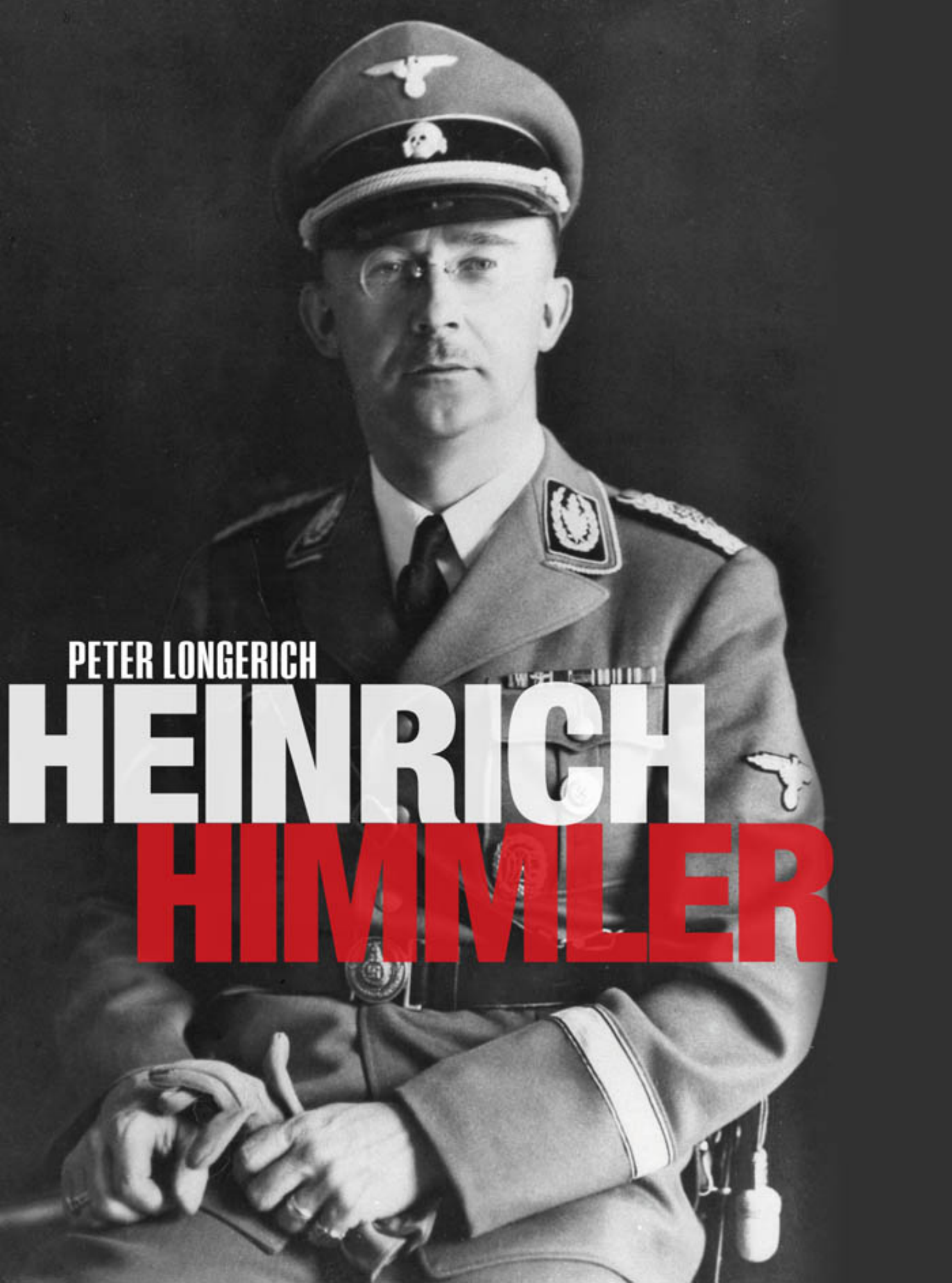

PETER LONGERICH

HEINRICH HIMMLER

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TRANSLATED BY

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
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Oxford New York

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Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
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Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

First published as Himmler: Bibliographie
by Siedler Verlag © Peter Longerich, 2008

First published 2012

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

ISBN 978–0–19–959232–6

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Acknowledgements

This book was written, with interruptions from other publications, over the last ten years and in various places: in London and Munich, in Washington, Frankfurt, and Essen, as well as almost everywhere I spent time during those years.

First and foremost, I should like to thank my colleagues and students at Royal Holloway College, University of London, who were once again willing to enable me to complete this work by generously allowing me periods of research. A series of research institutes gave me vital support by granting scholarships and visiting fellowships that provided the opportunity to discuss my work with others: the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt, and the Cultural Studies Institute in Essen.

In addition, in the last few years I have had the opportunity of presenting my work as it developed at a number of universities, in particular Freiburg, Stanford, Exeter, Oxford, and London (German History Seminar), also at the Villa Ten Hompel in Münster, at the Wewelsburg Documentation Centre, and at the Imperial War Museum.

I was also able to have intensive discussions about Himmler's personality with a group of psychoanalysts in Hamburg and a circle of psychotherapists in Cologne; the discussions with both groups made a distinct and lasting impact on my work on Himmler. I should like to thank all those who took part in these gatherings: Christiane Adam, Sabine Brückner-Jungjohann, Petra Demleux-Morawietz, Gundula Fromm, Beata Hammerich, Ulrich Knocke, Dr Bärbel Kreidt, Rita Krull-Wittkopf, Johannes Pfäfflin, Dr Peter Pogany-Wnendt, Erda Siebert, Dirk Sieveking, Dr Bernd Sonntag, and Matthias Wellershoff.

Dr Andreas Kunz, director of the branch of the Federal Archive in Ludwigsburg, drew my attention to the memoirs of Colonel Eismann, Himmler's military colleague on the staff of the Army Group Vistula. Mrs Christa Schmeisser, in the head administrative office of the Bavarian

Archives, obtained for me a transcription of Himmler's diaries and part of his correspondence. Mr Alois Schmidmeier helped me to decipher a number of shorthand passages in Himmler's letters. I am grateful to him as well as to all the staff of all the various archives and institutions that have supported my work.

P.L

Munich and London

July 2008

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Note on Sources

The primary sources for this biography are scattered across archives in several countries. Thus there are personal documents of Himmler's in the Bundesarchiv [Federal Archive] in Koblenz, in the Hoover Library in Stanford, California, and in the Special Archive in Moscow. Margarethe Himmler's diary, which provides insights into their marriage, and several family photograph albums have for some years been accessible to researchers in the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Some of Himmler's private papers are in the hands of various individuals and are continually being offered for sale in auction houses. It is, however, extremely unlikely that further material of Himmler's will come to light that provides significant insights into his political actions.

The Bundesarchiv in Berlin contains over 4,000 files of the Personal Staff of the Reichsführer-SS and varying quantities of material from the SS main offices. The collection of the personal files of SS leaders in the former Berlin Document Center (now part of the Bundesarchiv, Berlin) not only contains valuable information about their careers but, in some cases, substantial correspondence with Himmler and his personal staff. I have used several hundred of these files for this book.

The Munich archives proved very productive for Himmler's early years. The files of the Nazi Party's Reich propaganda headquarters in the Bundesarchiv, Berlin contain extensive correspondence of Himmler, who ran this office from 1926 to 1930 as its deputy head.

Finally, his activities are revealed in the files of a large number of other institutions, for example in those of the Foreign Ministry, which are held in its political archive in Berlin, in the documents of military agencies (Bundesarchiv, Freiburg), in those of various party and state agencies (Bundesarchiv, Berlin), but also in the files of British institutions, which are in the Public Record Office in London [now the National Archives].

As far as possible I have consulted the original documents in the relevant archives. However, I was obliged to make a few exceptions: in some cases

I have used copies of SS files from the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, which are available in the National Archives in Washington, DC, and used their reference numbers because trying to access these files in Berlin proved too time-consuming. In a number of cases I have also used copies of documents I was able to make during a lengthy stay in Yad Vashem in 1995–6. The originals are held in other archives.

The most important of the published sources is *Heinrich Himmler's Office Diary 1941/42*, which was edited by eight German historians. In an exemplary pioneering project, covering the particularly critical years 1941–2, they combined Himmler's hitherto undiscovered appointment notes, which were held in the Moscow Special Archive, with the Himmler calendars which were already available, and drew upon the Reichsführer's correspondence contained in various collections of files in order to provide a context for the diary entries. In the process they have provided an indispensable source.

Among other important published Himmler documents are the collection of speeches edited by Bradley Smith and Agnes F. Peterson and the very well-chosen collection of Himmler letters edited by Helmuth Heiber, which are in some cases absurd and in others shocking.

Since their publication in 1952 the memoirs of his masseur, Felix Kersten, *Totenkopf und Treue* (translated as *The Kersten Memoirs 1940–1945* (1956)), based on so-called diaries, have been a popular source for works on Himmler. According to the author, under his soothing hands the Reichsführer spoke freely about his views and plans. In some cases Kersten's accounts of Himmler's comments correspond remarkably closely to other reports of his views, for example in respect of his attitude to homosexuality (pp. 67 ff.) or on the theme of the 'rebirth of the clan' (pp. 191 ff.); but, on the other hand, they also contain fanciful exaggerations, as for example when he attributes to Himmler remarks about alleged 'studs' (*Zeugungshelfer*) in the Spring of Life (*Lebensborn*) homes (pp. 230 ff.). And Kersten's assertion that through his influence on Himmler he had managed to prevent the blowing up of the Zuidersee dyke and so saved large parts of Holland from being flooded (pp. 329 ff.) has long been disproved. Moreover, now that it is possible to compare his dates with those in the *Office Diary* a large number of discrepancies have emerged. In short, therefore, Kersten's book cannot in the strict sense be regarded as a reliable source.

There are a number of previous biographies of Himmler, in particular *Himmler: The Evil Genius of the Third Reich* by Willi Frischauer from 1953, Heinrich Fraenkel's and Roger Manvell's *Heinrich Himmler* from 1965, and Peter Padfield's *Himmler: Reichsführer SS* from 1990. These books use only a fraction of the primary sources on Himmler that are now available and, in view of the substantial research into the SS that has occurred in the meantime, must be regarded as completely out of date.

In 1970 Bradley Smith published a biography of the young Himmler (*Heinrich Himmler 1906–1926*) on the basis of his diaries. It is still very readable and provides important insights into the development of Himmler's personality. Josef Ackermann's *Heinrich Himmler as Ideologue*, published in 1970, is still considered a very sound work on this topic; also, Frank-Lothar Kroll's *Utopia as Ideology*, published a few years ago, is a substantial study of this subject.

In 2005 Katrin Himmler, a great-niece of Heinrich Himmler, gave an account of the Himmler family from her perspective and based to some extent on family tradition. *The Himmler Brothers* contains above all important material on the biographies of his brothers and their relationship to Heinrich.

Richard Breitman's study *The Architect of the 'Final Solution'* from 1991, dealing with Himmler's role in the extermination of the Jews, is largely restricted to the war years. Breitman has the merit above all of being the first person to have systematically studied the various Himmler office diaries available in Washington and placed them in the context of his correspondence. This has produced significant new insights into Himmler's activities during the war.

Breitman's main thesis, however, that Himmler had committed himself at an early stage—that is, at the turn of the year 1940/1—to murdering the European Jews is unconvincing and has not succeeded in winning support from fellow scholars. In contrast to Breitman this biography attempts to place Himmler's 'Jewish policy' in the context of his other activities; this procedure leads to very different results.

On the question of the persecution of the Jews this book has been able to make use of the very substantial literature that has appeared in the meantime. I should mention in this context—without claiming it to be a comprehensive list—the names of Götz Aly, Christopher Browning, Christian Gerlach, Raul Hilberg, Dieter Pohl, and Thomas Sandkühler. I should also refer to the fact that, as far as the Holocaust is concerned, this book is based on my earlier works on this topic.

However, during the past two decades not only Jewish persecution but numerous other aspects of the history of the SS and police apparatus have been the subject of a vast number of research studies. I have endeavoured to make use of this substantial research for this biography, and indeed without it this book could not have been written. Among these works, to name only a small selection, are those concerning the police by George C. Browder, Robert Gellately, Eric A. Johnson, and Patrick Wagner; those concerning general aspects of the concentration camps by Karin Orth and Johannes Tuchel; the studies of Martin Cüppers, Ralf Ogorreck, and Andrej Angrick on the Einsatzgruppen and other murder units, which substantially supplement the 'classic' works by Helmut Krausnick and Karl-Heinz Wilhelm. In addition, there are various contributions dealing with particular groups of victims: Michael Zimmermann's and Günther Lewy's books on the persecution of the Gypsies, and the contributions of Helmut Neuberger on the Freemasons, of Burkhard Jellonek on the homosexuals, of Detlef Garbe on the Jehovah's Witnesses, and of Wolfgang Dierker on the persecution of the churches.

Moreover, in the last few years substantial works have been written describing and analysing the activities of individual SS main offices and particular parts of the SS. Among these are, in particular, Torsten Querg's dissertation on the SD's foreign espionage, Michael Wildt's book on the Reich Security Main Office, Isabel Heinemann's book on the Race and Settlement Main Office, Jan Erik Schulze's and Michael Allen's studies of the Business and Administration Main Office, Bianca Vieregge's analysis of the SS and police's judicial system, Hermann Kaienburg's detailed account of the SS's business sector, and Gudrun Schwarz's study of the role of women in the SS. These works supplement older studies of other parts of the SS, for example the books by George H. Stein and Bernd Wegner on the Waffen-SS, Michael Kater's on the Ahnenerbe (which has still not been superseded), and Georg Lilienthal's study of the Spring of Life (*Lebensborn*) organization.

By integrating biography and structural history this book offers a new perspective by which the history of the SS, which in recent years has fragmented into its individual parts, can be reintegrated. In this way it represents an attempt to continue the work begun in the earlier general histories of the SS by Heinz Höhne (*The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS*, published in 1969) and by Robert Lewis Koehl (*The Black Corps*, published in 1983).

Glossary of Terms

TABLE OF SS OFFICERS' RANKS

	British Army	*US Army*
SS-Oberstgruppenführer	General	General
SS-Obergruppenführer	Lieutenant-General	Lieutenant-General
SS-Gruppenführer	Major-General	Major-General
SS-Brigadeführer	Brigadier	Brigadier-General
SS-Oberführer	Senior Colonel	Senior Colonel
SS-Standartenführer	Colonel	Colonel
SS-Obersturmbannführer	Lieutenant-Colonel	Lieutenant-Colonel
SS-Sturmbannführer	Major	Major
SS Hauptsturmführer	Captain	Captain
SS-Obersturmführer	Lieutenant	First Lieutenant
SS-Untersturmführer	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant

OFFICIAL TITLES/ SS-CONTROLLED ORGANIZATIONS/ABBREVIATIONS

Abschnitt	An SS district
Bürgermeister	Mayor of a town and, depending on its size, responsible either to the Landrat or to the Regierungspräsident but with certain autonomous powers under the principle of 'self-administration' (*Selbstverwaltung*)
BVP	Bavarian People's Party
County administrator	(Landrat) civil-service official in charge of a district roughly the size of an English rural district council and subordinate to the Regierungspräsident
District governor	(Regierungspräsident) civil-service official in charge of a district roughly the size of an average English county

EWZ	Einwanderer Zentralstelle, Łódź (Central Office for Immigration), the central office for organizing the settlement of repatriated ethnic Germans
Gauleiter	Head of a Nazi Party Gau, a district the size of a large city or a province
Gestapa	Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt (Secret State Police Office), the headquarters in Berlin of the secret state police (Gestapo)
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei (the secret state (political) police)
HSSPF	Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer (Higher SS and Police Leader); senior SS official in charge of the SS and police in a large region
IKL	Inspektion der Konzentrationslager (Concentration Camp Inspector(ate))
KL/KZ	Konzentrationslager (concentration camp)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (German Communist Party)
Kripo	Kriminalpolizei (the Criminal Police Department), a state organization
Lebensborn	Spring of Life organization, founded in 1936 by the SS to look after the racially and eugenically acceptable expectant mothers of illegitimate children, particularly of SS members, before and after birth by providing clinics and thereby to encourage such births
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers Party = the Nazi Party)
Oberabschnitt	An SS district larger than an Abschnitt
Oberbürgermeister	Mayor of a large city and directly responsible to the Interior Ministry but with certain autonomous powers under the principle of 'self-administration' (*Selbstverwaltung*)
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres (Army High Command)
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (Armed Forces High Command)
Old Reich	(Altreich) Germany in its pre-1938 borders
Ostland	The Baltic States and Byelorussia (White Russia)
Ostmark	(Eastern March) the official title for Austria
Provincial governor	(Oberpräsident) the official in charge of a Prussian province, in the Third Reich usually also a Gauleiter
Reich Governor	(Reichsstatthalter) the most senior official in a federal state (Land), a new post introduced in 1933 and normally held by a Gauleiter
RFSS	Reichsführer-SS

RKF	Reichskommissar(iat) fur die Festigung deutschen Volkstums (Reich Commissar[iat] for the Consolidation of the Ethnic German Nation), Himmler's official post and office coordinating all resettlement programmes, initially confined to Poland, but eventually extended to the whole of German-occupied Europe
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt (the Reich Security Main Office), established in 1939 to bring the Security Police (Gestapo and Kripo) and SD under one roof
RuSHA	Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt (Race and Settlement Main Office); this organized the racial assessment of individuals and communities prior to their acceptance into SS organizations and, where it was considered desirable, prior to their resettlement, deportation, or extermination. It also organized the resettlement of communities throughout Europe
SA	Sturmabteilung (lit. Storm Department = stormtroopers)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service), Nazi party organization established by the SS in 1931 as an intelligence operation. Originally partly a kind of ideological think-tank for gathering information on and developing policy towards Nazism's ideological opponents, it began to acquire executive functions in the late 1930s
Selbstschutz	Auxiliary force of ethnic Germans in Poland
Sipo	Sicherheitspolizei (Security police), an amalgamation in 1936 of the Gestapo and Criminal police, though the two retained distinct organizations
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutchlands (German Social Democratic Party)
SS	Schutzstaffel (Protection squad)
SSPF	SS- und Polizeiführer (SS and Police Leader)
Stapo	Gestapo
State Secretary	(Staatssekretär) the most senior permanent civil-service official in a ministry
UWZ	Umwandererzentralstelle (Central Office for Resettlement), the office that handled the deportation of 'ethnic aliens' prior to the resettlement of ethnic Germans in their place
VDA	Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland (National League for Germans Abroad)
Verfügungstruppe	Special Duty troops, the military organization of the SS, the precursor of the Waffen-SS

völkisch	Term dating from *c.*1900 denoting an ideology and movement that stressed the importance of ethnicity in determining national identity and considered that human mentalities and behaviour and national cultures were largely shaped by race/ethnicity ('blood') and that there was a qualitative hierarchy of ethnicities. These beliefs were usually accompanied by anti-Semitism
Volkssturm	A home guard established 25 September 1944
VoMi	Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (Coordination Centre for Ethnic German Resettlement), the central office for coordinating the SS resettlement programme in eastern Europe
Waffen-SS	Armed SS, the military organization of the SS
WVHA	Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt (Business and Administration Main Office), the department responsible for organizing the economic activities of the SS
z. b.V.	(*zur besonderen Verwendung*) 'for special assignment'

Abbreviations

ADAP	*Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1938–1945*
AP Lodz	Archivum Panstwowe Łódź
ATB	Arbeitstagebuch Himmler (BAK, NL 1126)
BAB	Bundesarchiv, Abt. Berlin
BADH	Bundesarchiv, Abt. Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten
BAK	Bundesarchiv, Abt. Koblenz
BAM	Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, Freiburg
BHStA	Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, München
CDJC	Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine
DVA	Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Ernährung und Verpflegung
EM	Ereignismeldungen UdSSR (BAK, R 58/214–221)
GstA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Berlin
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte, München
IMT	*International Military Tribunal*
KAM	Kriegsarchiv München
KTB	Kdostab
RFSS	Kriegstagebuch Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS
KTB	Pol. Btl. Kriegstagebuch Polizeibataillon
Leseliste	Leseliste Himmler (BAK, NL 1126/9)
LG	Landgericht
MbliV	*Ministerialblatt für die preußische innere Verwaltung*
NARA	US National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC
NLA, StA	Bückeburg Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv, Staatsarchiv Bückeburg
OA Moskau	Osobyi Archiv Moskva (Special Archive Moscow)
PAA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin
PrGS	*Preußische Gesetzsammlung*
PRO	Public Record Office, London [now the National Archives]
RFSSuChdDtPol	Reichsführer-SS und Chef der Deutschen Polizei
RGBl	*Reichsgesetzblatt*

RMBliV	*Ministerialblatt des Reichs- und Preußischen Ministeriums des Innern*
RVBl	*Reichsverwaltungsblatt*
StAMarburg	Staatsarchiv Marburg
StAMünchen	Staatsarchiv München
StAnw München	Staatsanwaltschaft München
TB	Tagebuch Himmler (BAK, NL 1126)
USHMM	US Holocaust Memorial Museum,Washington, DC
VF	Verfügungstruppe
VOGG	*Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement*
YIVO	Institute for Jewish Research, New York
YV	Yad Vashem, Jerusalem
ZStA Potsdam	Zentrales Staatsarchiv Potsdam
ZStL	Zentrale Stelle Ludwigsburg

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Prologue

On the afternoon of 23 May 1945, more than two weeks after the German surrender, a group of about twenty suspects—German civilians and soldiers—who had been rounded up two days previously, were brought into the British forces' 31st Civilian Interrogation Camp near Lüneburg.[1]

Captain Selvester, the duty officer, began the routine interrogation of the prisoners: the men were brought individually into his office, where he took down their personal details and questioned them. He had been at work for some time when he heard from the sentries that three of the prisoners waiting outside his office were causing trouble by demanding to be seen immediately. This was extremely unusual. Selvester knew from experience that most prisoners would do anything to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

His curiosity aroused, Selvester ordered the three prisoners to be brought in. Thereupon a fairly short, ill-looking man in shabby civilian clothing entered his office, followed closely by two taller men of distinctly military bearing dressed half in civilian, half in military clothing. All three were under suspicion of belonging to the Secret Field Police. Selvester sent the two taller men out again in order to take a closer look at the shorter one, who was clearly in charge. The man removed a black patch covering his right eye, put on a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, and introduced himself calmly as the person his outward appearance unmistakably indicated: Heinrich Himmler, the former Reichsführer-SS and Chief of the German Police, Commander of the Reserve Army of the German Wehrmacht, and Reich Minister of the Interior.

