nazi Party allocated to it. They were unsuccessful at outfitting and training the force because of the hasty formation of the Volkssturm, leading to its many defeats.[175] The process from defeat and irregular military formation imbued with fanatical political purpose had gone in a quarter of a century from a violent birth to an even more violent and horrible death. The second instance had shown the original destructive energy of such a union of irregular and paramilitary spirit with military nihilism. The latter had gotten a grip on the levers of state power and the European system with horrific results. The upshot had damaged the professional ideals of soldiers and demonstrated the weaknesses of democracy in a most frightful manner.

E. THE HOLOCAUST

Initially, the Jewish problem was solved by forced relocation to Jewish settlements, where, although many died due to starvation and illness, they were not systematically exterminated as they were after 1941. In the interim between 1939 and 1941, Jews were sent to the concentration camps to be held until deportation.[176] This

[173] Ibid., 127.

[174] Ibid., 135–149.

[175] Ibid., 161–166.

[176] Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 424.

allowed the Nazi regime to monitor the Jews and prepare them for expulsion from Germany, which was seeking to become a *judenfrei* (free of Jews) state. After the failure of Germany to defeat the Soviet Union in 1941, the Nazi regime faced a growing Jewish problem. Hitler had intended to save the deportations until after the war, but he changed his mind just prior to the end of the offensive operations in the Soviet Union. After this, he was committed to the final solution, the complete extermination of all the Jews in Europe. After the assassination of Heydrich, Operation Reinhard was launched with the objective of murdering all Jews in the General Government, an occupied area in Poland. Nearly 1.7 million Jews were killed in this operation.[177] These murders would soon expand to the rest of the German controller territories, using the concentration camps and killing centers at Auschwitz, Chelmno, and Belzac, among others. Jews were systematically shot, gassed, or starved until the body count rose to over six million by the end of the war.[178] The holocaust shows how far the paramilitary arm of the Nazi Party had risen; it started as a small bodyguard force and would morph into a massive organization capable of carrying out the greatest atrocity in human history.

[177] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Final Solution," last modified June 10, 2013, http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007328.

[178] Ibid; Longerich, *Holocaust*, 332–3, 418–9; Christopher R Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 424–35.

V. CONCLUSION

Starting with the veteran's organizations following the Franco-Prussian War, paramilitary organizations have been assertive in their influence on German politics and society. In the lead-up to World War I, youth organizations emerged that instilled a revolutionary ideology that was prevalent in early paramilitary groups. As the war began and intensified, a new type of solider developed. The stormtrooper was an elite fighting man and formed into units that were drastically different than the regular army. This would lay the groundwork for the post-war paramilitary units. As the war came to a close, demands by the Allies would, unbeknownst to them, start Germany down a road of increasing paramilitary and ideological growth.

The Treaty of Versailles set limits on the German army that were unrealistic and would cause Germany to create other organizations to cover the gaps the army left behind due to the limited force. Along with the limited manpower allocated to the army, the hundreds of thousands of returning veterans were met with no jobs, since their only known profession, the military, was unable to accommodate them. This led to the formation of paramilitary organizations that allowed these veterans to continue their profession without the help of the army. Along with veterans, the youth that was too young to join the war effort, but old enough to want to, flocked to these new Freikorps units to get a taste of military life.

Many new Freikorps units sprouted up after the end of the war, and many of these took part in Sparticist week, a communist and independent uprising in Berlin that was defeated by many Freikorps units. After this, Freikorps units continued crushing leftist uprisings until the Treaty of Versailles forced the dissolution of many of these units. This led to the failed Kapp Putsch in 1920 that saw some of the Freikorps units taking Berlin and attempting to set up a new government. After this failure, the Freikorps units that had enjoyed the governments support previously were forced to operate underground, as they had all been disbanded.

The underground paramilitary movement continued for several years, with the groups taking on new identities to avoid problems with the government. During these years (1921–1923), political paramilitary groups emerged, particularly those of the communists and national socialists. After the failed beer hall putsch in 1923 by Hitler and his SA, paramilitary organizations lessened their military emphasis and focused more on the political. These new political combat leagues influenced politics with less violence than the previous paramilitary organizations. The SA, left in shambles after the failed putsch and imprisonment of their leader, was resurrected by Röhm and further strengthened after Hitler's release from prison in 1925.

