



★ THE BROWN-SHIRTED S.A., whose power was broken on June 30, 1934, are seen above parading before Hitler. RIGHT: General von Schleicher and his wife, who was murdered with him ★

that Hitler's Reichstag speech which described the plot is a complete fabrication.

If Roehm was thinking of a *coup d'état* or *putsch*, it was certainly not arranged for June 30. The loose revolutionary talk in the S.A. was the emotional outpouring of frustrated men, long accustomed to tub-thumping in the beer halls of South Germany. On June 30, Roehm was leisurely waiting for Hitler to arrive at Wiessee, and so far from being a vigilant conspirator was quietly arrested while in bed. Karl Ernst, the leader of the Berlin S.A., who was supposed to make a surprise attack on the Chancellery at five o'clock in the afternoon of June 30, was, in fact, in Bremen

preparing to sail on his honeymoon. He was shot against a wall of the Lichterfelde barracks in Berlin, believing that he was the victim of a Right wing conspiracy against Hitler. Other high S.A. leaders were travelling to Wiessee to meet Hitler in conference; all quite open and above board, and not at all conspiratorial. There was no imminent *coup*, prevented at the last moment. Goering himself let the cat out of the bag when he told the Press on July 1. "Some days ago he (i.e., Hitler) ordered me to strike as soon as he gave the word, and he entrusted me with summary powers for the purpose." The discrepancy between this and the official account was never explained.

Nor was another remark of Goering's at the same conference. "I extended my orders," he said. The extension took in many people who were not connected with the S.A., but who, for one reason and another, were dangerous or hated. Such were Strasser, von Schleicher, von Bredow, von Kahr, Fr. Stempfle. Many private feuds and grudges were settled; some mistakes were made. In Munich, on June 30, Willi Schmidt, the music critic of the *Muenchener Neueste Nachrichten*, was playing the cello in his flat. The S.S. came and took him away, and his body was subsequently returned to his wife. The S.S. had been looking for another man with the same name, and Frau Schmidt was told to think of her husband as a "martyr for a great cause."

And the great cause? It was the succession to President von Hindenburg. Referring to the S.A. Hitler said to some of his intimates:

With the old gentleman at death's door, these criminals make such difficulties for me. At a time when it is important to decide on the successor to the Reich presidency, when the choice lies between myself and one of the reactionary crowd! For this alone these people deserve to be shot. Anyone who gets out of step will be shot.



To obtain the succession, to combine in his own person the office of President and Chancellor, Hitler promised the generals to suppress the revolutionary wing of his own party. This is the significance of the Night of Long Knives. But the Army's victory was a Pyrrhic one. Hitler had outwitted them. "Externally I end the revolution. But internally it goes on." And he wept tears for those whom he had just murdered, the "framed" men of the S.A., "because they too have died for the greatness of our movement."



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