Selvester immediately sent for the most senior interrogation officer, Captain Smith, and, in order to be quite sure, both demanded a specimen signature from Himmler. At first Himmler refused, clearly suspecting the

men were after a souvenir, but agreed in the end on condition that the paper was destroyed as soon as his signature had been compared with a copy kept in the camp.

After this Selvester himself set about searching the prisoner. First of all, he discovered documents in the name of Heinrich Hitzinger, Wehrmacht sergeant. In Himmler's jacket he then came upon a small tin with a glass phial containing a colourless liquid. Recognizing that it was a suicide capsule, Selvester asked Himmler as innocently as he could what was in the phial. The reply came that it was medicine to treat stomach cramps. When a second identical tin was found in Himmler's clothing Selvester was forced to conclude that his prisoner still had a further capsule hidden on or inside his person.

Himmler was therefore subjected to a minute examination that included all orifices, though the most likely and most dangerous hiding-place, his mouth, was carefully omitted. Instead, Selvester then ordered cheese sandwiches and tea, both of which Himmler was happy to accept without removing any suspicious object from his mouth. He did, however, refuse to put on the items of British uniform offered to him in place of his confiscated clothing, fearing most likely that the intention was to take photographs of him for use as propaganda.

So now he was sitting in his underclothes and draped in a blanket facing the British officers. It was established that the two men accompanying him were Obersturmbannführer Werner Grothmann, the SS leader's adjutant, and another member of his staff, Sturmbannführer Heinz Macher.

Towards evening a more senior secret-service officer arrived and began to interrogate Himmler. Meanwhile, the British began deliberating how they could retrieve intact the capsule presumed to be in Himmler's mouth. Military doctors were asked if drugs could be used to render him unconscious but this was rejected as too risky.[2]

The interrogation was brought to a temporary close towards midnight. Himmler was taken to the headquarters of the Second British Army in Lüneburg. The whole time he had been in Camp 31 Himmler had appeared cooperative, from time to time positively jovial, and willing to answer the British officers' questions, or at least that was Selvester's impression. Though at first he had seemed unwell, he had visibly recovered after being given something to eat and the chance to wash.

Once in Lüneburg Himmler was subjected to a thorough medical examination, in the course of which the doctor, Captain Wells, discovered in

Himmler's mouth, which he was reluctant to open, a blue-tipped object. As Wells attempted to remove this foreign body, Himmler jerked his head to one side to avoid him. He bit into the capsule and collapsed. After fifteen minutes all further attempts to remove the remains of the poison from his mouth and to revive him were abandoned. Closer inspection revealed that the poison was cyanide.[3]

Three days after his death Himmler's body was buried. Only a British officer and three sergeants who had dug the grave were present. There was no religious ceremony and the place of burial was unmarked.[4]

Himmler's behaviour during his final days is full of contradictions. Unlike other prominent Nazis he had not taken his own life in the last days of the war but rather gone into hiding, although in such an amateurish manner that he and those with him were bound to be caught at some point. When he fell into Allied hands he made sure they knew who he was and yet then evaded responsibility through suicide. The fact that he acted in this way and not in accordance with the virtues of an SS officer he perpetually preached—which included taking responsibility, in however crude a form, for one's own actions—was to disillusion his men deeply and result in the posthumous reputation of the Reichsführer-SS remaining largely negative even among his former adherents. In the post-war years no Himmler legend was waiting to be born.

In May 1945 Himmler had simply been absorbed into the flood of millions of refugees and soldiers. His end appears as puzzling as his career in the service of National Socialism. How could such a banal personality attain such a historically unique position of power? How could the son of a prosperous Bavarian Catholic public servant become the organizer of a system of mass murder spanning the whole of Europe?

The aim of this biography is to penetrate as far as possible the mystery of this man's personality and the motives underlying his monstrous deeds. To succeed in this, however, it is necessary to go beyond the established pattern of political biography and take into account quite literally the whole of Himmler's life in its separate stages and its various spheres of activity, including the non-political ones.

Such a comprehensive biographical approach allows us to reconstruct the development of this personality, its essential character traits and typical behaviour patterns in its formative years, which extend into the start of

Himmler's political career, and thereby to gain insights that will illuminate his later life. This method makes it altogether possible to explain what motivated this 'young man from a good family' to join the radical right-wing splinter party, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), in the mid-1920s, and what impelled someone who was fairly weak physically and nondescript in appearance to develop the protection squad (*Schutzstaffel*) he commanded into the martial SS and steer it on a course of selecting only the racially perfect. His personality also allows us to draw conclusions about what moved Himmler in the following years to stick stubbornly to his post in spite of defeats and frustrations, and to work consistently to build up a power structure that exercised decisive control over the territory under German domination. As far as the unprecedented crimes he organized are concerned, his own justification of them is indissolubly bound up with his biography, with his notion of 'decency', which on closer inspection turns out to be no more than a label for petit-bourgeois double standards.

A Himmler biography can, however, achieve much more. For if we build up a biographically coherent picture, with both chronological and synoptic analysis, of the diverse activities for which Himmler, as Reichsführer-SS, Chief of the German Police, Reich Commissar for the Consolidation of the Ethnic German Nation, Reich Minister of the Interior, and Commander of the Reserve Army, was responsible, we are in a position to recognize that the individual fields of political activity for which Himmler was responsible were much more strongly interlinked than is commonly supposed. In addition, surprising coincidences of timing come to light that have not been recognized in research to date.

Research up to now on the history of the SS and Nazi Party structures has concentrated above all on the reconstruction of the mass crimes carried out by the SS (with the Holocaust clearly the main focus of attention), as well as on its various spheres of action. Thus, repression, racial extermination, the Waffen-SS, settlement and ethnic policies, espionage, and so on were considered primarily as a series of separate pillars of the SS empire. Yet if an explanation is sought for what held this exceptionally heterogeneous apparatus together and for how it came, in the course of time, to seek more and more tasks, to extend its areas of activity, and, on several occasions, to redefine itself, then the focus must be turned onto the life story of the man at its head. For Himmler was to redefine the role of the SS repeatedly, in clearly distinguishable phases of its existence.

From the small bodyguard unit he took over in 1929 he created in a very short time a paramilitary organization with elite pretensions sworn to serve the top Party leadership. In 1933/4 he was able to to propel himself relatively quickly up to the rank of Reich Chief of the Political Police. From this position he developed a comprehensive plan for the management of the whole of the police force which, after Hitler had appointed him Chief of the German Police, he intended to amalgamate with the SS to form a state protection corps (*Staatsschutzkorps*) to provide comprehensive internal security.

When at the end of the 1930s the so-called Third Reich began to expand, he set new targets; alongside settlement and racial selection of the population in territories identified for 'Germanization', he expanded the Waffen-SS and played a role in the policy of repression in the occupied territories. From 1941 onwards he introduced a policy of systematic mass murder based on racial criteria. In his eyes this was the first step towards setting up a qualitatively new, racially based power structure—the Greater Germanic Reich.

At the end of 1942, however, the regime went on the defensive and Himmler changed his emphasis once again. Now he concentrated entirely on guaranteeing 'security' within the area still under Nazi rule, and until the end of the war all the internally enforceable methods of violence of the Nazi state were united in his person.

This evidence suggests that Himmler's actual strength consisted in redrawing every two or three years the master plans for his sphere of power, on the basis of which interdependent tasks, aligned with the overall policy of the regime and justifiable in terms of both power politics and ideology, were allocated to the individual parts of this heterogeneous power conglomerate. By these means he responded to the increasing political radicalization of the Nazi regime and simultaneously gave that process decisive impetus.

This ability Himmler had to connect ideology and power politics in a most efficient way, by creating a continuous stream of new and wide-ranging tasks for his SS, makes one thing clear above all: the biographical approach offers the only adequate way of grasping and explaining the history of the SS in all its facets. Without the man at its head this heterogeneous organization, constantly expanding and growing more radical, cannot be investigated in a way that is thorough and complete.

Added to this is the recognition that Himmler's personal predilections, aversions, and diverse quirks were deeply ingrained in the organization and leadership of the SS and actually played a formative role in its structure. This is, for instance, true of Himmler's idiosyncratic notion of personnel management, which included surveillance of the private lives of his men and in many respects is reminiscent of the behaviour of a strict and solicitous father figure. It is true also of his attempt to establish an SS cult that fitted entirely the Germanophile tendencies of this Catholic dissident. The state protection corps, into which Himmler wanted to develop the SS, offered him in many respects a form of self-protection, a cover organization behind which he could act out his personal desires and hide his own weaknesses.

Himmler as Reichsführer-SS was precisely not someone who exercised a political function or held an office with a stable group of powers, but rather in the course of time he created for himself from the diverse tasks allotted to him by the Führer a unique position of power that was completely geared to him as an individual. Leading the SS, ensuring its internal cohesion and its future viability, became in fact his whole life.

The more Himmler carried over his personal maxims into his leadership of the SS, and the more he and his office grew together, the more he disappeared as a private individual behind the function of Reichsführer-SS. While a variety of sources (in particular diaries and letters) provide us with a relatively large quantity of information about the private Himmler up to the start of the 1930s, such personal documents become ever rarer with the increase in his range of powers and in the claims his professional duties made on him. Himmler had hardly any private life any more. Although we have a large number of official documents at our disposal, in which Himmler's personality—his characteristic style, his resentments, predilections, and prejudices—clearly emerges, the purely biographical method, in spite of such evidence, comes up against its limits at the latest in the mid-1930s. It would also be presumptuous—as well as completely erroneous historiographically—to attempt to explain the actions of Heinrich Himmler as Reichsführer-SS first and foremost on the basis of his life. The history of National Socialism cannot be reduced to the intersecting careers of a number of leading Nazis.

Instead, what we have here is an effective combination of biography and structural history; if increasing weight is given in the course of our protagonist's life to structural history, this methodological and narrative shift of emphasis is the logical consequence of the process described here of office

and individual becoming indistinguishable. The biographical element nevertheless remains significant in the description of every phase of Himmler's life. For in National Socialism the exercise of political power was quite simply inextricably linked to the biographies of leading Nazi functionaries. In the case of Heinrich Himmler this is true to an exceptional degree.

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PART I

Himmler's Early Years

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I

Childhood and Youth

In 1980, a few weeks before his death, the German writer Alfred Andersch concluded work on an autobiographical 'school story'. The story describes a Greek lesson at the Wittelsbach Grammar School in Munich that took place fifty-two years before the story was published. Its model is the last Greek lesson Andersch experienced at this school in 1928.

The drama begins when 'Rex', the school's strict and universally feared headmaster, appears on a surprise visit to the class. First there is an argument between Rex and a very self-confident pupil from an aristocratic family that quickly escalates and ends with the headmaster telling the disobedient pupil, who will not submit to his authority, that he is expelled. But this was only the prelude: now Rex summons the hero of the story, whom Andersch calls Franz Kien, to the blackboard. Not only does he parade with positive pleasure the boy's pathetic knowledge of Greek, but with every trick of his trade—sarcasm, malice, meanness of spirit—he demolishes Kien-Andersch. He too is obliged to leave the school.

'Rex', it is revealed, was in fact called Himmler, and Andersch gave the story the title 'The Father of a Murderer'.

Andersch's 'school story' is a plausible attempt to understand the phenomenon that was Himmler: The career of a mass murderer, it is suggested here, is the result of a father–son conflict, in the course of which Heinrich Himmler becomes a radical right-wing revolutionary, rebelling against his overly strict father and turning into his 'mortal enemy'. Andersch asks if it was not inevitable that, 'as a result of "natural determinism"' (defined as the obvious rules of psychology, the laws of conflict between one generation and the next, and the paradoxical consequences of family tradition) 'such a father would produce such a son?' Andersch conceded that he had no definitive answer to this question.

After the advance publication of Andersch's story in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* numerous letters appeared in the newspaper from readers who had known Gebhard Himmler personally. They do not paint an unambiguous picture: He is described as 'the kind of person who grovels to his superiors while oppressing his inferiors', but also as a 'vigorous person of high intellect who commanded respect'.[1]

Otto Gritschneder, a well-known Munich lawyer, who in numerous publications has criticized the Bavarian judicial system under National Socialism, recalled his former teacher Gebhard Himmler 'as Rex the just (and justice is of course very important to pupils), honestly striving to communicate to our young minds the culture and history of our native country and our continent'. Furthermore, Gritschneder had sat in the same classroom as Andersch. According to his account, Andersch had simply been a bad pupil and the decision to put an end to his career at the Wittelsbach Grammar School had been entirely reasonable.[2]

The Himmlers and their son Heinrich

As the son of a low-ranking Protestant civil servant, Gebhard Himmler, Heinrich Himmler's father, was a classic case of upward social mobility. Born in 1809, his father Johann Himmler, who came from a family of peasants and artisans from Ansbach and was himself trained as a weaver, had in the course of a varied career in the Bavarian military and police worked his way up to the rank of 'brigadier' (the police equivalent of sergeant). After his retirement in 1862 he had been employed up to his death in 1872 in the district administration of Lindau. A few months after his move to Lindau Johann Himmler, now 53, married Agathe Rosina Kiene, who was twenty-four years his junior, a Catholic and the daughter of a clockmaker from Bregenz.[3]

In 1865 the couple had a son, Gebhard. When he was 7 years old his father died. His mother brought him up a Catholic, and it was probably due to her influence that he owed that energy and commitment that helped him succeed in rising socially from his petit-bourgeois background to the professional middle class. In 1884 he began to study at Munich University, specializing in German literature and classical languages and graduating in 1888.[4] He went on to spend some time in St Petersburg, where at that point there was a relatively large German colony. There he was employed as a

private tutor in the house of the honorary consul Freiherr von Lamezan.[5] Lamezan's friendship with the Bavarian Prince Regent Luitpold created contacts at the Bavarian court. Gebhard Himmler returned to Bavaria and tried to establish himself as a grammar-school teacher. From 1890 he taught first on a temporary basis at the Munich Grammar School, but from 1894 onwards he enjoyed the rare privilege of being appointed by Prince Arnulf of Wittelsbach, a brother of the Prince Regent and of the later King Ludwig III of Bavaria, as private tutor to his son Heinrich.[6] After completing this task successfully, in 1897 Gebhard Himmler was given a permanent position as a teacher at the long-established Wilhelm Grammar School in Munich.[7]

His new position enabled him finally to establish a family. In 1897 he married Anna Maria Heyder, the daughter of a Munich businessman. At the time they married she was 31, a year younger than her husband; she too had lost her father, who was 55 when she was born, at the age of 6.[8] It is thought she brought a not-inconsiderable fortune to the marriage.[9]

Heinrich, who was born on 7 October 1900, was the second child of this union, after Gebhard, who was born in July 1898. It was a great honour for the Himmlers that Prince Heinrich, then 16 years old, agreed to Gebhard Himmler's request that he be the child's godfather. Though the prince was ninth in line to the Wittelsbach crown and thus unlikely to succeed, his role as godparent strengthened the family's link to the court, and for the future of the ambitious Himmlers this was enormously important.[10] The youngest addition to the Himmler family was naturally named after his influential godfather; Luitpold, the name of the Prince Regent, was chosen for his second Christian name. Ludwig, the name of the Bavarian king who had died in 1886, had been selected for the eldest son's second Christian name. In 1905 Heinrich's younger brother Ernst was born.

It is clear that the Himmlers succeeded in their efforts to create an ordered life characterized by regular habits, hard work, and religious observance, as was typical of comfortably off families of state officials in Munich around 1900. While the mother devoted herself to the household and the welfare of the children, the father not only immersed himself in his career as a grammar-school teacher but tried also to give his sons as far as possible the benefit of his pedagogic skills.[11]

Central to this education was the transmission of a solid cultural canon, comprising in particular classical literature and sound knowledge of history and of Greek and Latin. The strong emphasis the father placed on acquainting his sons with social conventions and manners presumably also betrays

the lack of confidence of someone who came from modest circumstances. It went without saying that religious belief and active participation in church life were part of the children's upbringing; Anna Himmler in particular attached so much importance to establishing their Catholic faith that their father felt he must warn against taking such things too far.[12]

As a father he exercised his authority not through being unapproachable or through overbearing strictness but rather through patient efforts with his sons; they were subject to a system of rules and prohibitions, while their father monitored their obedience precisely and at times pedantically. His strictness was designed to have a lasting effect and seems to have been altogether compatible with kindness, love, and affection.[13] In addition he spent a considerable part of his free time on his stamp collection, introducing his sons to this hobby as well. He also taught them stenography; a large part of the family correspondence is written in shorthand.[14]

Himmler's father kept a particular check on his children's successes at school and encouraged them to use the school holidays to consolidate what they had been taught. When his eldest son Gebhard lost more than half of his first school year through various illnesses, his father made great efforts not only to make up for what the boy had missed but to make him top of the class by the end of the second school year.[15] In addition, both parents paid attention to 'suitable friendships' for their offspring, preferably with children from Munich's upper middle classes.

Gebhard Himmler's pedantry, to which his great-niece has drawn attention, emerged in a particularly blatant form in 1910 when he was getting ready to embark on a journey to Greece—without his family. Gebhard made comprehensive preparations for the eventuality of his not returning alive. He wrote a long farewell letter to every member of the family, containing detailed advice on their future lives and numerous practical pointers on how to deal with everyday problems. He commended to his son Gebhard a veritable catalogue of virtues, calling on him to be 'hard-working, dutiful, and morally upright' and enjoining him to become 'a conscientious, religious man with a German outlook'. These words exactly reflect the maxims by which he brought up his three sons.[16] Unfortunately his letter to Heinrich has not survived. What becomes clear from these letters is that Himmler wanted his sons to go to university and gain their doctorate, though not in philology or theology. They were not to become officers either.

In those years before the First World War the Himmlers lived in apartments in favoured but by no means exclusive areas.[17] They employed a

maid and were clearly free from financial worries. They kept up extensive contacts with numerous family members and had a relatively large circle of acquaintances.[18] The link to Prince Heinrich was maintained, and he took a lively interest in the progress of his godson and in how the Himmlers were faring. It was a warm relationship, as is shown by the preserved correspondence between Gebhard and the prince; at Christmas the Himmlers regularly received a visit from the prince and his mother, who after the death of her husband Prince Arnulf took the name Princess Arnulf.[19]

Solidly conservative, monarchist, Catholic, economically secure and culturally traditional, the Himmlers lived in a milieu that stood in stark contrast to the widespread reputation enjoyed by turn-of-the-century Munich as being the metropolis of a self-consciously modern culture, an art-loving, tolerant, and lively city. In fact cultural modernism and political liberalism in Munich had been in retreat since 1900. From the turn of the century the liberal city administration and Bavarian state ministry had found themselves increasingly under pressure from the Catholic-conservative Centre Party, which protested in particular against 'immorality' and against unconventional cultural trends, and specifically against the bohemian artistic world of the Schwabing district. In line with this stance of uncompromising rejection in the field of cultural politics, the Himmlers' world was largely untouched by the works of a Thomas or Heinrich Mann, by the Blaue Reiter artists, the Schwabing cabaret scene, or art nouveau.[20]

In 1902 the family moved temporarily to Passau, where Gebhard Himmler had been appointed to a post at the grammar school.[21] In February 1903 the 2-year-old Heinrich fell ill with a lung complaint, so his mother took the children for a few months to Wolfegg, a village in the Allgäu, as a cure for the illness. There was serious danger of Heinrich contracting tuberculosis, at that time the most common cause of infant death. When Heinrich's health was improving they returned to Passau; yet it is clear that the parents were anxious about the usual childhood diseases, which, as Heinrich was already severely weakened, threatened to have severe, perhaps fatal, results.[22]

In 1904 the family moved back to Munich, where Gebhard Himmler, who had in the meantime been promoted to the post of grammar-school professor,* took up a position at the Ludwig Grammar School. Again the Himmlers moved into an apartment, this time in Amalienstrasse 86,

* *Translators' note*: senior academic teacher.