After Hitler's Nazi Party took power in 1933, the SA and SS no longer took a back seat to politics and violence. Rather, these violent organizations became central to the Nazi state with the paramilitary ethos. These organizations were now the violent arm of the leading political party in Germany. In the Third Reich, paramilitary organizations prevailed, as long as they were named the HJ, SA, or SS. The Hitler Youth provided a breeding ground for future SA and SS members, indoctrinating German youth in Nazi ideology and military training. The SA quickly became the prevalent paramilitary force in Germany after 1933, growing rapidly through 1933–34. This rapid growth, along with disagreements between Hitler and Röhm over the direction of the SA led to Hitler's distrust of the organization. This ultimately led to the Night of the Long Knives in June and July of 1934, which saw the SA dismantled from the top and pushing the SS to the prominent position in the Nazi Party.

The SS, led by Himmler, became the face of mass and technocratic state violence and terror in Germany. They ran the secret police, as well as the concentration camps, which saw millions of people killed. Himmler transformed the SS from a small group of bodyguards into a state within a state of elite fighters that saw combat in World War II, as well as running the complex concentration camp system throughout the Reich. Heydrich and Eicke took the concentration camps and turned them into effective killing grounds and turned its guards into the elite of the SS. His forces, along with the other armed SS members that would make up the Waffen-SS, proved itself in battle, although they were ultimately defeated by the Allies at a huge cost in life for Germany and its neighbors.

This paramilitary explosion of violence and state terror in Germany saw after World War I hinged on a few main points. First, the inherent revolutionary spirit in Germany allowed the paramilitary mindset to take hold easier once it was underway. Second, the Treaty of Versailles set up an impossible situation for Germany. The state was unable to sustain security and stability without an adequate military apparatus and was forced to turn to the paramilitary units formed in the post-war environment. Once underway, it was impossible to stop the paramilitary groups from expanding, regardless if they were deemed illegal or not. The members of these units became more politicalized, eventually making their voices seen in the government, sometimes with violence. With the Allies refusing to lessen the blow to the German army, paramilitary organizations grew and occupied an increasingly powerful position within the state, eventually leading to the rise of the Nazi Party and the SA/SS violence that followed.

A lesson can be learned from the events that took place in Germany after World War I and into World War II. War termination is a delicate art form; the victors must ensure that the enemy does not have the power to go to war again, but they must also ensure that it has the ability to be a stable nation. This power can be found in the personality and collective personalities of the demobilized soldier and or those who aspire to join the ranks of soldiers in the wake of defeat. In the case of war termination after War World I, the Allies failed on both accounts because they were focused more on the punitive means to ensure that Germany could not fight in the future with the physical punishment of disarmament, instead of the more arduous task of building a stable and effective democratic state and an army in a democracy in this state. Although today is not 1923, it is important to give careful consideration to the implications of any demands placed on another state at the end of a conflict and to be alert to the rise of the paramilitary complex amid the democratic crisis in Europe. These factors are once more in playas of this writing in 2014 in such places as Greece, Hungary, Ukraine and Russia, and collide with an extraordinary ignorance about the forces of violence that exist in poisoned mass politics and ruptured military professionalism. The Allies in 1919 failed to factor in the requirements needed for Germany to ensure its security from within and placed limitations that allowed revolutionary groups to form and take over the nation.

The story of the paramilitary rupture of German politics, which led to an attempt to overwhelm the European system of state, is a story that any expert on European defense and security needs to know. In the future, the makers of strategy and operations should devote more attention to all aspects of war termination, especially the internal impact on any limitations, to prevent another catastrophe like the world saw in the first half of the twentieth century.

APPENDIX A. EQUIVILANT RANKS IN SA, SS, AND ARMY[179]

SA Rank	Translation	SS Rank	German Army Rank	U.S. Rank
Stabschef	Chief of Staff	Reichsführer SS	Generalfeldmarschall	General of the Army
None	Supreme Group Leader	Oberst-Gruppenführer	Generaloberst	General
Obergruppenführer	Senior Group Leader	Obergruppenführer	General	Lieutenant General
Gruppenführer	Group Leader	Gruppenführer	Generalleutnant	Major General
Brigadeführer	Brigade Leader	Brigadeführer	Generalmajor	Brigadier General
Oberführer	Senior Leader	Oberführer	None	None
Standartenführer	Regiment Leader	Standartenführer	Oberst	Colonel
Obersturmbannführer	Storm Unit Leader	Obersturmbannführer	Oberstleutnant	Lieutenant Colonel
Sturmbannführer	Storm Unit Leader	Sturmbannführer	Major	Major
Sturmhauptführer	Chief Storm Leader	Hauptsturmführer	Hauptmann/ Rittmeister	Captain
Obersturmführer	Senior Storm Leader	Obersturmführer	Oberleutnant	First Lieutenant
Sturmführer	Storm Leader	Untersturmführer	Leutnant	Second Lieutenant
Haupttruppführer	Chief Troop Leader	Sturmcharfürer	Stabsfeldwebel	Sergeant Major
Obertruppführer	Senior Troop Leader	Hauptscharführer	Oberfeldwebel	Master Sergeant
Truppführer	Troop Leader	Oberscharführer	Feldwebel	Staff Sergeant
Oberscharführer	Senior Squad Leader	Scharführer	Unterfeldwebel	Sergeant
Scharführer	Squad Leader	Unterscharführer	Unteroffizier	Corporal
Rottenführer	Section Leader	Rottenführer	Obergefreiter	Lance Corporal
Sturmmann	Storm Trooper	Sturmmann	Gefreiter	Private First Class
SA-Mann	Trooper	SS-Mann	Soldat	Private