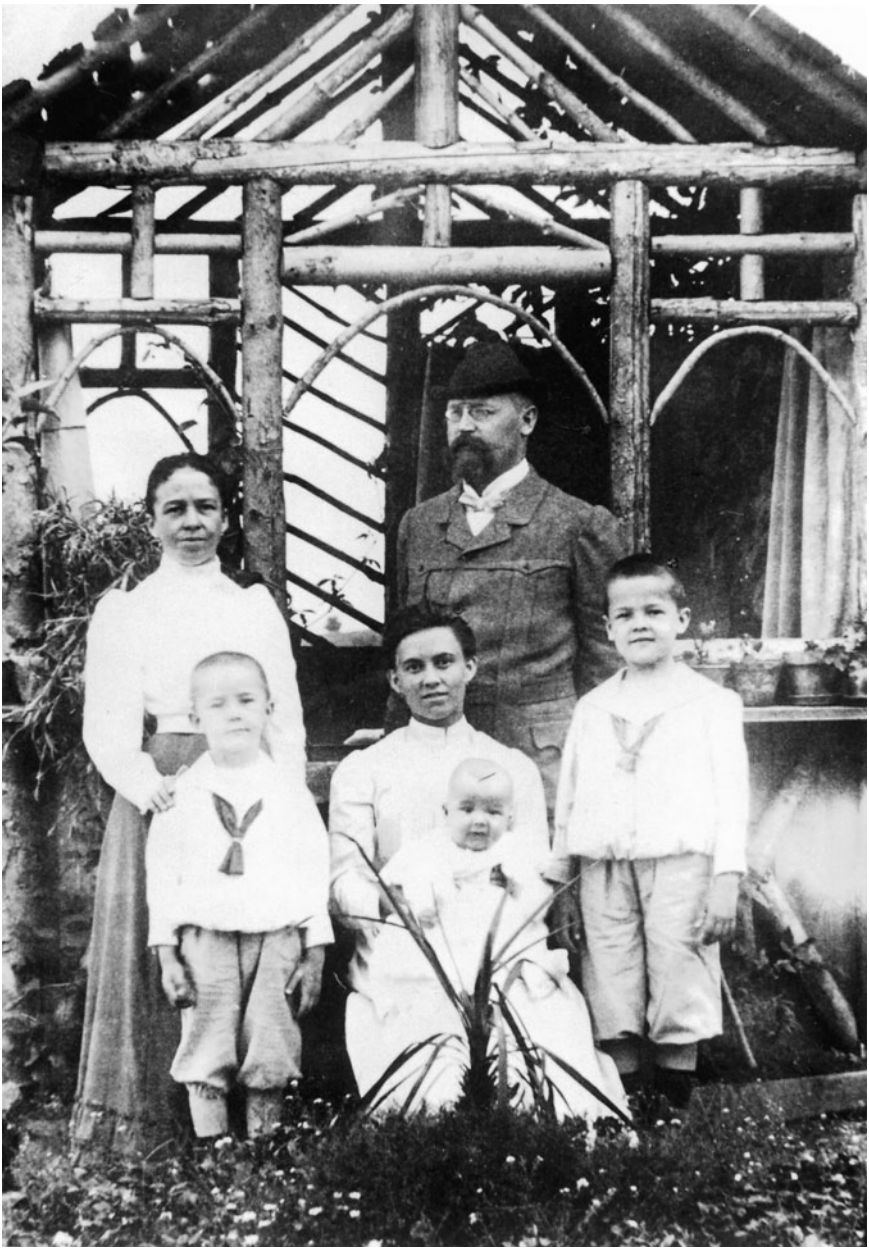
immediately behind the university.[23] This was the start of a difficult time for Heinrich: not only did his brother, who had started school in September 1904, fall ill with a series of infections und thus replace Heinrich as the focus of his parents' care and attention, but Anna Himmler was facing a further pregnancy. In December 1905 Ernst was born, and Heinrich saw his parents' attention being directed primarily towards his younger brother.[24]

Heinrich was now in the complex position of the middle son, trapped between the model of the superior big brother and the solicitous care focused on little Ernst. In this situation, in which he perhaps feared being sidelined in the family, his illnesses became not only periods of suffering but also the chance to recapture his parents' interest. This experience is possibly at the root of his later psychosomatic complaints. Towards his younger brother he began to develop a certain good-natured condescension.[25]

In 1906 Heinrich started school at the cathedral school on Salvatorplatz in the city centre (and not at the school in Amalienstrasse which was the proper school for children from his district). Yet even here he was at first unlucky. Like his brother before him, in his first school year he missed a total of 150 school days through various infections such as coughs, measles, mumps, and above all pneumonia. With the help of a private tutor he caught up with the schoolwork he had missed,[26] but the fact that his parents, and in particular his father, had high expectations of him may well have combined with the new family dynamic created by his younger brother to put him under pressure—the more so because, in spite of good marks, he did not do as well as his elder brother. Only when he moved to the school in Amalienstrasse did his situation seem to ease. Heinrich was a good pupil there and also made friends with some of his classmates.[27]

The long summer holidays, which the family mostly spent in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps, were undoubtedly the most exciting time of the year. There were visits to places of interest, walks, boat trips, and other leisure activities. In 1910, on holiday in Lenggries, his father gave Heinrich the task of keeping a diary about their stay that summer. He wrote the first entry himself to show his son what to do. He continued to read and correct the boy's entries and saw to it that in the years following he wrote similar holiday diaries.[28]

It is hardly surprising that these holiday diaries resemble school exercises and basically do no more than list the activities. For instance, in 1911 Heinrich provided a running record of how many times he had gone swimming: the total was thirty-seven times.[29] This terse recounting of the



Ill. 1. Gebhard and Anna Himmler (seated) with their three children, Heinrich (left), Ernst (middle), and Gebhard (right), in 1906.

events of each day was something Heinrich continued with after his father had stopped checking the diaries. Paternal monitoring was replaced by self-monitoring.[30]

In 1910 Heinrich moved to the Wilhelm Grammar School, where his father had taught up to 1902.[31] At this time the boy was slightly built and relatively short. He had a sickly constitution, he was frequently unwell, and his whole appearance was delicate. The spectacles he was obliged to wear all the time dominated his round, still decidedly childish face. His receding chin reinforced this impression.

When one of his former fellow pupils, Wolfgang Hallgarten (he had fled from the Nazis to the United States and meanwhile become one of the leading American historians of Germany), discovered decades later that the future 'man of terror' had actually been the classmate whom everyone called 'Himmler', he simply refused at first to believe the irrefutable fact. Too great was the contrast between the Reichsführer-SS and that 'child of hardly average height, who was unusually pale and physically very awkward, with hair cut fairly short and even then a pair of gold-rimmed glasses on his slightly pointed nose', and who was frequently seen with 'a half-embarrassed, half-malicious smile on his face'. According to Hallgarten, Himmler had been a model pupil, liked by all the teachers; amongst the boys he had been regarded as a swot and been only moderately popular. Hallgarten had a particularly clear memory of the unhappy figure Himmler cut, much to the amusement of his fellows, in gymnastics. Hatred of the Jews, Hallgarten went on to say, was not something Himmler was at all associated with at that time; on the other hand, he said he remembered Heinrich's radically anti-French outlook.[32]

In 1913 Professor Himmler took over as deputy head of the grammar school in Landshut. This enabled the family to move into a house with a garden.[33] Fortunately a Munich friend, Falk Zipperer, also moved with his family to Landshut, where his stepfather, Ferdinand von Pracher, had become head of the district administration, from the Himmlers' point of view an ideal family background for their son's best friend. The friendship was to be lasting: in 1937, on the occasion of his friend's wedding, Himmler gave a lunch party;[34] in 1938 he accepted him into the SS, and in 1940 Zipperer, who had in the meantime gained his second doctorate in legal history, published an essay in a Festschrift for Himmler's fortieth birthday.[35] In 1944, when Himmler was getting ready for his last Christmas, Zipperer's wife, Liselotte, was noted down for a present.[36]

Another friendship that lasted to the end of the Second World War was with Karl Gebhard, three years older than Himmler. The two boys met in Landshut. Gebhard became a doctor and was later director of a sanatorium in Hohenlychen in the Berlin area that, as we shall see, was to play a special role in Himmler's life.[37] Heinrich also remained friends with Edi and Luisa Hager, whose father was a senior museums and galleries administrator.[38] On this evidence Heinrich was not at all a lone wolf, even if his classmates may have considered him a model pupil, a swot, and a weakling. His attainments during his time at school in Landshut, which lasted until 1919, were in fact above average. In religious education and history he was always graded 'very good' and in languages he was judged 'very good' to 'good'; his weakest subject was physics, for which one year he was given only 'satisfactory'. A school report from 1913/14 reads: 'An apparently very able student who by tireless hard work, burning ambition and very lively participation achieved the best results in the class. His conduct was exemplary.'[39]

Youth in wartime

Into this well-ordered world, just as the family was enjoying the summer of 1914 in picturesque Tittmoning on the German–Austrian border, burst the news of the crisis precipitated by the murder of the heir to the Austrian throne on 28 June in Sarajevo, which culminated in the outbreak of the First World War.

Heinrich's diary entries, in which the alarming news is recorded alongside the usual notes on his everyday activities, reflect the atmosphere of these decisive days and the sudden termination of the holiday idyll. For 29 July we read: 'Gebhard's birthday. *Outbreak of war between Austria and Serbia*. Excursion to Lake Waging.' The announcement of the outbreak of war is underlined in red. The entries for the next two days, which clearly concerned the programme of activities, are rubbed out and over the top, again in red, is written the sentence: '*Proclamation of a state of war*'. And now political and military events moved centre stage:

1. VIII. *Germany mobilizes* 2nd army corps. Even the Landsturm [territorials].
2. VIII. Played in the garden in the morning. Afternoon as well. 7.30 *Germany declares war on Russia*.

3. VIII. *Attacks on the French and Russian borders. Planes and spies.* We are packing up right away.

The Himmlers hurried back to Landshut. The abrupt end to the holiday was to mark the end of an era.

From now on military events, which at first went very well for Germany, dominate Heinrich's diary entries; for example, the entry for 23 August:

German Crown Prince's victory north of Metz (Longeville). Prince Heinrich wrote to father. During the attack on the French dragoons he was slightly wounded. Germany gives a dignified response to Japan's ultimatum. Germans in Ghent. Played the piano. [...] The Bavarians are said to have been very brave in yesterday's battle. In particular our 16ers are supposed to have put up an excellent fight with their bayonets. There are flags out all over town. The French and Belgians must have been surprised to be beaten so quickly. Territorial 1st Regiment has been called up. Namur is besieged. 8000 Russians taken prisoner at Gumbinnen.

And the next day he noted with excitement:

Pursuing the French has brought the army of the Bavarian Crown Prince rich pickings (prisoners, standards, and 150 guns). The 21st army corps has marched into Luneville. The Crown Prince's army is also still pursuing the enemy (advancing towards Longwy). Duke Albrecht of Württemberg beat a French army that was advancing across the Semois. The enemy is pursued and booty taken: Prisoners, generals, guns, standards. Our troops advance to the west of the Meuse towards Maubeuge. An English cavalry brigade is there and is beaten, really beaten! Hurray!

Every day he went to the offices of the local newspaper, where the latest news telegrams were displayed:

27. VIII. [...] Afternoon, went to see the telegrams. Prince Luitpold of Bavaria, the heir to the throne, has died of a throat infection in Berchtesgaden. The light cruiser, the Magdeburg, ran aground in fog at Odensholm [Osmussaar] in the Gulf of Finnland and could not be refloated. [...] The cruiser was scuttled. 85 men are missing, some are dead or wounded, another was picked up by a German torpedo boat. The worried philistines of Landshut are now hanging their heads, spreading dreadful rumours, and fearing that they will be massacred by the Cossacks. Today the first sizeable list of Bavarian army casualties was published.

28. VIII. [...] English army beaten.. [...] Now we are making terrific progress. I'm as happy at these victories as the English and French are no doubt annoyed at them, and the annoyance will be considerable. Falk and I would really like to fight right now ourselves. It's clear that the good old Germans and their loyal allies the Austrians are not afraid of a world full of enemies.

Seemingly those around him did not share that view to the same extent, as he records in a critical tone on 27 August: 'Generally speaking there is no particular enthusiasm in Lower Bavaria among the people at home. When the mobilization was announced in the old town everyone apparently started blubbing. I would have expected that least of all of the Lower Bavarians. They are usually so ready for a fight. A wounded soldier says the same. Often really dreadful and stupid rumours go round, all invented by people.'

On 6 September he noted that the people of Landshut were 'as mindless and fearful as ever. When they heard, as they thought, the news of the troops' retreat near Paris they all got diarrhoea and their hearts went into their boots. It's terrible how rumours fly about.'

On 30 August he observed, with contempt for the people in the town and compassion for the enemy captives, how a transport of French wounded was cared for at the station: 'The whole station was full of inquisitive Landshuters who became abusive and even violent when the seriously wounded French soldiers (who must be worse off than our wounded, because they're prisoners) were given water and bread.' He clearly regarded the Russians somewhat differently, as an entry from 4 September reveals: 'There are 90,000 Russians captured in East Prussia, not 70,000. (They multiply like vermin.)'

In spite of the war the Himmlers went on a summer holiday as usual in 1915, this time to Burghausen. Their arrival at the station in Mühldorf revived Heinrich's memories of the start of the war a year before. Although the jubilant patriotism of the first phase of the war was now over, he could not help having vivid recollections of the previous summer, 'when we stood at about the same time on the platform, doing army drill. It was 6 August when we came back from Tittmoning. A few days later they went off cheerfully to war. How many of them are alive today?'[40]

Everything connected with war and the military fascinated him. When in September 1915 his brother, who was two years older, had the opportunity to accompany his parents on a visit to wounded soldiers Heinrich acknowledged in his diary how much he envied him.[41] At the beginning of 1915 the Army Reserve (*Landwehr*) had created trenches and dugouts that Heinrich's class went to see. Heinrich was impressed: They are sketched and described in his diary.[42]

In July 1915 his brother Gebhard reached the age of 17 and joined the Territorials (*Landsturm*) and so could be counted as belonging to the military reserve. Heinrich commented longingly: 'If only I were old enough, I'd be

out there like a shot.'[43] But as he was 14 at the outbreak of war Himmler was part of the so-called war youth generation: too young to be sent to the front as soldiers and yet old enough to follow the military and political events closely from the start, and also marked by the experience of having endured all the phases of the war as a collective national effort.[44]

In the early phase of the war in particular Heinrich and his friends tried to create through play some kind of access to the 'normality' of the war, which was to last for four years.[45] Sometimes in his diary the boundaries between war as a game and the real war become blurred: 'Played in the garden with Falk. 1000 Russians captured by our troops east of the Vistula. Austrians advance', he noted on 26 August 1914. Three days later: 'Played at sword-fighting with Falk. This time with 40 army corps and Russia, France and Belgium against Germany and Austria. The game is very interesting. Victory over the Russians in East Prussia (50,000 prisoners).'

From Easter to autumn 1915 he was a member of the Cadet Corps (*Jugendwehr*), where he and his classmates were given the preliminaries of military training. He was noted as showing 'commendable enthusiasm'.[46] 'To the Cadet Corps in the afternoon. Practice was pretty poor. I was lying for about quarter of an hour in a fairly wet field. It didn't do me any harm, though,' he noted in his diary.[47]

Heinrich began to complain of stomach pains, an ailment he suffered from to the end of his life.[48] He tried to overcome his physical weakness through sport. In his diary there is a reference to daily training with dumb-bells.[49] In February 1917 he became a member of the Landshut gymnastics club.[50]

Meanwhile the war began to affect the Himmlers' everyday life. Restrictions on the supply of food and important commodities became increasingly evident. In November 1916 the government introduced the Patriotic Auxiliary Service, which committed every German male aged between 17 and 60 who was not already in military service to make himself available for important war work. In the same month the news reached the Himmlers that Heinrich's godfather Prince Heinrich had been killed in Romania; he was only 32 years old. The Himmlers mourned not only a significant family friend but also the fact that their privileged access to the court, which had always held out the most alluring prospects for the three sons' future, was now irrevocably lost.[51]

In 1917 his elder brother's year group was called up into the armed forces: Gebhard had been in the Territorials for two years and in May 1917 he

joined the 16th Bavarian Infantry Regiment in Passau, where he completed the first stage of officer training.[52] Falk Zipperer also left the grammar school in April 1917 and began officer training.[53]

Heinrich, who had been continuing his pre-military training since October 1915 in the Landshut Cadet Corps, wanted to take the same course.[54] In the summer of 1917, probably as a result of pressure from his son, Himmler's father began to make extensive efforts to get him accepted as a candidate for officer training with one of the Bavarian regiments. He successfully enlisted the help of the chamberlain to Princess Arnulf, the mother of the dead Prince Heinrich, and amongst other things he intervened to support Heinrich's application for the exclusive 1st and 2nd Infantry Regiments. His efforts were in vain, however, as the lists of applicants were already too long.[55] In the course of his correspondence with the military authorities Himmler's father was called upon to respond to the question of whether his son was considering becoming a professional army officer. 'My son Heinrich has a strong desire to be an infantry officer by profession', was his clear answer.[56]

Shortly before the start of the new school year—he had spent the usual summer holiday in Bad Tölz—Heinrich surprised everyone by leaving the grammar school. Up to that point he had completed seven years at the school. His last report indicated that he was a good, though not an excellent, pupil.[57] His leaving was evidently motivated by his fear of being conscripted while still at school, along with his cohort, before he had succeeded in gaining a post as an officer candidate in a first-class regiment. He was successful in his application to the Regensburg city administration for the patriotic auxiliary service: in October 1917 he was set to work in the war welfare office, an organization for the care of surviving relatives of fallen soldiers. After six weeks he put an end to this interlude and went back to the grammar school, after the schools ministry had made it clear in a directive that his age-group of pupils would not yet be conscripted.[58]

Heinrich the soldier

On 23 December he received the surprising news that the 11th Infantry Regiment would accept him as an officer candidate. Yet again the chamberlain already mentioned had been pulling strings: Himmler's father's contacts at court had, after all, finally been effective.[59] Heinrich left school and on

2 January began his training with the reserve battalion of the 11th Regiment at a camp near Regensburg.[60]

He proudly signed one of his first letters to his parents with the Latin tag 'Miles Heinrich', Heinrich the soldier, and the brand-new warrior expressed his manliness amongst other things by taking up smoking.[61] In contrast to this masculine pose, his almost daily letters to his parents in fact reveal the considerable difficulties he had in adjusting to the world of the military. Heinrich was homesick. He complained about the poor accommodation and wretched food, though on most evenings he could supplement this by going to pubs. He asked constantly for more frequent replies to his letters, for food, clean clothes, and other such things that would make his life in the barracks easier.[62] If his requests were not immediately fulfilled (he did after all receive seven parcels from home in the first five weeks of his military career[63]) he reacted in a hurt manner: 'Dearest parents! Today again I have got nothing from you. That's mean.'[64] After a few weeks he got used to the new life and the complaints in his letters became less frequent. Yet the correspondence shows how much he was still reliant on close contact with his parents.[65]

From the middle of February 1918 he regularly received leave to spend most weekends at home. By contrast, his brother Gebhard was sent in April 1918 to the western front and took part in heavy fighting in which there were severe losses.[66] Heinrich, however, became petulant if he got no mail from home for a few days: 'Dear Mother! Thank you so much for your news (which I did not get). It's so horrid of you not to write again.'[67] When the Regensburg training was coming to an end he hoped that he too would be sent to the front, but to his disappointment he learned that he was to be sent on a further training course. 'You could have saved your tears', he wrote to his mother, who had been viewing the prospect of a second son at the front with anxiety. 'Don't rejoice too soon, though. Things can change again just as quickly.'[68] On 15 June he continued his training just 40 kilometres from Landshut, in Freising. He was still able to spend most weekends at home.[69]

In his letters he described daily life in the military as before, but he now coped with it considerably better, as his lapidary descriptions show: 'We are given excellent treatment. This afternoon we bathed. [...] The food is very good.'[70] As before, problems with the food and reports about his changeable health are prominent;[71] his hunger for the many 'lovely little parcels'[72] from Landshut, for which he always sent a thank-you letter ('the cake was

terrific!'[73]), never seemed to abate. Yet as the correspondence shows, his obvious need for the affection and love of his parents could not really be satisfied. Although he tried, after initial difficulties, to present himself to his parents in a manly, adult, and soldierly light (and he was certainly also impressed by the example of his elder brother, who was, after all, at the very same time in immediate mortal danger at the front), his letters continued to demand their lively participation in his everyday concerns and their permanent support in dealing with them.

In August he began to long for the end of the Freising course: 'The Freising course is getting more and more rotten and strict: oh well, we'll make a reasonable job of it, even if we're not brilliant', he wrote home.[74] Even after finishing this course[75] he was not, as he expected, sent to the front but had to complete a further course: he was ordered to Bamberg to begin a special two-week training in the use of heavy machine-guns on 15 September.[76] Even though it was becoming clear on the western front how critical the German military situation was after the failure of their spring offensive, the German army continued to give its officers extremely thorough training. Or was it that Heinrich's superiors thought he was simply not mature enough to be sent to the front as an officer cadet?

At the beginning of October the Bamberg course was over, and after a week's leave he had to go back to Regensburg to help, amongst other things, with the training of recruits.[77] Heinrich took a pessimistic view of the general situation: 'I now see the political future as terribly black, completely black', he wrote on 16 October to his parents. Like many others, he now regarded revolution as inevitable.[78]

Even so, Heinrich was determined to prove himself in action, and wrote an enthusiastic letter home saying he had met a lieutenant who had offered to transfer him to the front.[79] But that never happened, for in view of the political turbulence that was erupting at the beginning of November the company destined for the front was disbanded. He experienced the overthrow of the political regime and the end of the war in Landshut: on 7 November revolution broke out in Munich and the Bavarian king abdicated. On 9 November the revolutionary Council of the People's Deputies set itself up in Berlin and Kaiser Wilhelm II fled to Holland. On 11 November the new government signed the armistice, and in so doing conceded the defeat of the German Reich.

At the end of November Heinrich returned to his unit in Regensburg in the hope that the army would complete the training of the cohort of ensigns

born in 1900. At first, however, he worked with his cousin Ludwig Zahler, who had in the meantime been promoted to lieutenant, on the demobbing of the regiment. Both rented rooms in Regensburg.[80] Heinrich also began to prepare for his Abitur.★[81] In Regensburg he became a sympathizer of the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), which had been founded in November 1918 by leading politicians of the Bavarian Centre Party. Heinrich contacted one of Gebhard's former classmates who was now active in the local Regensburg BVP party organization, and also called on his father to work for the new party.[82]

His brother Gebhard, meanwhile promoted to lieutenant and decorated with the Iron Cross, had returned uninjured from the front at the beginning of December. Heinrich, on the other hand, was forced to recognize a little while later that there was no longer any chance that he could continue his military career. In December 1918 he learned that all ensigns of his cohort were to be discharged from the army.[83] On 18 December he was demobbed and returned to Landshut.[84] The fact that he neither saw action at the front nor became an officer was to him a serious failure. Throughout his life he was to hold to the view that he had been prevented from following his true calling, that of an officer.

★ *Translators' note*: Grammar-school leaving examination.

2

The Student of Agriculture

Back in Landshut Himmler's first priority was to finish his grammar-school education. Up to that point he had successfully completed seven years; thanks to a special ruling he could make up the remaining time required for his school-leaving certificate by joining a special class for those who had done war service. The teacher in charge of this programme turned out to be none other than Himmler's father, who treated the group with his habitual strictness and pedantry, showing no favouritism at all towards his son.[1]

Heinrich's closest friend at this time was Falk Zipperer, who had come back from the war and also joined the special class. The two friends spent a great deal of time writing poems. Whereas Zipperer was talented and even published a series of verses, Himmler's were on the clumsy side.[2]

Meanwhile political conditions in Bavaria were becoming more tense. On 21 February Kurt Eisner, the leader of the German Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) in Bavaria, who as a result of the revolution had become Prime Minister, was shot by an extreme right-wing officer. In the following weeks an increasingly sharp polarization emerged between the coalition government elected by the state assembly under the new Prime Minister Johannes Hoffmann and the radical left-wing soviet movement, which was particularly strong in Munich. Finally, in Munich on 7 April the Left proclaimed the creation of a soviet republic and Hoffmann's government fled from the city and retreated to Bamberg. The USPD left the Bavarian government. In northern Bavaria Reich army units and Free Corps (armed groups of volunteers made up of anti-revolutionary and anti-democratic returning soldiers) prepared to capture the capital of the new Bavarian republic.[3]

Heinrich again gave practical support to the Bavarian People's Party, if only for a short time, as his correspondence with the Regensburg party

office shows.[4] At the end of April he joined the Landshut Free Corps and also the reserve company of the Oberland Free Corps. This Free Corps had only just been founded by Rudolf von Sebottendorf, chairman of the extreme right-wing Thule Society, and came into being with the support of Hoffmann's government in order to defeat the Munich soviet republic. Heinrich does not, however, seem to have taken part in the bloody battles that took place at the beginning of May.[5] Even so he remained a further two months in the Oberland Free Corps, taking a post in the supplementary company[6] and hoping still to be able to make a career as an officer. At any rate, the government had opened up the prospect of members of the Free Corps being taken into the Reichswehr. But when in August Free Corps units were adopted into the Reichswehr Oberland was not amongst them.

Initial difficulties

In July 1919 Heinrich Himmler, in accordance with a further special ruling for those who had done war service, received his school-leaving certificate, without ever having had to undergo the actual examination. In most subjects his mark was 'very good' and only in maths and physics did he have to make do with 'good'.[7] As a military career in the Reichswehr seemed increasingly improbable, he made the surprising decision to study agriculture at the Technical University in Munich. At first sight this choice of career is hard to reconcile with the status-conscious, socially ambitious Himmlers and their aspirations as members of the professional middle class, the more so because the family was based in the town and had no links to landowners who might have offered their son a post such as steward of an estate. On the contrary, the imminent and extensive dissolution of the old officer corps made it likely that numerous disbanded officers, as well as the new generation of sons of the nobility who would in the past have gone into the army, would now enter agriculture.

Precisely this circumstance most likely accounts for Himmler's decision, however: at the agricultural faculty he hoped he would be in the company of former officers, who, although forced to prepare for a means of earning a living, regarded their studies first and foremost as a way of filling in the time with like-minded people until the outbreak of a fresh war or a civil war. Here Heinrich could immerse himself fully in the milieu of reserve officers and paramilitary activities, in order if possible still to realize his actual aim,

namely a career in the military. The general uncertainty that prevailed in the immediate post-war period may have encouraged Himmler's parents to judge his decision pragmatically. They did, after all, also accept the decision of Gebhard and Ernst to study engineering.

In the summer of 1919 Himmler's father was appointed headmaster of the grammar school in Ingolstadt, and the family managed to find a small estate nearby where Himmler was to gain the one-year's practical experience he needed for acceptance on his course of study. On 1 August 1919 he began the one-year placement on the estate of Economic Councillor Winter in Oberhaunstadt. Work on the farm consisted of a twelve-hour day, six days a week; Himmler had Sunday off but still had to work early in the morning with the livestock. From his letters to his parents[8] and the 'work diary' he immediately began it is clear that he found the unaccustomed hard physical labour difficult, but that 'Heinrich agricola', as he signed one of his letters, was also proud of what he achieved. Thus he noted on 26 August: 'Morning, swept the grain drying-floor, unloaded 3½ loads of barley on my own.' And on 29 August he recorded: 'Afternoon loaded sacks of rye onto a wagon. 105 sacks weighing 2 hundredweight each. 3 loads of barley.' As during his time with the military he was still provided with extra rations, clean clothes, and various other things by his parents.

His hope that his exertions would strengthen his weak constitution[9] was, however, soon dashed: on the second weekend he was already ill in bed, and after less than five weeks of his placement he became seriously ill. In the Ingolstadt hospital he was suspected of having paratyphoid fever and he was kept there for three weeks. During that time his family moved to Ingolstadt.[10] On 25 September he travelled to Munich to see the former family doctor, Dr Quenstedt, who according to Heinrich came to the following diagnosis: 'Enlarged heart. Not significant, but he should take a break for a year and study.'[11]

During the idleness forced on him by his illness Heinrich read voraciously. While still in hospital he began to compile a list of books he intended to read, noting for the months of September and October (after leaving hospital he went back to live with his parents) a total of twenty-eight works.[12]

He devoured half-a-dozen volumes of Jules Verne along with predominantly historical fiction, for example three books by Maximilian Schmidt, the writer of popular Bavarian tales. Goethe's *Faust* formed part of his reading, also Thomas Mann's novel *Royal Highness*, the only work of

modern German literature in this period that was to be found on his list and one that he immediately disliked.[13] On the other hand, he found the two volumes of *Ossian*, a collection of ancient Celtic bardic poetry edited by the teacher and writer James Macpherson in 1762/3, to be 'interesting'. Allegedly collected in the Scottish highlands, the songs were in fact a forgery, the work of the editor himself. Whether Himmler was aware of this when reading must remain a mystery; whatever the case, this type of romantic heroic saga suited his taste exactly.[14]

Towards the end of his period of illness he turned to political reading-matter. He read a polemic against the Freemasons that was widely read in its day, written by Friedrich Wichtl, a member of the Austrian National Assembly, who set about creating an ethnic (*völkisch*) stereotype out of the negative image of the Freemasons prevalent above all in Catholic circles during the First World War.[15] Wichtl claimed that, among other things, Freemasonry was strongly influenced by the Jews, was aiming for world revolution, and was overwhelmingly to blame for the World War. Himmler agreed and commented: 'A book that sheds light on everything and tells us who we have to fight first.' It remains an open question whether this challenge was directed at the Freemasons or at the Jews allegedly concealed behind them. Shortly before this he had read the first eight volumes of *Pro-Palestine*, publications edited by the German Committee for the Promotion of the Jewish Settlement of Palestine, and thus had engaged with Zionist literature, though he made no comments on this reading.[16]

First semester in Munich

On 14 October he travelled to Munich for a further examination by Dr Quenstedt. With regard to his heart 'nothing out of the ordinary' was discovered.[17] There was now nothing to prevent his beginning his studies: on 18 October 1919 he registered at the Technical University.[18]

Heinrich Himmler was a disciplined and conscientious student, and his health stabilized right away.[19] At first he shared a room for a few weeks with his brother Gebhard and then rented a furnished room very close to the Technical University at Amalienstrasse 28.[20] He quickly adopted a particular rhythm in his everyday life. He took his meals very close to his lodgings at the home of Frau Loritz, the widow of a professional singer, who together with her two daughters provided meals for students.[21] He mostly spent the

evenings there and the rest of his free time he spent with friends, of whom we shall hear more. He also frequently paid formal visits to acquaintances of his parents—apparently not only out of politeness or on his parents' account but because he enjoyed such social occasions.

He made several visits to Privy Councillor von Lossow, a family friend, who, as Himmler noted, showed himself to be immensely kind.[22] On occasion he also visited the home of Professor Rauschmeyer, with whose daughter Mariele he was later to become friends.[23] He was a particularly frequent guest at the Hagers, his main interest being their daughter Luisa, whom he had known for years. He visited friends and acquaintances who were ill as a matter of course.[24]

In November he became a member of the 'Apollo' fraternity, in which his father was one of the 'old boys'. Apollo was a duelling fraternity, in other words, a place where traditional fencing was cultivated. 'At 2.30 went to the pub, where there were 5 duels. [...] At least it strengthens the nerves and you learn how to take being wounded.'[25] The 'pub' (*Kneipe*), as the meetings of the members were known in the fraternity's jargon,[26] was of course linked to increased consumption of alcohol; 'It was very jolly. I drank 8 glasses of wine. At 12.30 we went home on the train. Most of us were tipsy, so it was very funny. I got a few of the brothers back to their digs. In bed at 2 a.m.'[27]

While conducting this social life Himmler continued to be a practising Catholic, who went to mass and confession and took communion.[28] In his diary we find entries such as: 'God will come to my aid.'[29] The Christmas Eve mass he attended in 1919 with his family in Ingolstadt made a very deep impression on him; 'We were standing at the front in the choir and the solemn mass was a powerful experience. The church reaches people through its imposing ritual and God through a sweet and simple child.'[30]

Like many students at the Technical University, Himmler was a member of the League of War Veterans,[31] and in addition involved himself in the Territorial army: he joined the 14th Alarm Company of the 21st Rifle Brigade,[32] a Reichswehr reserve unit, and took part in practice alerts and shooting exercises. After the defeat of the soviet republic in May, Munich had developed into the centre for counter-revolutionary activities. The Free Corps and paramilitary organizations of the political Right, which arose to resist revolution, were still in existence; they had extensive stockpiles of weapons at their disposal and worked closely with the Reichswehr.

On a number of occasions Heinrich had good reasons for believing that 'actions' would occur and he urgently wished to be involved. Thus, immediately before 9 November 1919, the first anniversary of the revolution, he expected the military to be deployed but then nothing happened.[33] In December 1919 a putsch seemed to be in the offing; his unit was put on standby, but again nothing happened: 'Went at half past 3 with Lu [Ludwig Zahler] to the alarm call. Out to the Pioneers' barracks. Guns delivered but nothing more was done. Perhaps something more will happen this year.'[34] The feeling of being a soldier gave him deep satisfaction: 'Lectures till 10, then put on the king's coat again. I am after all a soldier and will remain so.'[35] Another entry reads: 'Today I have another day in uniform. It's what I enjoy wearing most every time.'[36]

On 16 January he learned that Count Arco, the former lieutenant who, on 21 February 1919, had murdered the serving Bavarian Prime Minister Kurt Eisner in the street, had been condemned to death.[37] The death sentence provoked outrage among those on the political Right. The students at the Technical University took part in the protests—but they did not want to stop there. With support from military circles an initiative was planned to free the prisoner and possibly begin a putsch. Himmler already had a part to play in this. Concerning the day after the verdict he noted in his diary: 'Put on my uniform. At 8 there was a big meeting of all the students in the university's main lecture hall to bring about a pardon for Arco. It was a brilliant patriotic meeting. A deputation was sent off. Captain St., Lieutenant St., Lieutenant B., and I were in the Turkish barracks⋆.' There the deputation was met by like-minded officers. 'Lieutenant St. arranged everything with a captain. The whole thing would have worked wonderfully. Back at the university at 11, where at 12.30 the news arrived that the sentence had been commuted to imprisonment. However pleased we were, we were equally sorry that the business passed off so uneventfully. Oh well, there will be another time. But people have seen how tremendous Germany's universities are.'[38] In other words, the Technical University in Munich was not just a place for studying. He told his mother: 'The ministers knew all right why they commuted Arco's sentence. If they hadn't they would have had to answer for it. We were all ready and were actually sorry that everything went off so quietly. [...] But it will happen one of these days.'[39] Letters to his parents reveal that during the Kapp putsch, which was

⋆ *Translators' note*: Barracks in Türkenstrasse.

started by Free Corps units in Berlin, he was alerted and took part at night in a motorized military patrol through Munich.[40]

When in spring 1920 the Allies compelled the German government to disband the reserve units of the Reichswehr, Himmler immediately transferred to the newly founded Residents' Reserve (*Einwohnerwehr*), which had been created by the Bavarian government in order to circumvent the Allied ban.[41] He also joined the Freiweg Rifle Club, an organization with a similarly paramilitary background.[42] His activities in these areas had further practical advantages: he used the discounted rail-tickets reserved for the military that he could claim as a member of the 14th Alarm Company for his weekend visits to his parents.[43]

All the same, his diaries contain relatively little about the political events of these months. The reason for this may be that at this time his basic political attitudes were established and he moved in a milieu in which these beliefs were largely shared. In the elections for the General Student Committee (AStA), the students' representative body, he voted for the candidates from the right-wing German National People's Party.[44] He also attended student political meetings.[45] The anti-Prussian tirades of one priest at the New Year sermon displeased him[46]—Himmler was no Bavarian separatist but saw himself as a German nationalist. An established component of this set of views was also a conventional, as yet not racially based, anti-Semitism.[47]

At the end of 1919 he was, however, caught up in a serious conflict of conscience. In the circles he belonged to of students who 'bore arms' a lively debate was being conducted about whether Jewish students were eligible to fight duels; in other words, whether Jews might be admitted as members of duelling fraternities (in fact at this time basically no fraternity still accepted Jews) or whether, by the same token, it was permissible to duel with Jewish students. It was a question of honour, in essence a question of whether Jewish students were capable of being equally valuable members of the student body, with equal rights.

Within the German student body, a significant portion of which leaned sharply to the right, there was at this time a strong tendency to mark themselves off from their Jewish fellow students and in fact to deny that these were truly German; or to put it more precisely, to base the definition of 'German' on ethnic criteria. Behind the debate surrounding the so-called duelling question there was therefore an attempt on the part of extreme right-wing students to enforce ethnic criteria throughout the network of

student fraternities. The German-speaking fraternities in Austria had already denied Jews duelling status as a matter of principle in the 1890s, and after the end of the First World War radically anti-Semitic students attempted to establish this principle throughout the fraternities. As a result Catholic members of fraternities experienced a fundamental conflict, as Catholic student organizations for reasons of principle resisted the marginalization of students of Jewish descent: though they were to a considerable extent also anti-Semitic in outlook, they explained their hostility to the Jews primarily on religious and cultural grounds rather than on racial ones.[48]

'After dinner I had a conversation [...] about Jewishness, questions of honour and so on. A very interesting discussion. I was thinking about it on the way home. I think I am heading for conflict with my religion', Himmler noted in his diary, revealing that although he sympathized with racial anti-Semitism he could not yet make up his mind to adopt fully a radical anti-Semitic position. 'Whatever happens,' the diary goes on, 'I shall always love God and pray to him, and belong to the Catholic church and defend it, even if I should be excluded from it.'[49] Three days later he and Ludwig Zahler had a discussion, again about 'the principles of fencing, matters of honour, the Church etc.'.

At a Christmas celebration at which a cleric made a speech that, in Himmler's view, was 'a right old sermon', his 'inner conflicts of faith' assailed him 'as never before'. Again and again the 'fencing matter' reared its head, but then for the time being the crisis was past: 'In the evening I prayed, although even before that I had more or less got over it. God will show me the way in all my doubts.'[50]

'A heart in conflict and turmoil'

Himmler's circle of friends in Munich consisted above all of Falk Zipperer and Ludwig Zahler, though the latter's friendship with Heinrich's brother Gebhard was closer. Even so, Heinrich spent much time with Ludwig and the two frequently had long discussions: 'Ludwig came home with me and we looked at books together in my room and talked. He is a good man and a brother to Gebhard and me.'[51] Falk, however, was in Heinrich's eyes 'a really nice, good friend and a great man of genius'.[52] Their shared interest in writing poetry still bound them together. A popular ballad they jointly wrote for a charitable cause was even performed for friends.[53] 'We began at

4.30, see programme. Everything went off brilliantly', he noted with satisfaction. 'The last number, when Lu and Käthe danced in rococo costumes, was charming. Then we had sandwiches and cakes. Then there was dancing.' Himmler had attended a class to overcome his initial clumsiness.[54] 'All the ladies were very nice, particularly Käthe, Mopperl, Friedl. Later Mr Küfner even poured schnapps. Lu and I chinked glasses (Cheers brother, we'll always stick together). Then more dancing. After that forfeits with lots of kisses. At about 1.30 we went home. I am very satisfied with the evening. Lu and I can also be satisfied.'[55]

As a 19-year-old Heinrich also developed a considerable interest in two girls in his circle. At first he took a fancy to Luisa Hager, whom he had known since their shared childhood and admired for some time. The two corresponded and Himmler paid a striking number of visits to the family.[56] The discovery that she too was a devout and practising Catholic filled him with enthusiasm. When he learned from an acquaintance that 'sweet, well-behaved Luisa goes to communion every day', it was 'the nicest thing that's happened to me all week'.[57] And yet he did not make any real progress; as he repeatedly stated, Luisa did not 'come out of her shell'.[58] She was 'really nice,' he noted after an evening spent with her and friends, 'but all the same not in the way I would like'.[59] He discussed the matter at length with Gebhard: 'If sweet young things knew how they worried us, they would no doubt try not to.'[60]

But he was also captivated by Maja, one of Frau Loritz's daughters and Ludwig Zahler's girlfriend. He confessed to being 'happy to be able to call this marvellous girl my friend'.[61] On a November evening he spent once more with Frau Loritz, 'I talked the whole time with Fräulein Maja about religion and so forth. She told me a lot about her life. I think I have now found a sister.'[62]

The friends saw each other often, went to concerts[63] and to the theatre[64] together, visited museums,[65] enjoyed the ice rink,[66] and made music.[67] In spite of the continuing tension of the political situation, economic problems, and food shortages the Munich students' daily lives were relatively untroubled and pleasant. Heinrich recorded memorable moments in his diary: 'Lectures began today. In the evening we sat together, arm in arm, until midnight.'[68] The following day his mood was sombre: 'In the evening we were in the room at the back. I was terribly serious and downcast. I think very difficult times are on the way, or is that not what these things mean?' And he noted the thought that was to liberate him from his depressive

mood: 'I'm looking forward to the fight, when I shall wear the king's coat again.' The evening then continued very harmoniously:

> First Maja sang 'Women's love and pain'. She sang the songs with tears in her eyes. Ludwig doesn't, I think, understand his darling girl. But I am not sure even of that for I don't know him well enough. Later Gebhard and Käthe played the piano. Ludwig and I sat together in an armchair and Mariele and Maja sat on the floor leaning against us. We all embraced each other, partly out of love and partly out of brotherly and sisterly friendship. It was an evening I shall never forget.[69]