[179] Bruce Campbell, *The SA Generals and the Rise of Nazism* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 163; Stein, *The Waffen SS*, 295.

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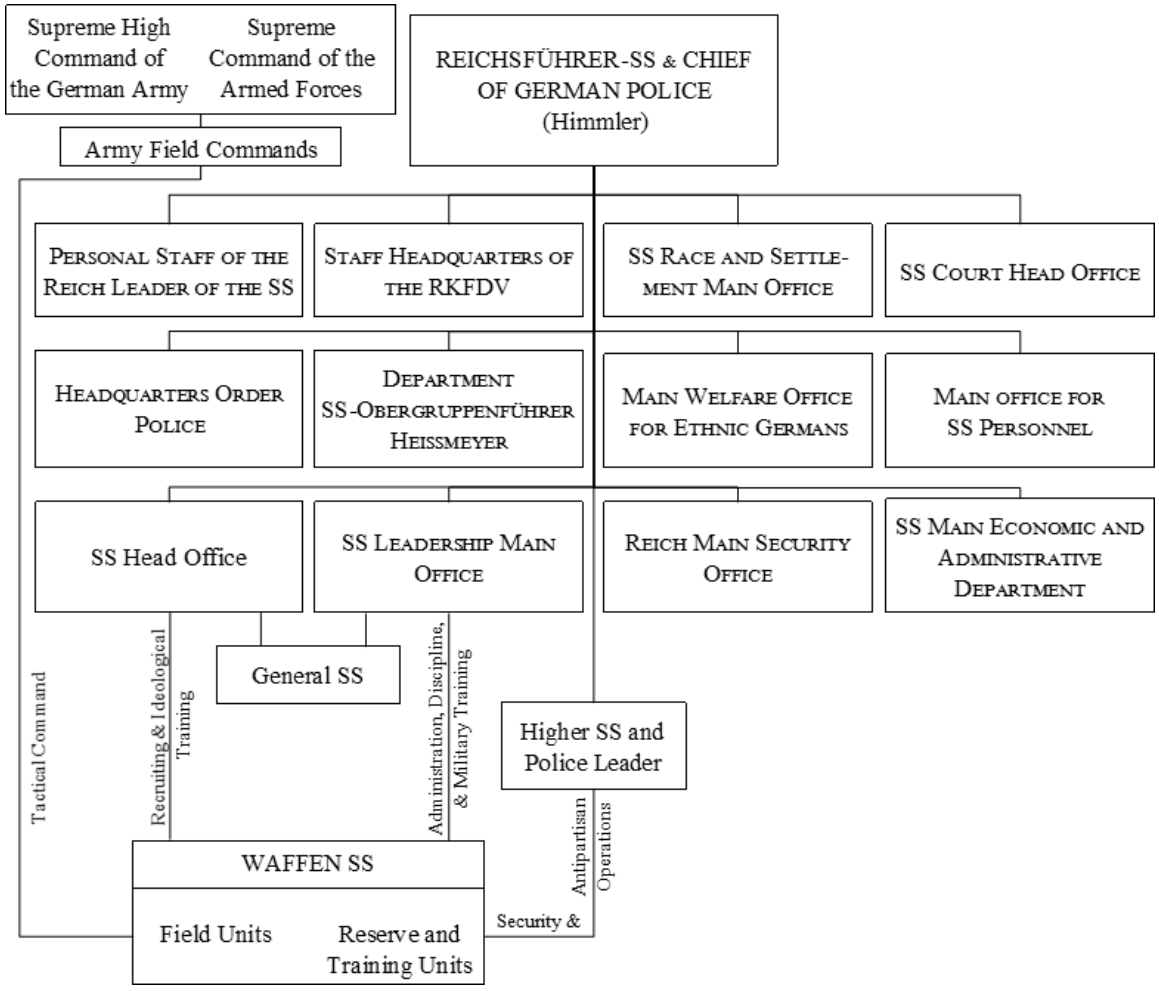
APPENDIX B. SS ORGANIZATION, 1943[180]



[180] Stein, *The Waffen SS*, 304.

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