His affection for Maja did not remain simply brotherly, and Heinrich's relationship with Ludwig, her boyfriend, became ever more complicated. 'I understand Ludwig less and less. Poor Maja', he wrote on 5 November in his diary: 'I am sorry for him and even more for Maja, who is nice. Human beings are miserable creatures. The saying is really true: restless is the heart till it rests on Thee, O God. How powerless one is, unable to do anything.' Heinrich was lovesick. He was engulfed by 'oppressive thoughts and inner conflicts', but his friends were not to notice anything.[70] He intended 'to be a friend to my friends, do my duty, work, battle with myself, and never let it happen that I lose control of myself,' as the high-flown language of his diary puts it.[71]

His efforts never to lose control over himself were put seriously to the test in the middle of November at an 'evening of hypnotism' at the Loritz home, when he fended off the invited hypnotist 'with all his powers of resistance'. Maja had a different experience: 'He had poor, sweet Maja completely in his power. I was sorry to see her that way. I could have strangled the brute in cold blood.'[72] The first plans to leave Munich behind and to move as a settler to the east emerged: 'At the moment I don't know for whom I am working. I work because it is my duty, because I find peace in work and I am working for my ideal of German womanhood, and with that ideal I will live out my life in the east, far from the beauty of Germany. I will struggle to make my way there as a German.'[73] Heinrich began to learn Russian.[74] Then once more the right way for him seemed to be to prove himself in 'war and struggle': 'Gebhard, Lu, and I talked for a long time about how good it would have been if we had stayed in the army. Together in the field and so on. Perhaps I wouldn't be here any more, one fighting spirit less. But I do not want to become weak and will never lose control of myself. In a few years perhaps I will have a chance to fight and to

struggle and I'm looking forward to the war of liberation and will join up as long as I can move a muscle.'[75]

The diary entries about time spent with Maja, mostly in their circle of friends, became more numerous. They read and played music together, had profound discussions about life, sometimes sat together hand in hand and parted with a kiss.[76] In November, however, he was shocked to learn that Maja would be leaving Munich in January.[77] At the end of November, after he had again had the opportunity to say a few words to her, he made the resolution: 'Tomorrow I must know where I stand, for this situation is awful.' The next day he did in fact meet her again, but did not manage to clarify matters as he had hoped: 'After dinner until about 10.30 I helped Maja with her arithmetic. She was always thanking me profusely. Then home . . . '[78]

Again he wanted to plunge into battle: ' . . . if only I had dangers to face, and could risk my life and fight, that would be ecstasy. Oh human beings, with their affections, their indeterminable longing, their hearts in conflict and turmoil, are pathetic creatures. And yet I am proud to fight this battle and am determined not to be defeated.'[79] At the same time he noticed a growing distance on Maja's part: 'I don't know if I am only imagining it or if it really is so. Maja did not behave to me as she has done up to now. Went home at 1.'[80] Now he began to take a negative view of his chances with the object of his adoration.[81]

On 5 December, the night before St Nicholas's Day, he was pleased about a gift he took to be from Maja: 'Found a little St Nicholas basket at home. Gebhard found a golden hair on it. I think it's dear Maja's doing. I have kept the hair.' Three days later, however, he knew the truth: 'The St Nicholas presents recently came from Frl. Wahnschaffe, by the way. That shows how stupid a man in love is.' What could he do? He made a decision: 'Today I distanced myself inwardly from everything and now am relying on myself alone. If I don't find the girl whose qualities match mine and who loves me I shall just go to Russia alone.'[82]

The next day he wrote in his diary about Maja: 'I hope I see her again when I'm here the year after next, when she has been a year in the country. And I hope that by then this lovely personality has become more settled and mature and has won through. She has a Faustian temperament.'[83] The old year ended with resolutions for the new one: 'Then we played music together and drank punch. What will the new year bring? Whatever it is,

with God's grace I intend to use it to become more mature and to continue to climb the path towards greater self-knowledge.'[84]

But only a few days later he was again in 'a terribly serious mood'.[85] There were highly unpleasant confrontations with his brother Gebhard and Ludwig Zahler, for he was obviously getting on their nerves: 'Ludwig told me I was touchy and he's certainly right in part. But not entirely.'[86] He was annoyed by Maja's behaviour after she ignored him at one of the evenings at the Loritz home, and he complained, full of self-pity (and probably completely without justification as far as Maja's alleged feelings for him were concerned): 'My experience with her and with Luisa is: "It's hard to think of anyone more heartless than many girls are who've once loved you."'[87]

Alongside his heartache, in this period his growing sexual curiosity is also apparent in the diary. With Ludwig and Gebhard he discussed 'the old topic of "Woman and whore"'.[88] In November he noted that 'in Odeonsplatz a whore tried to attach herself to us'—'unsuccessfully, of course', as he quickly added, but he admitted to himself: 'It's a very interesting thing, though.'[89] In December 1919 he discussed Wedekind's play *Wetterstein Palace*, in which sexual entanglements play an important role, with a fellow fraternity member who also recounted relevant experiences from his war service: 'I must say though that it wasn't just smut but something I was genuinely interested in, something a mature person must be thoroughly informed about.'[90] In March 1920 he reacted with deep agitation and disgust to a book about a love affair between a young priest and a 14-year-old boy: 'Sunday, 7.3.1920. 10.30 in the evening in a terrible mood. Munich—strange. The idealization of a homosexual man.—Ghastly pictures.'[91]

At the end of January and beginning of February 1920 a dose of flu kept him in bed, and he recorded with extreme precision what care his friends took of him and how much emotional support, which he clearly desperately needed, they gave him: 'Käthe always brought me my meals. Lu visited every day, sometimes twice. Schorschl also visited once. They are truly good, dear people and above all good friends. Käthl was like a sister. Lu is a brother to me. Friedl sent me an egg and always lots of greetings. She is a good sort [. . .].'[92]

Even so, taken as a whole the experiences of this first Munich period were very sobering for him. It is therefore not surprising that his favourite place was at home with his parents: 'There's just nowhere as nice as home.'

With them—and in letters—he engaged in quite detailed discussions about the things on his mind. 'In the evening went for a walk with Father. We talked a lot. About Luisa, about my Russian problem (mainly with Mother), about the political and economic future etc.'[93] At home 'I'm just a cheerful boy without any cares, but on leaving my parents' house I'm changed back again'.[94] His relationship with his father ('dear Dad') was harmonious for long stretches, though matters on which he clashed with his parents arose repeatedly; for example, a serious crisis was to develop in April 1921.[95]

As a perusal of the very detailed diary entries from his first semester in Munich makes abundantly clear, Heinrich Himmler had distinct problems in his personal relationships. Not only was he inexperienced and shy with girls, which was a function of his age, he was also uncertain in general about what he should and could expect of other people in his personal relations. He found it very difficult to judge the emotional attitudes of others and to respond to them appropriately. He simply did not know how to strike the right note in his behaviour with other people.

Psychologists would analyse this in terms of the consequences of an attachment disorder.[96] People who suffer from this kind of dysfunction acquired in early childhood frequently tend, while growing up and as adults, to attach very high expectations to personal relationships, though they cannot define these expectations precisely, and as a result they cannot be fulfilled. The consequence is a sense of frustration and the desire for more signs of affection. People with this problem are prone to feeling constantly exploited. From time to time they unload their feelings in outbursts of rage that others find difficult to comprehend, and then develop strategies to help them approach others which are often perceived as ingratiating. Often, however, they learn to conceal their emotional immaturity by means of particular behavioural techniques, and up to a certain point to compensate for it in their dealings with others.

As the letters from Himmler's period in the army have already made clear, he did in fact struggle with insatiable longings for affection and care—at first from his mother in particular and then in relation to his circle of friends. He tried to get close to others but always had the sense that he had not really succeeded. He made an effort always to be helpful and then was annoyed with himself because he feared he had made a fool of himself. He also had the experience of his behaviour towards others, though well intentioned, being seen by them as inappropriate and provoking mystified or defensive reactions.

It must be said that he made great efforts to compensate for these weaknesses. He was helped by a fundamental character trait, evident from his earliest childhood: his constant exercise of will-power and self-control. It became second nature to him to hold himself in check and avoid emotion as far as possible. In addition, he hoped that by rigorous self-discipline he would acquire that level of self-assurance that would allow him to disguise his emotional immaturity in dealing with personal relationships. This is the context in which the strict regime he applied to his contacts with people has to be seen: the enforced good behaviour, the routine visits, the conversational strategies, and finally the huge emphasis he placed on regular exchanges of letters and gifts. For his relations with others he needed a framework in which he could operate.

His habit of regarding and referring to himself as a 'soldier' can be interpreted as part of these strenuous efforts to gain control of himself and be recognized by others. As a member of the generation that grew to adulthood during the war, Himmler belonged to a cohort of middle-class young men who experienced the military defeat and revolution as the decisive events of their lives. For them the events of 1918/19 represented an existential challenge, demanding the response of a fundamentally new orientation geared to overcoming the defeat as an internal and external reality: this was to be achieved by a changed attitude to life and new way of living.

Thus, as Ulrich Herbert in particular has demonstrated, in those years a way of living emerged amongst those who became adults during the war that can be summed up in the words: sobriety, distance, severity, and rationality.[97] Himmler's determined struggle to conceal his relationship problems by means of strict observance of social formalities and rules for daily life, and to avoid and control emotion, was also matched, therefore, by a desire to live up to the demands of his contemporaries. This he could do much more easily as a Territorial soldier than in his everyday life as a student from a comfortable background. The world of the military, with its organization of every last detail, met his need for rules and control, and in view of the tendency in this masculine world to suppress emotion his difficulties in forming attachments must have appeared as a positive virtue. Herein lies the biographical key to his enthusiasm for the military and, after a career as an officer was denied him, for his later engagement in the paramilitary movement.

According to psychologists, the origins of attachment disorder go back to early childhood, to a lack of affection and mirroring on the part of the

mother. What the cause was in Himmler's case can only be the subject of speculation. Possibly his brother's frequent illnesses were a factor, and perhaps also competition developed between Himmler and his younger brother and he fell into the classic role of the middle child who feels neglected. Whatever the causes of his difficult interpersonal relations, they remained a problem for him throughout his life.

The fruits of reading

The emotional upheavals of his first semester from October 1919 to March 1920 also made an impact on his reading list. A total of fourteen titles are listed, but politics and popular philosophy appeared only peripherally; a book on the Freemasons seemed to him too uncritical,[98] whereas he was gripped by Walter Flex's 'Poems and Thoughts from the Battlefield', which appeared under the title *The Great Feast*, because the book 'uses a poet's imagination to reproduce very convincingly and well the thoughts one has as a soldier'.[99]

At this time his main reading was novels and stories chiefly concerned with love, erotic attraction, and the battle of the sexes. He thought Georges Rodenbach's gloomy novel *Bruges-la-Morte* 'psychologically very good'. It tells of a man who continues to feel tied to his dead wife and murders his lover when she wants to take the wife's place. This reading-matter apparently suited Himmler's depressed mood in November.[100] He finished Ludwig Finckh's folksy novel *The Rose Doctor* (1906), putting it down with a feeling of 'satisfaction such as I have not felt for a long time'. His view was that it was 'a hymn of praise, and a justified one, to women'.[101] At the end of the winter semester he started on *Diary of a Lost Soul*, a bestseller about the fate of a girl who falls into prostitution. It was a book, as Himmler noted—clearly impressed—'that offers insight into dreadful human tragedies and makes one look at many a whore with very different eyes.'[102]

He read Ibsen's *A Doll's House* with great interest, and it challenged him to reach a conclusion about the causes of this marital tragedy: 'It is her fault, for allowing herself to be turned into a doll', adding 'in part' in modification of this verdict. He went on, however, to make a further point: 'She can never require her husband to sacrifice his honour.' Helmer, the husband, is to blame because, 'in cowardly fashion, he abandons his wife when she is in need, and afterwards acts as if something had happened.'[103] The fact that

Nora leads the life of a doll deprived of adult status is, according to Himmler, her own fault; the fact that her husband might have something to do with it is an idea that never even crossed his mind. The question of emancipation, the central problem of the play, which was after all already forty years old at the time, was clearly completely foreign to him. He did not know what to do with Nora, a woman breaking out of marital subservience; his still very adolescent concept of women—and this is shown by his responses to his reading—was instead dominated by the contrasting images of the ideal woman and the whore. Apart from that, the play strengthened him in the notion that a husband must above all protect his wife—though only as far as his 'honour' permitted it. He could hardly have provided a more telling example of his complete incomprehension of the debate about marriage as an equal partnership that was being conducted with increased intensity at the beginning of the Weimar Republic.

In the spring and summer of 1920 two anti-Semitic titles can be found on his list. It is clear that he was looking for an answer to the 'Jewish question', which as a result of the debate on duelling at the end of 1919 was a matter he too wanted to resolve. In April he read Artur Dinter's extraordinarily successful novel *The Sin against Blood*, to which he reacted with both approval and scepticism: 'A book that gives a startlingly clear introduction to the Jewish question and makes one approach this subject extremely warily but also investigate the sources on which the novel is based. For the middle way is probably the right one. The author is, I think, somewhat rabid in his hatred of the Jews.—The novel, with its anti-Semitic lectures, is written purely to push a particular line.'[104] Friedrich Spielhagen's *Ultimo*, by contrast, met with his complete approval.[105] On the evidence of his reading-list, the 'Jewish question' did not loom large in his interests again until 1922. In 1920, however, he was clearly not yet prepared to subscribe unequivocally to a radically anti-Semitic viewpoint.

In May 1920 he chanced upon a book that helped him to transform his lack of sexual experience and success with girls into true virtue. The work in question was Hans Wegener's sex-education book of 1906, *Young Men Like Us*, which focuses on the 'sexual problem of educated young men before marriage'.[106] Wegener warned about masturbation, prostitution, and sexual relations outside marriage, as well as preaching sexual abstinence in general before marriage. By contrast with many contemporary publications, however, he was not content to demand sexual abstinence on the grounds of possible health-risks, but rather he appealed first and foremost to the young

man's honour and strength of will: chastity is here declared to be the essence of masculinity, correctly understood.

The central admonition is to maintain 'chivalrous reverence for a pure woman'.[107] Such a 'responsible' attitude, it is argued, permits friendly, platonic relationships with women:

> Good, so let us trample our animal nature underfoot and with senses under control seek the friendship of such women. They will not withhold it and it will enrich our personal lives. It will restore to us in a purer form what we offered up, and if we were pure it will immerse us in greater purity. It will increase our strength in our battle with ourselves and we will be dubbed knights, pledged our whole lives to protect women. Until we have found the woman to whom we wish to belong for life, friendly relations with women are positively necessary.[108]

These words were balm to Himmler's bruised soul. In positive euphoria he decided to make Wegener's advice his own maxim. In his reading-list he drew the satisfied conclusion: 'A book containing the highest ideals. Demanding, but achievable. And I have achieved them already.—Probably the finest book of its kind that I have read.'[109]

Agricultural work experience

After the first two semesters in Munich Himmler had to carry out an agricultural work placement. Although we do not know much about Himmler's second semester, as there are no diary notes for the summer semester of 1920, we may assume nevertheless that the compulsory period in the country provided him with a welcome escape from Munich, where circumstances had become difficult. Relatives of the Loritz family, the Rehrls from Fridolfing in Upper Bavaria, had offered him a placement on their estate, and he embarked on the year ahead with great expectations, as he wrote to his father: 'a good diet' and work on the land will strengthen him physically, will in fact 'steel' him. He hopes also that 'his nerves and soul can find repose in nature and in the seriousness and jollity of the agricultural calling and way of life'.[110] By buying a motorbike he aimed to be mobile in his remote rural location.[111]

He arrived in Fridolfing on 7 September, and his letters to his parents show that he launched himself body and soul into the unaccustomed work.[112] His accommodation and food were good and he got to know the family. Right

away he formed a friendship with the owner of the estate, Alois Rehrl, ten years his senior, that was to last for decades.[113] The two went hunting together; Himmler visited agricultural shows and went on a variety of excursions and tours of the mountains,[114] became a member of the German Touring Club and the Alpine Society,[115] and also took a lively part in country organizations and traditional festivities.[116] He even joined the Residents' Militia.[117] He attended church regularly,[118] and in his free time also enjoyed visiting acquaintances who lived nearby.[119] Throughout the placement he was in very close contact with his parents; his mother went on supplying him with numerous parcels,[120] while he in turn produced minute calculations to account for how he had spent the pocket money they paid him.[121] 'I promise always to strive to be a good man and remain so', he vowed to his father in a letter on the latter's fifty-sixth birthday.[122]

Himmler's reading at this time focused on further Ibsen plays, which he thought somewhat too 'realistic' but which made an 'uncommonly true' impression.[123] In *Love's Comedy* he saw 'the mendacity and social mores of love' pilloried.[124] He also liked the fact that in *Pillars of Society* we see 'the dishonesty and the deception on which society is built'; he was, however, above all impressed with 'how the good in society emerges through individual characters and still wins through'.[125] His motto that self-control and exercise of the will make it possible to master any situation is confirmed by Ibsen, whose drama about Pastor Brand, who destroys himself and others by his inflexibility, was for him, 'as far as morality and discipline of the will are concerned one of the best and most perfect dramas I know. It is a book that deals with the will, morality and life without compromises.'[126]

At the same time he devoured novels in which he saw representations of his ideal woman—*Poor Margarethe* by Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti for example, or Agnes Günther's *The Saint and the Fool*.[127] He also enjoyed books about the Nordic-Germanic heroes. Verner von Heidenstam's novel about the Swedish king Charles XII impressed him as the 'story of an iron man, who with his mind and will inspired a people up to the last day of his life and led each of these brave men on to be heroes—A man sorely needed in our time'.[128] When he read Felix Dahm's monumental novel about the Goths, *A Battle for Rome*, he was totally enthused by the 'gripping and vividly written story of a splendid, fine and truly Germanic people'; 'the perfidious Latins and feminine intrigues' could make one 'weep', however.[129]

Rudolph Stratz's novel *Light from the East*, about a nobleman of German descent in Estonia during the First World War opened up to him in

'blindingly clear' light a new perspective on the 'terrifying east'. 'If anyone wants to visualize the future', this is a book he has to read. 'It sheds light on the changing migrations in the east, the power and the inner strength of the Germanic peoples in the Baltic region, and about our own strength and weakness.'[130]

He was also impressed with Ernst Zahn's *Women of Tannö*. In the novel the inhabitants of a village make the decision to have no more children in order to avoid passing on haemophilia, which is prevalent in the community, to the next generation. Himmler commented: 'The fight against the power of the blood. How this battle is fought. From the most noble silence to the point of succumbing. An excellent novel.'[131]

He read various historical books, preferring those that chimed with his nationalism. He found an edition of speeches made in 1848 to the Frankfurt Parliament interesting principally because of 'analogies with the present-day revolution'.[132] In August 1920 he was reading about the 'Wars of Liberation' against Napoleon[133] and the First World War; a commemorative volume for German officers who were prisoners of war he devoured within a few days. He considered it a 'monument to Germans' emotional, intellectual and all-round competence [...] that edifies, elevates and is bound to inspire respect for what is essentially German'.[134]

At the turn of 1920/1 five novels of Conrad von Bolanden followed in quick succession. The author was a Catholic priest who, under a pseudonym, wrote historical works that were in equal measure aimed at a popular audience and written from a consistently Catholic perspective. It is clear from Himmler's comments that he did not adopt this standpoint uncritically. He particularly disliked Bolanden's anti-Protestant attitude, for he himself regarded it as a blessing that the confessional rift was being healed.[135] He was also sceptical about whether, from his 'purely Catholic' standpoint, Bolanden had taken a sufficiently comprehensive view of the causes of the French Revolution.[136] On the other hand he reacted enthusiastically to his polemic against the Freemasons; the fact that it was based on conventional Christian, rather than völkisch, arguments clearly did not concern him.[137]

When the work placement in Fridolfing came to an end in August 1921 he returned, strengthened in body and in self-confidence, to Ingolstadt, where he completed a further two-month placement at an engineering works. At the start of the winter semester of 1921/2 he resumed his studies at the Technical University in Munich.[138]

3
Struggle and Renunciation

Himmler resumed his studies at the beginning of November 1921. He found a room at No. 9 Briennerstrasse conveniently close to the Technical University, to the University (where he also attended lectures), and to the State Library.[1]

Unlike during his first year of study, he now usually had his meals in his lodgings. His contacts with the Loritz family, which during his first stay in Munich had been an important fixed point in his life, were now reduced to irregular visits. Since his old friend Ludwig Zahler had in the meantime become engaged to Käthe Loritz, which on occasion was to put a great strain on his friendship with Käthe, Heinrich was quite glad that this new arrangement enabled him, when necessary, to avoid encountering his friend's fiancée.[2]

Himmler had still not succeeded in establishing his independence from his parents; indeed, he does not appear even to have made a serious attempt to do so. He made numerous purchases for his father[3] and received in turn regular parcels of food and clothing from his parents.[4] 'Good old Mummy sends me lots of goodies', the 21-year-old gratefully noted in his diary at the beginning of 1922.[5] His correspondence with Ingolstadt was always as regular as before and Himmler, in his role as the conscientious son, continued to list all his tasks in minute detail,[6] portraying himself as a keen student. He was 'doing what was required'.[7] Apart from that, he plunged into student social life with his typical commitment. He sang in the church choir,[8] revived his regular social contacts, particularly with acquaintances of his parents,[9] and took an active part in the General Student Committee (AStA), the student representative body of the Munich Technical University. He was a candidate in the AStA elections at the end of 1921 and his tenth place on the fraternity students' list won him a seat.[10]

He spent most of his spare time involved in the activities of his fraternity, the League of Apollo. From early afternoon onwards he was frequently to be found in his fraternity fencing-room. However, he does not appear to have found the fencing exercises, to which he devoted himself so assiduously, at all easy.[11] He had to wait a long time for his first official duel, which had to be carried out in accordance with strict rules and which would qualify him to become a full member of his fraternity.

Nevertheless, he took part enthusiastically in the activities of the fraternity, which were dominated by complicated rules of honour and procedure involving endless debates about disciplinary matters and relations with other student fraternities.[12] He conscientiously visited sick and wounded members of the fraternity in hospital,[13] exploited the opportunity of getting to know the 'old boys' of the fraternity,[14] some of whom were influential figures, and enjoyed hospitality and assistance from other members, for example when travelling.[15]

Despite this selfless commitment, he did not receive the recognition from his fellow students that he was seeking. In November 1921 his application to be made an officer was rejected, 'because it's believed that the fencing would not be in good hands and, in any case, I would be liable to be prevented by my father from performing the role'.[16] He does not appear to have been aware of the fact that, as a relatively recent member and without having taken part in a duel, he had applied for a post for which he was entirely unsuitable.

In February 1922 he applied for the office of 'Fuchsmajor' (who was responsible for the supervision of the new members), but once again without success. 'On the one hand, I was hurt that I wasn't elected,' he confided to his diary, 'but on the other hand, it's very good. I've got more time. I haven't cultivated people and so I'm not well liked. Why?—Because friendly types make comments about me because of my fencing and because I talk too much.'[17]

When the elected candidate declined to serve Himmler proposed himself for the post to two fellow fraternity members, but again in vain. 'I shall never mention the matter again', he promised in his diary.[18] Evidently he was annoyed at his own behaviour, which his fellow fraternity members must have considered very importunate. His attempt in July 1922 to win the support of the League for an important change in the statutes also met with no success. When, at the end of the night-time session, the vote was called he found himself in the minority. He noted stubbornly: 'Defeated according to the rules, but morally in the majority.'[19]

This student had a full, indeed an overfull, diary of events to get through. Apart from various student and paramilitary activities, he was a member of several associations[20] and liked going to cafés, pubs, and dance venues;[21] he also went to the cinema[22] and accepted numerous private invitations. He was continually meeting acquaintances in the university district and evidently spent a lot of time 'rabbiting on', as he noted in his diary.[23] But, however hard he tried, he failed to achieve the popularity he yearned for.

'I have to struggle': the young Himmler and the opposite sex

He also had little success in his relationships with women. While his brother Gebhard had a steady girlfriend and his best friend, Ludwig Zahler, a fiancée, Himmler had to face the fact that, as far as love and sex were concerned, he was getting nowhere.

It was not that he lacked interest. His diaries, especially during his second stay in Munich, reveal an increasingly active interest in the most varied aspects of sex and every conceivable problem that could arise in relations with the opposite sex, an interest that, on occasion, could be described as obsessive. There are numerous descriptions of women in his diary, often chance acquaintances or objects of desire observed from afar. At a concert in February, for example, the pianist, 'a pretty woman', 'provoked all sorts of thoughts'. The relaxed atmosphere of the Munich Carnival also aroused his fantasy. At a Carnival party 'Zipfchen', a 'true Rhinelander', made a great impression on him. 'Of course we used the familiar "Du" form the whole evening . She was a sweet girl, 19 years old with a childlike quality, and yet a mature woman with a hot-blooded temperament, easy going and rash and yet not bad (as she herself said). We got on marvellously.'[24] Another Carnival acquaintance 'had quite a bosom'.[25] The girlfriend of a former comrade from the Landshut Free Corps period was 'certainly a good girl. But sexy.' When he took her home after an evening spent together because his acquaintance had to catch a train, he reflected: 'I think I could've had her.' But 'home to bed'.[26]

Conversations with his friend Ludwig Zahler, often on long evening walks, helped Himmler to calm his surging passions. In January, he noted, they had 'a long talk until 11 o'clock about sexual questions, abstinence, sexual performance'.[27] Two days later the pair talked about adultery, and

two weeks later the whole gamut of issues was discussed: 'sexual intercourse, contraception, abortion, the attitude of the individual and of the state. Lu's attitude very laid back.'

Himmler, by contrast, had moral inhibitions. After a Carnival party he noted:

> Only got home at 2 o'clock. Walked with Lu. We spoke about the dangers of such things. I have known what it's like to be lying together in pairs next to each other, side by side. One gets into a passion where one has to summon up all one's powers of control. The girls are then so far gone they no longer know what they're doing. It's the burning unconscious yearning of the whole individual for the liberation of a terribly strong natural instinct. That's why it's so dangerous for men and such a responsibility. One could do what one wants with girls and yet one has enough to do with controlling oneself. I feel really sorry for girls.[28]

After another, in his eyes, wild Carnival party he vowed to moderate his behaviour: 'But it's terrible how hot one gets on such occasions. Look at Mariele. She can't help it, but one has to be sorry for girls. One can't be too careful. 11.15 went home with Lu. Talked about it. To bed at 1 o'clock.'

In spring 1922 Ludwig was replaced by a new companion with whom to discuss sex. Alphons, the son of his landlady, Frau Wolff, was in Himmler's eyes 'a ladykiller. But he doesn't go the whole way.' Alphons even let him read letters from a girlfriend. 'I find it interesting from a psychological point of view. One ought to get to know these kinds of people too.'[29] In the end Himmler became Alphons's 'ghost-writer' and composed his replies not only to his girlfriend ('a deep, romantic, hot-blooded, but good girl'[30]), but also to another acquaintance, a cabaret dancer called Fiffi.

Himmler seized the opportunity to attend one of her performances with Alphons, though they both told Frau Wolff that they were going elsewhere: 'Supposedly in Annast. I am, after all, the virtuous youth. But none the less anyone ought to realize what we're up to.' Fiffi revealed herself to be 'a very decent girl'.

> Dancing for her is an art form in which she's completely absorbed. Terrific taste. I got on with her really well. I talked about her dances and the others, and about her costumes. She doesn't mind one expressing an opinion. She's about 18 years old, a cute charming little thing, a virgin and good. She willingly accepts Alphons's caresses, but only at the end, at the front door, does she give him a kiss as well[31] [...] It would be a great shame if this girl got into the wrong hands.

But a few months later this 'charming little thing' provoked his displeasure: 'Smoked and chatted with Alphons. Fiffi has written an impertinent letter and returned his (our) letters.'[32]

Himmler preferred to look for an elevated kind of woman, an ideal female, the kind of woman who acquired an ever more prominent place in his thoughts and for whom, as was his firm intention, he wished to save himself. Käthe, Frau Loritz's daughter, who was unfortunately already engaged to his best friend Ludwig Zahler, fulfilled all the preconditions for this role. One Sunday evening, in January 1922, he was alone with her in the Loritz flat. The atmosphere was tense:

Little Käthe sat on the sofa; she was wearing a grey dress that she'd made herself and which really suited her. I sat opposite her in the armchair [...] We got on really well. We talked about lots of examples of egoism, jealousy, etc., about Theo, the nice Rehrls, about a lot of things, a lot of intimate things as one does between friends. Little Käthe was very sweet. In this way I was able to tell her a lot and this time we definitely got close. Naturally, whether it will last remains to be seen. But we have formed an intimate bond [...] I went home very contented. It was a nice and worthwhile evening.[33]

In June 1922 he met an Ingolstadt acquaintance on the train. 'She has a large landholding with a lot of livestock. A straightforward, often boyish, but I think, sweet and lively girl. It's the same as usual: I would need only to make the first move, but I can't flirt and I can't commit myself now—if I don't definitely feel this is "the one".'[34]

Himmler kept creating situations that he felt were erotic and which aroused his fantasy, while at the same time insisting to himself that he must refrain from taking advantage of them. Himmler believed in sexual abstinence, not only because he believed he ought to wait for 'the right one', but also because he considered he was on the brink of deciding on his future and so could not enter into any binding commitment. In a short time he hoped he would either be going off to war as an officer or on a journey to a far-off land as a settler.

'Talked about women,' he wrote after a Carnival party about a conversation with Ludwig,

and how on evenings like these a few hours can bring one close to other people. The memory of such times is among the purest and finest one can experience. They are moments when one would like to kneel down and give thanks for what one is blest with. I shall always be grateful to those two sweet girls. I would not like to call

it love but for a few hours we were fond of each other and the lovely memory of it will last forever. Only one notices how one thirsts for love and yet how difficult and what a responsibility it is to make a choice and a commitment.—Then one gets to thinking, if only we could get involved in some more conflicts, war, mobilisation—I am looking forward to my duel.[35]

The repression of the subject of sexuality through the invocation of masculinity, heroism, and violence, and his self-imposed conviction that, predestined to be a solitary fighter and hero, he could not enter into any emotional commitments, form a constant refrain in his diary entries: 'I am in such a strange mood. Melancholy, yearning for love, awaiting the future. Yet wanting to be free to go abroad and because of the coming war, and sad that the past is already gone [. . .] Read. Exhausted. Bed.'[36] And on the occasion of Gebhard's engagement we read: 'Another of our group of two years ago has gone. Commitment to a woman forms a powerful bond. For thou shalt leave father and mother and cleave to thy wife. I am glad that once again two people so close to me have found happiness. But for me—struggle.'[37]

In May 1922 he visited friends in the country. As a prude, Himmler considered they were rather too permissive; he was shocked at their 3-year-old daughter, who ran around naked indoors in the evenings: 'Irmgard ran about naked before being put to bed. I don't think it's at all right at three, an age when children are supposed to be taught modesty.'[38]

His time with the family clearly provoked him so much so that he wrote at greater length on it in his diary:

She is a thoroughly nice, very competent, sweet but very tough-minded creature with an unserious way of looking at life and particular moral rules. He is a very skilled doctor and also a very decent chap. His wife can be very headstrong, and he has trained her well [. . .] He can be egotistic when he needs to be but he is a patriot and all in all a proper man.—The fact is, there are two kinds of people: there are those (and I count myself among them) who are profound and strict, and who are necessary in the national community but who in my firm view come to grief if they do not marry or get engaged when they're young, for the animalistic side of human nature is too powerful in us. Perhaps in our case the fall is a much greater one.—And then there are the more superficial people, a type to which whole nations belong; they are passionate, with a simpler way of looking at life without as a result getting bogged down in wickedness, who, whether married or single, charm, flirt, kiss, copulate, without seeing any more to it—as it is human and quite simply nice.—The two of them belong to this type of person. But I like them and they like me and by and large I like all these Rhinelanders and Austrians. They are all

superficial but straightforward and honest.—But in my heart I cannot believe in their type even if, as now, the temptation is often strong.[39]

The masculine world, defined by a combative spirit and military demeanour, in which he spent a large part of his free time, the fencing sessions and evenings for the male membership of the Apollo fraternity, and the paramilitary scene he belonged to in Munich offered him a certain support and refuge amidst all the confusion. He was therefore all the more unsettled when, in March 1922, a fellow student lent him Hans Blüher's book on *The Role of Eroticism in Masculine Society*. This was a work much discussed at the time, the author of which puts forward the theory that the cohesiveness of movements defined by masculinity, such as the youth movement and the military, is explicable only on the basis of strong homoerotic attachments. It was precisely these attachments, which must be judged entirely positively, that made the members of these organizations capable of the highest achievements.

Himmler was shocked, as his diary indicates: 'Read some of the book. It's gripping and deeply disturbing. One feels like asking what the purpose of life is, but it does have one.—Tea. Study. Dinner. Read some more. [. . .] Exercises. 10.30 bed, restless night.'[40] Impressed, he noted in his reading-list: 'This man certainly penetrated to immense depths into the erotic in human beings and has grasped it on a psychological and philosophical level. Yet, for my liking, he goes in for too much bombastic philosophy in order to make some things convincing and to dress them up in scholarly language.' One thing, however, was plain to him: 'That there has to be a masculine society is clear. But I'm doubtful whether that can be labelled as an expression of the erotic. At any rate, pure pederasty is the aberration of a degenerate individual, as it's so contrary to nature.'[41]

Himmler's defence mechanism against women who had at first definitely aroused his erotic interest, his abrupt smothering of erotic ideas by means of fantasies of violence, but also his alarm when suddenly confronted by the homoerotic aspect of the world of male organizations are all phenomena associated with the basic attributes of the 'soldierly man' of those post-war years, and were widespread in the Munich milieu in which Himmler moved. In the 1970s, in his study *Male Fantasies*, which has since become a classic, Klaus Theweleit analysed the typical defensive behaviour of these men towards women on the basis of memoirs and novels from the milieu of the Free Corps. According to Theweleit: 'Any move "towards a woman" is

stopped abruptly and produces images and thoughts connected to violent actions. The notion of "woman" is linked to the notion of "violence".'[42] The Free Corps fighters—and the young men who took them as their model in the paramilitary movements of the time—were basically in a world without women. In order to control and suppress their urges they had acquired a 'body armour'; physical union was experienced only in the bloody ecstasy of conflict or in their fantasies of conflict.

The image of the ideal woman, untouchable and desexualized, invoked by Himmler after he first came across it in the sex-education manual by Wegener is similarly typical of its time and milieu. Theweleit has described it in the form of the 'white nurse' who appears either as a mother or as a sister figure; for him she is 'the epitome of the avoidance of all erotic/threatening femininity. She guarantees the continued existence of the sister incest taboo and the link to a super-sensuous caring mother figure.'[43] Even Himmler got carried away when he met the sister of a seriously ill fellow student, who was looking after him: 'These girls are like that; they surrender themselves to the pleasure of love, but can show exceptional and supremely noble love; indeed that's usually the case.'[44]

War, struggle, renunciation—these three things intoxicated him, but the war still did not come and so, during his second stay in Munich, Himmler continued to pursue the idea of emigrating. But even this was more a case of castles in the air, a flight from the reality of post-war Germany, than of concrete plans.

At first Turkey attracted him; a Turkish student friend told him about the country and people: 'People are given as much land as they can cultivate. The population is supposed to be very willing and good-hearted, but one has to spare their feelings.'[45] Then, after a lecture at the League of German officers (General von der Goltz was speaking about the Baltic region and 'Eastern European issues'), he noted that he now knew 'more certainly than ever that if there's another eastern campaign I'll join it. The east is the most important thing for us. The west is liable to die. In the east we must fight and settle.'[46]

The next day he cut out a newspaper article about the possibilities of emigration to Peru: 'Where will I end up. Spain, Turkey, the Baltic, Russia, Peru? I often think about it. In two years I'll not be in Germany any more, God willing, unless there is fighting, war and I'm a soldier.'[47] In January he took a brief shine to Georgia, and asked himself again: 'Where will I end up, which woman will I love and will love me?'[48] A few weeks later, in

conversation with his mentor Rehrl, he came back to the subject of Turkey: 'It would not cost much to build a mill on the Khabur.'[49]

Running parallel to this, his efforts to embark on a career as an officer proved fruitless, although his redoubled attempts since the beginning of 1922 to establish contacts with officers of the Reichswehr—at the beginning of December 1921 he had finally received his accreditation as an ensign[50]—and his activities throughout that year in the paramilitary scene in Munich resulted in his becoming more closely linked to potential leaders of a putsch. At a meeting of the Freiweg Rifle Club, for example, he had an important encounter: 'Was at the Rifle Club's evening at the Arzberg cellar—things are happening there again. Captain Röhm and Major Angerer were there too, very friendly.'[51]

Frustration

After only a few months in Munich he felt as frustrated as he had done during his first year of study. The confidence he had gained in Fridolfing that he would be able to show a new face to the world had dissipated. In his diary the self-reproaches mount up: he is simply incapable of keeping his mouth shut, a 'miserable chatterer'.[52] This is his 'worst failing'.[53] 'It may be human but it shouldn't happen.'[54] He constantly observed himself in his relations with other people to check if he was showing the necessary self-confidence—and usually the result, from his perspective, turned out to be unsatisfactory. 'My behaviour still lacks the distinguished self-assurance that I should like to have', he noted in November 1921.[55] While visiting Princess Arnulf, the mother of his late godfather, he had, as he realized afterwards, forgotten 'to ask after her health'; even so: 'Apart from the leave-taking my conduct was fairly assured.'[56]

Himmler at times regarded himself as a thoroughly unfortunate character, a clumsy buffoon. Dressed up as an Arab at a big Carnival party at the Loritz home, which had been decorated as a 'harem', he noted laconically: 'Loritz offered guests a colossal amount, beginning with cocoa, which I spilt all over my trousers.'[57] His lapidary description of a dance attended by members of his Apollo fraternity was unintentionally comic: 'All of us Apollonites were sitting at a table with our ladies. I hadn't brought one.'[58] On a visit to friends in the country he had to put up with mockery from the woman of the house: 'In particular, she poked fun at me when I said I had

never chatted up girls and so forth, and called me a eunuch.'[59] Moreover, he had continual problems with his stomach, particularly when he had been up late the previous night. Because of his problems his fraternity gave him permission not to drink beer.[60]

Himmler showed distinct feelings of inferiority provoked by the repeated experience of not getting the emotional support he expected from other people. His attachment disorder kept resulting in his being left with a vague sense of emptiness after encounters with people who were actually close to him. After a visit by his mother to Munich, which culminated in coffee and cakes at the Loritz home ('Mrs Loritz, Lu, Kätherle, Aunt Zahler, Mariele, Pepperl, Aunt Hermine, Paula, Mother, Gebhard, and me'), he became 'very monosyllabic' at the end. In the evening he took stock:

Ill. 2. Himmler with his family and his fiancée Margarete Boden; on the left Heinrich's elder brother Gebhard with his wife Mathilde; standing behind Margarete to the right is Heinrich's younger brother Ernst. The dejection suggested by Heinrich's posture is no accident, for he often felt misunderstood by his family. Margarete shared this feeling.

The upshot of these past days. I'm someone who comes out with empty phrases and talks too much and I have no energy. Did no work. Mother and everyone very kind but on edge, particularly Gebhard. And empty conversation with Gebhard and Paula. Laughter, joking, that's all.—I could be unhappy but as far as they're concerned I'm a cheery chap who makes jokes and takes care of everything, Heini'll see to it. I like them but there is no intellectual or emotional contact between us.[61]

Even writing his diary occasionally turned into an 'exercise of the will'.[62] In a mood of depression he expressed it even more negatively: 'I'm such a weak-willed person that I am not even writing my diary.'[63] There was increasing evidence of difficulties in his relationships with others. In particular his relationship with Käthe, the more elevated woman he dreamt of and his friend Zahler's fiancée, went through several crises. As early as November the tensions were building up. Käthe reproached him with

despising women completely and seeing them as unimportant in every sphere, whereas there were in fact areas where women were in control.—I have never taken that view. I am only opposed to female vanity wanting to be in charge in areas where women have no ability. A woman is loved by a proper man in three ways.—As a beloved child who has to be told off and also perhaps punished because it is unreasonable, who is protected and cared for because it is delicate and weak and because it is so much loved.—Then as a wife and as a loyal and understanding comrade, who helps one with the battles of life, standing faithfully at one's side without restricting her husband and his intellect or constraining them.—And as a goddess whose feet one must kiss, who through her feminine wisdom and childlike purity and sanctity gives one strength to endure in the hardest struggles and at moments of contemplation gives one something of the divine.[64]

At the beginning of December 1921 open conflict broke out: 'A remark of mine caused a row this afternoon. The same old story. Everything I say provokes people. It is not Lu's fault, she's not blaming him. I'm the one who's supposed to be at fault. She says she doesn't understand Lu. You women don't understand any of us. She says I'm trying to take Lu away from her and so on. A lot of crying.' Himmler assumed Frau Loritz was behind the fuss, and decided: 'I'm going to break with Frau Loritz and Käthe for quite a time. We'll observe the social formalities but nothing more. If she's in trouble she will always find in me the same loyal friend as two years ago. In that case I will behave to her as though nothing had happened and look for no thanks.' And in general: 'I think too much of myself to play the fool to feminine caprice, that's why I've broken with her.

It's not easy, though, and when I look back I still can't understand it.' Hardly had he admitted this than he was challenging himself: 'But in the end I must be consistent. I intend to work on myself every day and train myself, for I still have so many deficiencies.'[65]

Although in January he had a discussion with Käthe on the sofa to clear the air, in March the fragile peace was finally over. Zahler had told him that she was reproaching him for having 'attached himself at a ball to an aristocratic woman in order to make good contacts'—in Himmler's view 'the egoism and jealousy of an injured woman'. 'Now there are mountains between us.'[66]

Arguments with his fellow students are hinted at in his diaries at various points. The 21-year-old complains in a highly condescending tone about the 'lack of interest and maturity of the young post-war generation of students', by which he means those who, unlike him, had done no military service.[67] The aim of 'every man should be to be an upright, straightforward, just man, who never shirks his duty or is fearful, and that is difficult'.[68] Himmler tried to get over the crisis by imposing a programme of discipline on himself, of which regular ju-jitsu exercises formed a part.[69]

Above all, however, he fantasized about a heroic future for himself, in comparison with which the tribulations of the present were insignificant. It was no accident that at the end of May 1922 he began a new diary with a poem taken from Wilhelm Meister's *The Register of Judah's Guilt*:

> Even if they run you through
> Stand your ground and fight
> Abandon hope of your survival
> But not the banner for
> Others will hold it high
> As they lay you in your grave
> And will win through to the salvation
> That was your inspiration.[70]

Student days come to an end

Himmler's increasingly brusque and disengaged manner may well also have been caused by the anxiety aroused in him by the thought of the approaching diploma exams. He was pursued by his parents' recurring concerns about the range of his activities in Munich, most of which were not related

to his studies. On the occasions when he put in a burst of work, it was above all the thought of his father that oppressed him: 'Ambition because of the old man.'[71]

At times he was overcome by a wave of panic. 'One could get very worried at the thought of exams, study and time, study and being thorough. It's all so interesting but there's so little time.'[72] A few weeks later he lapsed into melancholy: 'Brooded about how time flies. The nice, blissful student days already soon over. I could weep.'[73] He was, however, successful in gaining advantages for himself, for the contacts among the academic staff that he had built up as an AStA representative proved useful. 'Dr Niklas is immensely obliging. I told him I didn't attend the lecture series. I am to tell him that in the exam and he will question me on the work placement.'[74]

To complete a programme of study in agricultural sciences the Technical University in Munich in its examination regulations scheduled a minimum of six semesters. Himmler had, however, taken advantage of a dispensation for those with war service, according to which he had been allowed to sit parts of the preliminary examination after only two semesters, in other words, during his work placement. By this means he was able to shorten his course to four semesters. In his submission he claimed to have been a member of the Free Corps from April to July 1919, and that 'as a result of over-exertion in the army' he had 'developed a dilatation of the heart'.[75] In reality, as he confessed in a discussion with one of his professors, the premature completion was 'not legal', but he got away with it.[76]

On 23 March 1922 he completed the last part of the preliminary examination and so was halfway towards passing the final examination. The semester was finished; Himmler went for a few days to Fridolfing, in order to boost his reserves of energy.[77] In May he visited friends in a village near Landshut and at the end of the month finally returned to Munich for his last semester of study.

The fact that in spring 1922 his father took up the post of headmaster at the long-established Wittelsbach Grammar School in Munich signified for Himmler that, at least to some extent, he was again under his father's watchful gaze. Until Frau Himmler also moved to Munich in the autumn Gebhard Himmler was alone and spent a relatively large amount of time with his son. At the end of May Himmler suddenly realized that his father's proximity could very easily lead to problems: 'Suddenly Father arrived all het up and in a terrible mood and reproached me etc.—Had something to

eat. My good mood was completely destroyed and shattered; won't it be just great when we are together all the time; it'll be diabolical for us and for our parents, and yet they're such trifling things [that cause the rows].'

On the whole, however, the relationship between father and son developed harmoniously. The two met frequently for meals, chatted about this and that, and on one occasion even went together to a political event.[78] They were in agreement as far as their fundamental convictions were concerned, and Himmler even initiated his father into the mysteries of his paramilitary activities.[79]

Politicization

In the diary entries for 1922 there is an increasing number of references to discussion of the 'Jewish question'. The contexts in which these references occur indicate the wide range of issues which Himmler believed relevant to this topic. Thus, at the beginning of February he discussed with his friend Ludwig Zahler 'the Jewish question, capitalism, Stinnes, capital, and the power of money';[80] in March he talked with a fellow student about 'land reform, degeneracy, homosexuality, Jewish question'.[81]

At the beginning of 1922 his reading-list once more contained two anti-Semitic works. Himmler found confirmation of his anti-Jewish attitude above all in *The Register of Judah's Guilt*, the work by Wilhelm Meister already referred to.[82] He found Houston Stewart Chamberlain's *Race and Nation*, which he read shortly afterwards, convincing above all because its anti-Semitism was 'objective and not full of hate'.[83] This indicates that he saw the 'mob' anti-Semitism, which was relatively widespread during the post-war years and found expression in insults and acts of violence against Jews, as unacceptably vulgar. Instead, Himmler preferred 'objective' reasons for his anti-Semitic attitude and, unlike during the arguments about whether Jewish fellow students were eligible to duel, he was increasingly adopting racial theory, which appeared to provide the intellectual basis for such an approach.

From the beginning of 1922 onwards his diary contains an increasing number of negative characterizations of Jews. A fellow student is described as 'a pushy chap with a marked Jewish appearance'.[84] 'A lot of Jews hang out' in a particular pub. Wolfgang Hallgarten, the organizer of a protest demonstration of democratic students and a former classmate, is referred to

as 'a Jew boy', a 'Jewish rascal'.[85] However, his diary shows that, despite his prejudice, he still tries to differentiate among the Jews he meets. In January, for example, he visited a lawyer on behalf of his father and noted: 'Extremely amiable and friendly. He can't disguise the fact that he's a Jew. When it comes to it he may be a very good person, but this type is in the blood of these people. He spoke a lot about society, acquaintances, and contacts. At the end, he said that he would be very glad to be of assistance to me. I've got a lot of fellow fraternity members, but all the same.—He didn't fight in the war because of problems with his heart.'[86] However, from summer onwards there was an increasing number of negative descriptions of, as well as dismissive remarks about, Jews, while he began to see himself not merely as 'Aryan', but as a 'true Aryan'.[87]

Himmler's increasing anti-Semitism coincided with the phase in the summer of 1922 when he became seriously politicized. While he had been very interested in politics since the end of the war and had made no bones about his hostility to the Left and his sympathies for the nationalist Right, now, in the early summer of 1922, he came out into the open with his views: he became actively involved with the radical Right.

This move was prompted by the murder of Walther Rathenau on 24 June. For the Right, the Reich Foreign Minister embodied the hated Weimar Republic like no other figure. He was attacked as the main representative of the 'policy of fulfilment' of the Versailles treaty, and his active engagement in support of democracy was seen as treason, particularly in view of his social origins as a member of the Wilhelmine upper-middle class. Moreover, the fact that he was a Jew made him the target of continual anti-Semitic attacks. And now a radical right-wing terrorist group in Berlin had taken action.

The German public responded to the assassination with dismay and bitterness, and it led to the formation of a broad front of opposition to the anti-Republican Right. On 21 July the Reichstag responded to the murder by passing a 'Law for the Protection of the Republic', which considerably facilitated the prosecution of political crimes and made a significant encroachment on the responsibilities of the federal states. The Bavarian government refused to implement the law and, on 24 July, issued its own 'Decree for the Protection of the Constitution of the Republic'. The competing legislation led to a serious crisis in relations between Bavaria and the Reich, which, after difficult negotiations, was resolved on 11 August.

Radical right-wing elements, in particular the Nazi Party, made full use of this crisis for their propaganda. Because of his willingness to compromise, the Prime Minister of Bavaria, Baron von Lerchenfeld, was a particular target of criticism. Hardly anyone on the political Right in Bavaria could avoid becoming affected by the politicization that developed as a result of these conflicts. The dividing-line now ran between the moderate Bavarian conservatives, who were united in the Bavarian People's Party (BVP) and supported the Lerchenfeld government on the one hand, and the right wing of the party under the former Bavarian Prime Minister Gustav von Kahr, the German Nationalists (who had adopted the name 'Bavarian Middle Party' in Bavaria), as well as various radical leagues and groups, to which the Nazis in particular belonged, on the other. These latter forces had embarked on a course of fundamental opposition to the Weimar Republic and, with growing determination, advocated the violent overthrow of the constitution. This alliance came to an end only with the so-called Hitler putsch of November 1923.[88]

It would be quite wrong, on the basis of this political constellation, to interpret Himmler's radicalization as a break with the conservative views of his parents, an interpretation which is put forward, for example, in Andersch's account of Himmler's father as a schoolmaster, 'The Father of a Murderer'. For, during these months, many Bavarian conservatives tended to contemplate radical political solutions. This undermines the argument that Himmler's involvement with the radical Right should be understood as a rebellion against his parents. It is clear from his diary, for example, that initially father and son attended political meetings together.

On 14 June they attended a meeting of the 'German Emergency League against the Disgrace of the Blacks' in the Zirkuskrone hall. The League attacked the deployment of French colonial soldiers in the occupied Rhineland, which was denounced as a national humiliation. According to the report in the newspaper *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, the main speaker, Privy Councillor Dr Stehle, described 'the occupation of the Rhineland by coloureds as a bestially conceived crime that aims to crush us as a race and finally destroy us'. After the meeting the excited crowd began a protest march, which was dispersed by the police.[89] Himmler noted in his diary: 'Quite a lot of people. All shouted: "Revenge". Very impressive. But I've already taken part in more enjoyable and more exciting events of this kind.'

On the following day he held forth in a pub, once again accompanied by his father. His diary entry conveys a good impression of the topics that were

covered that evening: 'Talked with the landlord's family, solid types of the old sort, about the past, the war, the Revolution, the Jews, the hate campaign against officers, the revolutionary period in Bavaria, the liberation, the present situation, meat prices, increasing economic hardship, desire for the return of the monarchy and a future, economic distress, unemployment, struggle, occupation, war.' His father and his old acquaintance Kastl shared the view, as did many of the Munich middle class, that they were facing big changes and a major political settling of accounts. 'Father had spoken to Dr. Kastl, who shared these views. Once the first pebble starts to roll then everything will follow like an avalanche. Any day now, we may be confronted with great events.'

A few days later, in the wake of the attack on Rathenau, the political situation became critical. Himmler fully supported the murder: 'Rathenau's been shot. I'm glad. Uncle Ernst is too. He was a scoundrel, but an able one, otherwise we would never have got rid of him. I'm convinced that what he did he didn't do for Germany.'[90] However, two days after the assassination Himmler was no doubt astonished to discover that among his circle he was almost alone in holding this opinion. 'Meal. The majority condemned the murder. Rathenau is a martyr. Oh blinded nation!'[91] 'Käthe hasn't got a good word to say about the right-wing parties', while his father was 'concerned about the political situation'.[92] On the following Saturday he met an acquaintance at the Loritzes and had 'an unpleasant conversation [. . .] about Rathenau and suchlike (What a great man he was. Anyone who belonged to a secret organization—death penalty.) The women of course were shocked. Home.'[93]

On 28 June he took part in a demonstration in the Königsplatz against the 'war guilt lie'. It was a big protest meeting 'against the Allied powers and the Versailles Treaty'. He was evidently disappointed by the indecisive stance of his fraternity: 'Of course our club was useless; we went with the Technical University. The whole of the Königsplatz was jam-packed, definitely more than 60,000 people. A nice dignified occasion without any violence or rash acts. A boy held up a black, red, and white flag (the police captain didn't see it; it carries a three-month prison sentence). We sang the "Watch on the Rhine", "O Noble Germany", the "Flag Song", the "Musketeer", etc.–it was terrific. Home again. Had tea.'

The following day—five days after the assassination—he confided secretively to his diary: 'The identity of Rathenau's murderers is known—the C Organization. Awful if it all comes out.' The Consul Organization,

which carried out paramilitary activities from its Munich base with the support of the Bavarian government, belonged to the same milieu in which Himmler now felt relatively confident through his membership of the Freiweg Rifle Club and his acquaintanceship with Ernst Röhm (the central figure in these circles) and other officers. While staying with his parents in Ingolstadt at the beginning of June Himmler had already learned details through an acquaintance of secret rearmament activities in Bavaria: 'Willi Wagner told us various things about what's going on etc. (training, weapon smuggling).'[94] Evidently such information was quite freely available in 'nationalist' circles. However, it can no longer be established whether Himmler knew more than the rumours that were circulating among his acquaintances.

On 3 July he had nothing but contempt for 'a meeting of the democratic students with the Reich Republican League to protest against the Black-White-Red terror in the Munich institutions of higher education', which his former classmate Wolfgang Hallgarten had helped organize. In his view there could be no talk of terror. When, a few days later, he visited Health Councillor Dr Kastl, at the request of his father, he learnt that 'I've been asked to collect signatures for a Reich Black-White-Red League to support a campaign for the reintroduction of the black, white, and red flag. Agreed of course. Home. Dinner.'[95]

He immediately began eagerly to collect signatures from among his large circle of acquaintances, not only from his fellow students but also from members of the Freiweg Rifle Club: '8 o'clock Arzbergkeller. "Freiweg" evening. Collected moderate number of signatures.' But there was more going on that evening, as he added, once again in a secretive manner: 'Talked about various things with Lieutenants Harrach and Obermeier and offered my services for special tasks.'[96] In Himmler's view, the decisive confrontation with the Republican forces appeared to be imminent, and he had the impression that he was going to play an important role in it.

On 17 June Himmler's duel finally took place, the long-awaited initiation ceremony of his duelling fraternity. His diary states:

I invited Alphons. Mine was the third duel. I wasn't at all excited. I stood my ground well and my fencing technique was good. My opponent was Herr Senner from the Alemanni fraternity. He kept playing tricks. I was cut five times, as I discovered later. I was taken out after the thirteenth bout. Old boy Herr Reichl from Passau put in the stitches, 5 stitches, 1 bandage. I didn't even flinch. Distl stood by me as an old comrade. My mentor, Fasching, came to my duel specially.

Klement Kiermeier, Alemannia, from Fridolfing had brought Sepp Haartan, Bader, and Jäger along with him. I also watched Brunner's duel. Naturally my head ached.

Himmler's father, from whom he had expected a dressing-down because of the fresh wounds in his face, reacted calmly: 'Went to see father. Daddy laughed and was relaxed about it.'[97]

Himmler's radicalization must have been encouraged by the fact that, as will have become clear to him in the course of these months, his plans for the future were built on sand. His hopes of a career as an officer were misplaced, and the alternative of completing a degree in politics (*Staatswissenschaften*) was to prove equally illusory. Himmler had already applied to the Politics faculty of Munich University in May 1922. In June 1922 he received the news from the dean that his previous agricultural studies would count towards his degree and that he would be exempted from paying student fees. This appeared to ensure the continuation of his student life in Munich: 'So I can stay here for the winter semester, that's marvellous, and my parents will be pleased.'[98] Himmler's father was initially fully in agreement with his son's continuing his studies, but warned him not to get further involved with his fraternity, but to concentrate entirely on work. 'Next year I'm supposed to devote myself solely to scholarship.'[99] He had already discussed plans for a doctorate some months before.[100] Dr Heinrich Himmler—this achievement, with his agricultural studies properly integrated into an academic education, would fulfil his parents' expectations of him.

However, in September 1922 Himmler was not preparing for the new semester but instead found himself in a badly paid office-job. It is not clear exactly what led to his change of mind. But between June and September he must have experienced a profound sense of disillusionment. This was probably caused by the awareness—presumably communicated in the first instance by his father—that in a time of galloping inflation the Himmlers' family income was insufficient to pay for all three sons to study simultaneously.[101]

In fact, in the early summer of 1922 inflation reached a critical stage. The cost of living had steadily increased since the previous summer: in June 1921—after a year of relative stability—it had been eleven times higher than before the war. Now, in June 1922, it had already gone up to forty times the pre-war level: '200 grams of sausage now costs RM 9. That's terrible. Where's it all going to end?'[102] Himmler noted in his diary. But that was

to be by no means the highest point of the inflation. Prices doubled between June and August 1922 and between August and December they tripled again.[103]

Civil-service salaries could not keep pace with these price-rises. Although they had been continually increased since 1918, this had been done so slowly that these increases could cover only around 25–40 per cent of the continually rising cost of living.[104] Even if it is assumed that a bourgeois family, such as that of grammar-school headmaster Himmler, could make savings in its living expenses and could fall back on financial reserves, such reserves would eventually be exhausted. After years of inflation they would be getting close to the poverty line.

In 1922 the Himmler family had evidently reached that point, and his parents had to make it clear to their son Heinrich that they had exhausted their ability to finance his studies.[105] As a result, Himmler lost the sense of material security and freedom from worries that had characterized his life up until then. His parents no longer appeared to offer him the secure support on which he could always count if his expansive and nebulous plans should fail. The university was no longer the waiting-room in which one could comfortably mark time until the hoped-for clarification of the political situation, in the company of a circle of like-minded people. Instead, agriculture would have to become the basis for his employment, and that in the most difficult economic circumstances. Evidently it was only at this point, in the summer of 1922, that the reality of post-war Germany finally caught up with the young Himmler. Until then, in his plans for the future he had taken no account either of the political circumstances or of economic parameters, but instead had indulged in vague illusions.

Now the dreaming was over. It was time for the 22-year-old to find his bearings. He took his final exams at the end of the summer semester of 1922. The overall grade of his agricultural diploma was 'good'.[106] He was relatively successful in his search for a post. He was appointed assistant administrator in an artificial fertilizer factory, the Stickstoff-Land-GmbH in Schleissheim near Munich. Once again he had benefited from family connections: the brother of a former colleague of his father's had a senior position in the factory.[107] He remained in this job from 1 September 1922 until the end of September 1923. According to his reference from the firm, during this period he had 'taken an active part particularly in the setting up and assessment of various basic fertilization experiments'.[108]

Unfortunately we do not know how Himmler felt about this activity, how he organized his new life, and why he left the firm after a year, because no diaries have survived for the period from the beginning of July 1922 until February 1924. That is all the more unfortunate because it was precisely during this period that the event occurred that was to prompt his fundamental decision to make politics his profession: his participation in the putsch attempt of November 1923.

The path to the Hitler putsch

In the summer of 1923 the Weimar Republic stumbled into the most serious crisis it had faced hitherto. In January France had used the excuse of delays in Germany's delivery of reparations to occupy the Ruhr, prompting the Reich government under Wilhelm Cuno to call upon the local population to carry out passive resistance. There were strikes and a loss of production, the Ruhr was economically isolated, and the depreciation of the Reichsmark, which had already reached catastrophic proportions, went completely out of control. In August a new Reich government was formed under Gustav Stresemann, which included the German People's Party (DVP), the Centre Party, the German Democratic Party (DDP), and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in a grand coalition. On 24 September the Stresemann government ceased the passive resistance against the Ruhr occupation.[109]

While, since the autumn, the Socialist governments in Thuringia and Saxony had been cooperating ever more closely with the Communist Party (KPD) and had begun to establish armed units, in Bavaria the seriousness of the crisis resulted in a further radicalization of the Right. In September 1923 the Storm Troop (SA) of the Nazi Party, the Free Corps unit Oberland, and the Reichsflagge, the paramilitary league led by Röhm, of which Himmler had in the meantime become a member, established the Deutsche Kampfbund or German Combat League. At the end of the month Röhm succeeded in securing the leadership of this formation for Hitler. However, behind the scenes the real strong-man was General Erich Ludendorff, the former Quartermaster-General of the imperial army and head of the Supreme Army Command.

The Bavarian government, however, responded by declaring a state of emergency and appointing Gustav Ritter von Kahr, who had been Prime

Minister during the years 1920–1, as 'General State Commissioner', in other words, as an emergency dictator. In view of the new situation, the Reichsflagge declared its support for von Kahr, whereupon Röhm, together with a section of the membership, established—*nomen est omen*—the Reichskriegsflagge (the Reich War Flag), an organization which Himmler also joined.

The Reich government in turn responded to the state of emergency in Bavaria by declaring a state of emergency in the Reich as a whole. Faced with this conflict, Otto von Lossow, the commander of the Reichswehr troops stationed in Bavaria, declined to follow orders from Berlin and was relieved of his command. The Bavarian government reacted by reinstating him and placing his troops under their authority. In doing so, the so-called triumvirate of von Kahr, von Lossow, and the chief of the state police, Hans Ritter von Seisser, found themselves involved in an open confrontation with the Reich, while in Bavaria they were opposed by the Kampfbund led by Hitler and Ludendorff.

The Kampfbund wanted to declare a Ludendorff–Hitler dictatorship in Munich and then set out with all available forces on an armed march against Berlin. On the way they intended to overthrow the Socialist governments in central Germany. Kahr was also contemplating a takeover in the Reich, but in the form of a peaceful *coup d'état* supported by the dominant right-wing conservative circles in north Germany, who counted on the support of the Reichswehr. This faced the Kampfbund with a dilemma. It could not simply join von Kahr if it did not wish to be marginalized, and yet it was too weak to act on its own.

There was an additional problem. On the northern border of Bavaria the (now 'Bavarian') Reichswehr had set about establishing a paramilitary border defence force against the Socialist governments in Saxony and Thuringia, with the aid of various combat leagues. The Kampfbund was involved in this operation, and in the process had had to subordinate itself to the Reichswehr leadership.

However, in October the Reich government ordered troops to march into central Germany, with the result that the excuse that a border defence was needed was no longer valid. In addition, with its announcement of a currency reform the Reich government had begun to win back public trust.

At the beginning of November, therefore, the Kampfbund was coming under increasing pressure to take action. The danger was that the triumvirate would come to terms with Berlin, and so the window of opportunity

Ill. 3. Himmler as the flag-bearer of the Reichskriegsflagge on 9 November 1923. The world of the paramilitaries enabled Himmler to escape from the upsetting experiences which he kept having in civilian life. It was here that he found an environment in which he could to some extent cope with his personal difficulties.

for a putsch was beginning to close. It was in this situation that the Kampfbund adopted the plan of seizing the initiative for a putsch themselves and dragging the forces around von Kahr along with them.

A rally announced by the triumvirate, to be held on the evening of 8 November 1923 in the Bürgerbräukeller, appeared to offer a favourable opportunity. Hitler, in the company of armed supporters, forced his way into the meeting, declared the Bavarian government deposed, announced that he was taking over as the head of a provisional national government, and forced Kahr, von Lossow, and von Seisser to join him. The subsequent history of the Hitler putsch is well known: early the following morning the three members of the triumvirate distanced themselves from these events and ordered the police and the Reichswehr to move against the putschists. The Hitler–Ludendorff supporters made a further attempt to gain control of the city centre, but the putsch was finally brought to an end at the Feldherrnhalle, when the police fired on them.[110]

In fact, the marchers had been aiming to get as far as the army headquarters in Ludwigstrasse, where Röhm and his Reichskriegsflagge were holding out. On the morning after the putsch, therefore, the citizens of Munich were confronted with a very unusual scene: the army headquarters, the former War Ministry, was cordoned off by Reichskriegsflagge members, and these putschists were in turn surrounded by troops loyal to the government. Behind the barbed-wire barricade was a young ensign, who on that day had the honour of carrying the flag of the paramilitary Reichskriegsflagge: Heinrich Himmler, son of the well-known headmaster of the Wittelsbach Grammar School. Here too the confrontation between the putschists and the forces of the state had led to bloodshed. After shots were fired from the building the besiegers returned fire, and two of the putschists were killed.[111] But, despite this incident, during the course of the day the Reichskriegsflagge and the Reichswehr came to an amicable arrangement. The Reichskriegsflagge departed peacefully and its members including Himmler, the flag-bearer, were not arrested.

With this unsuccessful putsch the attempt by the radical Right to force the conservatives to join them in a common front and get rid of the Republic had for the time being failed. It was to be almost ten years before a second alliance between right-wing radicals and right-wing conservatives achieved rather more success.

4

A New Start in Lower Bavaria

After the unsuccessful putsch attempt Himmler was facing personal and political bankruptcy. Five years after the end of the war he was neither an officer nor a colonial settler in a faraway land, but instead an unemployed agronomist unsuccessfully looking for a job.[1] His hopes of securing political change by force had been dashed by the crushing of the putsch. The more the economic and political situation stabilized, the more hopeless the völkisch cause appeared.

Nevertheless, Himmler continued to work for the banned Nazi Party, which had gone underground. According to various hints in his diary, during the months after the putsch he performed various clandestine services as a courier.[2] In mid-February he visited Röhm in Stadelheim prison: 'we had an excellent and fairly frank talk [...] I had brought him a *Grossdeutsche Zeitung* and some oranges, which he was very pleased with. He hasn't lost his good sense of humour and is still our good old Captain Röhm.'[3]

In the same month Himmler, who was once again living with his parents,[4] began to take on the role of a Nazi agitator in provincial Lower Bavaria, an area that was familiar to him from his childhood. He tried his hand at journalism, contributing a political piece for the *Langquaider Zeitung* with the title: 'A Letter from Munich'. Evidently, this 'Letter from Munich' was intended to be the forerunner of a series that would appear regularly and provide moral support for the Langquaid comrades, for there was a group of active Nazis in the town.[5] Whether he was able to realize this plan can, however, no longer be established.

His first 'Letter from Munich' was also published in the *Rottenburger Anzeiger*, a newspaper that appeared in the neighbouring county town.[6] The editor described the article in an introductory sentence as a contribution from 'völkisch circles'. The 'Letter' was written in Bavarian dialect and

in a cunningly naive, conversational tone. Himmler had evidently taken Ludwig Thoma's 'Filser' letters as his model, namely the letters of a fictitious Bavarian parliamentary deputy written in Bavarian dialect.

Himmler, who used the appropriate pseudonym 'Heinz Deutsch', began his article with a little sarcastic prologue:

> Writing letters was without a doubt easier to do in the old days than it is nowadays. There wasn't as much to report as there is now but then it wasn't so dangerous to do so. It's really not that simple. I hardly dare to think anything because I have so many thoughts that the police wouldn't like and I talk only to people who are in danger of ending up in Landsberg jail. So I shall put barbed wire round my brain and try to write in a tame, 'bourgeois' way.

This was followed by a fictitious conversation between Deutsch-Himmler and an evidently complacent Bavarian in a railway compartment, a gentleman with hat-size 61, a drooping moustache, well fed, and preoccupied with consuming some sausages:

> 'Yup, the French are on their way out. If the conference doesn't finish them then their currency will. Look how the franc's fallen' (he spoke just like a donkey neighing). 'The French'll go back of their own accord; they can't afford to go on.' 'Ah ha', I said, disappointedly. 'Wait and see. I reckon you'll have to wait till you're an old man for that to happen.' 'Yup, if the conference doesn't finish them then their currency will', repeated my philistine.

After Himmler-Deutsch has guided the conversation towards various topics, the article ends quite abruptly with a rather martial-sounding sentence: 'A German poet once said: "He who does not put his life on the line will never gain his life." Nowadays, people in Germany think that one can speculate for one's life with currency and shares. But the day will come when the Reich that Bismarck cemented together with blood and iron and is now falling apart through money will be revived once more with blood and iron. And that's when we'll come into our own.'

Himmler also made speeches. On the day when his article appeared in the *Rottenburger Anzeiger* Himmler spoke on behalf of the National Socialist Freedom Movement in the Lower Bavarian town of Kehlheim: 'Into the meeting, large hall, very full. Dr Rutz [a Nazi from Munich] was the main speaker, then there was an interval. I spoke about the workers being subject to stock-exchange capital, about food prices, wages, and what we ourselves should be doing about it. The meeting was definitely a success.' On the same evening there was another meeting in a nearby venue: 'Peasants and

communists in the pub. First Dr Rutz, then me. Talked only about workers' issues. Rutz's and my speeches bordered on National Bolshevism. The main topic was the Jewish question.'[7] On the next day he spoke to peasants in Rohr, as he thought, 'quite well'. He noted that at the end of the meeting there was an incident involving a 'Jewish hop-merchant': 'Afterwards, I think the peasants gave him a good hiding.'[8]

Himmler saw himself very much in the role of a self-sacrificing party worker: 'We often stayed in the pub canvassing people until 2.45 in the morning. This service we're performing for the nation, for this disappointed, often badly treated and mistrustful nation, is really tough and hard going. They're scared stiff of war and death.'[9]

On 26 February 1924, a day after Himmler's speech in Rohr, the trial of the 9 November 1923 putschists began in Munich. Himmler had been questioned by the prosecutor about his role in the failed attempt to storm the army headquarters, but there was insufficient evidence to prosecute. In the course of the trial the defence proposed calling him as a witness but, as it turned out, he did not have to appear.[10]

Himmler was still contemplating the possibility of emigration. His Turkish student friend, with whom he had already discussed plans for emigration in 1921 and with whom he still corresponded, offered to arrange a position for him as an estate manager in western Anatolia.[11] In fact Himmler made some enquiries about this possibility of emigrating;[12] unfortunately, one is inclined to say, he could not summon up the courage to take the plunge. The Caucasus was another possibility under consideration, but was then quickly dropped ('Bolshevik rule, division of the land, nothing doing').[13] The same thing happened with Italy; a friend who lived in Milan could not, when contacted, offer him much hope. This acquaintance suggested, presumably with the aim of consoling him, that the only thing suitable for him would be 'a colonial-type job', perhaps in the Ukraine or in Persia, for 'in the final analysis, as an ordinary estate manager you would have the prospect of getting something in Germany anyway'.[14]

Himmler had, of course, already considered this possibility; but he had been forced to come to the sobering conclusion that his job prospects in agriculture were slim. At the beginning of November 1924, in response to his enquiry,[15] the Reich Association of Academically Educated Farmers informed him that his chances of getting a senior position in estate administration were virtually nil. The only conceivable vacancies would be as a deputy administrator or as an assistant on a trial farm.

Crisis

Himmler was not prepared to admit the failure of his plans for his personal, professional, and political life and increasingly came to adopt the role of an outsider who had been failed by other people. It was not he who was following the wrong course of action but those around him.

This perception applied to both his personal and his political life. His irritability and opinionated arrogance, which during the previous years had become increasingly evident and had more than once got him into difficulties, now became more marked and were fatally combined with his already well-known tendency to interfere in other people's affairs.

This was particularly apparent in the way in which Heinrich intervened in the engagement of his brother Gebhard during 1923–4. This episode demonstrates how frustrated he had become after the failed putsch, but it also shows how this failure had made him increasingly and blatantly aggressive, something which those closest to him were now to experience in a most dramatic fashion.

In November 1921 Gebhard had become engaged to Paula Stölzle, the daughter of a banker from Weilheim. From the start Himmler had certain reservations about the engagement.[16] After 'searching for a long time' he had chosen as his engagement present a gift that barely concealed his ambivalent feelings: Agnes Günther's novel *The Saint and the Fool*.[17]

When tensions emerged in the relationship during 1923—Gebhard accused Paula of being too friendly towards another man—Himmler acted as intermediary at the request of his brother. However, he interpreted his role rather differently from how Gebhard envisaged it.[18] He wrote a letter to Paula in which he reminded her that a man must have 'the assurance from his fiancée that she will not be unfaithful to him with a single word, a look, a touch, or a thought, even if he spends years away from her and they never see each other and often don't hear from each other for a long time, which might well be the case during the war years that are soon to come'. But Paula had failed this test 'dismally'. If her marriage was to be a happy one then she must be 'kept on a tight rein with *barbaric* strictness'. Since she was not 'strict and harsh' with herself and his brother was 'too good for you and has too little knowledge of human nature', someone else would have to undertake this task. It is no surprise that he felt it 'incumbent upon myself to

do this'.[19] Paula's response was friendly but firm; she told him to mind his own business.[20]

Himmler, however, could not get over this incident, which he regarded as a matter of family honour. Some months later he heard another tale about Paula which prompted him to urge his parents to end the engagement.[21] It was only after he had been successful in this initiative that he approached his brother directly in 'the Paula matter', and 'spoke to him frankly about breaking off the engagement and told him what I thought of her in no uncertain terms'. During this conversation he learnt from Gebhard that Paula 'had already lost her innocence and was herself largely to blame'. He was surprised by how calmly Gebhard had taken it: 'Gebhard hasn't taken the whole thing (the breaking off of the engagement) to heart, but has completely come to terms with it. It's as if he has no soul; he shakes if off like a poodle. Our conversation lasted until half past ten. Read the paper. Slept. What a way to waste one's time.'[22]

When Gebhard informed Paula and her parents in writing of his wish to break off the engagement,[23] Paula, who in the meantime had come to the conclusion that marrying Gebhard would not be a good idea, replied accusing her ex-fiancé of 'allowing Heinrich to come between us and to tell me what to do'. She found it incomprehensible how 'your brother, who is two years younger than you, can have the nerve to think that he's entitled, for your sake and based on his experience of life, to tell me how to live my life'. She had found it very insulting.[24]

But Himmler was not prepared to let the matter rest. In March 1924, when the engagement had already been broken off, he hired a private detective to collect damaging material on Paula and in this way dug up some worthless small-town gossip.[25] Moreover, without Gerhard's knowledge he made enquiries about his brother's ex-fiancée from his acquaintances in Weilheim, only for the eventuality that the matter should have further repercussions, as he assured his informants. In the event of that happening he wanted to possess 'material' detrimental to the Stölzle family.[26]

With the 'Paula matter' Himmler's obsession with interfering in other people's private affairs and his almost voyeuristic interest in collecting details about their lives had reached a temporary high point. However, shortly afterwards he also alienated close friends with his didactic, totally humourless, and arrogant manner. This is documented in a letter from May 1924 to his friends Friedl and Hugo, whose hospitality he had been happy to enjoy only a few months earlier.[27] The banal cause of the break was a postcard,

which Friedl had sent to Himmler's mother three days earlier, in which she had asked Gebhard and Heinrich to advise Hugo, as they had promised to do, about the planned purchase of a car. Himmler could not stand the friendly ironic tone of this card:

> We consider the style adopted in the card to my mother dated 20.5.24, which we received on the morning of the 22.5.24, to be decidedly hurtful to Gebhard and myself and therefore rather inappropriate. To start with, I find the first phrase 'in my hour of need' to be at the very least totally inappropriate. To speak of 'need' because one has not received a reply for three days in a matter concerning a car is at least an exaggeration. Evidently Friedl has no idea what need is! And then to write 'if neither of your two sons can be bothered'. I hope that you and Friedl are convinced that I am grateful to you for your generous hospitality and for the friendship that you have shown me up until now [*sic*] and that I am not expressing my gratitude for reasons of convention (I don't recognize them) but from inner conviction.

Deeply hurt, he continued:

> I also believe that you will remember that I told you that you could rely on me in any situation, even and particularly if there should be a real need. I also believe I can say that I have always responded to small requests from you as if I was doing it for myself. So even if Friedl did not trust Gebhard, although that would be completely unjustified, she should have had enough trust in me to be sure that I wouldn't have let this matter go by the board.

Himmler also let his friends know to whose influence he attributed the insulting card: it could only be an act of revenge by Paula Stölzle, who, so he suspected, was stirring up hostility to him among his circle of friends! She was also the target of his warning that one should not get on the wrong side of him. He could, when forced to, 'behave very differently', and would 'not stop until the opponent concerned had been excluded from all moral and respectable society'. Evidently completely unaware of his impertinence, Himmler had the effrontery to end his letter with an appeal for sympathy: 'Unfortunately, I'm still here. Things are taking a terribly long time. This waiting for weeks on end is getting on my nerves. And these weeks that one is wasting in waiting later on could have turned out to be useful.'[28]

However, Himmler did receive some acknowledgment of his stance as a solitary hero and unappreciated pioneer of the völkisch cause. In June 1924 he received a letter from a female friend, which she had written more than six months before, a few days after the putsch, but had not sent off. Himmler

admired this young woman, Maria Rauschmayer, the daughter of a Munich professor and colleague of his father's, who was working on her doctoral dissertation in the summer of 1924.[29] Mariele had already appeared several times in his diary as 'an exceptionally clever girl with a strong and honourable character who deserves the greatest respect' and who was admirably patriotic.[30]

Maria Rauschmayer wrote to Himmler as someone who shared her political views. She wanted to inform him about the events taking place and the political mood in Munich; she shared his anger and disappointment at Kahr's 'betrayal'; she wanted to encourage and support him in his political stance. But the letter also reveals sympathy and admiration that was deeply felt. Rauschmayer described her feelings on that 9 November when she encountered Himmler in front of the besieged army headquarters, the former Bavarian War Ministry:

> In front of the War Min. troops of the Reichskriegsflagge. Heinrich Himmler in the vanguard, the flag on his shoulder, one could really see how secure the flag felt and how proud he was of it. I go up to him, unable to speak a word. But within me I can feel welling up the words
>
> Be proud: I am carrying the flag!
> Be free of care: I am carrying the flag!
> Be fond of me: I am carrying the flag!
>
> In all my life I have never given a firmer handshake for I knew that he felt the same as me: for years unable to think of anything but Germany, Germany, Germany.

She concluded: 'This letter is for my friend Heinrich Himmler. It is intended as a small gesture indicating my deep gratitude and loyal acknowledgment of a deed which, for a few hours, once again gave one reason to hope. The letter has been written during the hours of deep disappointment and depression that followed.'[31]

In August he received another letter from her, a glowing declaration of belief in their common cause: 'For years to be able to think of nothing else, to work for it for years; Nation and Fatherland as the grandest cause is like a prayer emerging from one's innermost being.' She herself, however, did not wish to play an active part in the völkisch movement, and her reason for not doing so will have met with Himmler's full approval: 'You are a combat group, who want to clear a swamp, and marsh-goblins and swamp-witches are so revolting that I don't want to have anything to do

with them. My view of the ideal German woman is to be at your side as a comrade and then to be with you after the fight.' She wrote that, shortly beforehand, she had responded to a request to form a völkisch women's group as follows:

> Get yourself some kind of wake-up apparatus and awaken the best girls that you can find in Germany to the need to remain pure German women—so that the men, who nowadays have no time for it, will know where to get their wives from. But that is a small matter, for nowadays the struggle for survival is more difficult for women than for men. The result is that some get married who would have provided the best material, but who are still too young to be able to wait—and maybe to wait in vain.[32]

Himmler kept these two letters in his private papers. Unlike Paula, who, measured against his ideal, had so clearly failed, 'Mariele' had reinforced his fantasy of the ideal woman, who would reserve herself for the solitary, celibate fighter. Bearing in mind how central his commitment to this image of womanhood was for Himmler's self-image as a man, a soldier, a political activist, and as a self-styled Teuton, one can guess how important Maria Rauschmayer's encouragement would have been to him, particularly at a time when he felt anything but secure.

In search of a world-view

Himmler's reading from the period 1923–4 shows that he was trying to find a 'world-view' in the broadest sense that would provide him with a solid foundation for his life. It is striking that he tried to integrate the most important elements of radical right-wing ideology, which are increasingly apparent in his thinking—anti-Semitism, extreme nationalism, racism, hostility to democracy—into a far more comprehensive world-view, cobbled together from the most varied sources.

He distanced himself more and more from Roman Catholicism. Instead, he became increasingly preoccupied with works that, in his view, dealt with occult phenomena in a serious 'scholarly' way; for example, a book about 'Astrology, Hypnosis, Spiritualism, Telepathy',[33] topics which, at the peak of the inflation and during the subsequent period of upheaval, were generally in vogue.[34] In 1925 he was to read a book about the power of pendulums,[35] and in the same year he approached an astrologer with a request for four horoscopes.[36]

He was impressed by an account of the Pyramid of Cheops—'history built and written in stone and a representation of the universe, which a genius has written in the form of this pyramid'—since it showed 'a range of knowledge that we conceited people of culture have long ago lost and even now have not recovered to the same extent'.[37]

During January and February 1923 he read a book on Spiritualism, and commented in his notes that it had convinced him that Spiritualism was true. Thus, Himmler assumed that it was possible to communicate with the souls of the dead.[38] Already, in May 1921, he had read a book twice within a short time which claimed to prove there was life after death; despite being somewhat sceptical, he was inclined to believe the evidence put forward. 'The transmigration of souls', he noted at the end of his commentary on it.[39] It was a topic that was also to preoccupy him after he became Reichsführer-SS (RFSS).

In December 1923 he began reading Ernst Renan's *The Life of Jesus*, and approved of its anti-Jewish interpretation of the Son of God. This allowed him to overlook the fact that some things in the book were 'certainly not right'. At least Renan illuminated 'many matters that have been kept secret from us'.[40] In February 1924 he perused Ernst Haeckel's *The Riddle of the World* but completely rejected its monist world-view; 'the motley collection of unproven attacks on and denials of a personal God' were 'absolutely disgusting'.[41] Thus, despite his growing doubts about Catholic teachings, he had not yet broken with his God.

In addition, from 1923 onwards he was keen on anti-Semitic literature. He was, however, disappointed by a book on the German criminal *argot* (*Mauscheldeutsch*), since the author was 'evidently someone patronized by Jews and in any event not a Jew-hater'.[42] By contrast, the *Handbook on the Jewish Question* published by Theodor Fritsch, who since the 1880s had been one of the most important German anti-Semites, met with his approval: 'it shocks even someone who knows the score.'[43] Shortly afterwards he read *The False God: Evidence against Jehovah*, by the same author. Evidently Fritsch provided him with backing for his existing scepticism about the Old Testament. 'One suddenly begins to understand things that one couldn't grasp as a child about what quite a lot of biblical stories are worth. And, as is the case with all these books, comes to appreciate the terrible scourge and danger of religion by which we are being suffocated.'[44]

In February, during a visit to his friends Friedl and Hugo Höfle, he read two novels combining an anti-Semitic leitmotif with erotic themes, which

he thoroughly enjoyed.[45] During a train journey in September 1924 he devoured a pamphlet of the anti-Semitic Ethnic German Defence and Resistance League (Deutschvölkische Schutz und Trutz Bund), which was totally in accordance with his views.[46]

And finally he came across *In the Power of Dark Forces* by a certain Gotthard Baron von der Osten-Sacken. This book, which first appeared in 1924, was a classic example of a shift from anti-Semitism to paranoia. Himmler clearly saw this, and yet it did not detract from the author's plausibility in his eyes, as is plain from his notes: 'Description of the Jewish system which is designed to condemn people to a moral death. It's conceivable that there's a persecution complex involved in all this to a certain degree. But the system undoubtedly exists and the Jews operate it.'[47]

There are also a whole series of anti-Jesuit works on his reading list. After reading the first book, he noted, in November 1923: 'It's becoming increasingly clear to me that expelling the Jesuits was one of the best and most sensible things Bismarck ever did.'[48] According to his notes, the 'influence of this powerful order' was also reflected in the novel *The Sadist in a Priest's Cassock*, which he read a few months later.[49]

In May 1924 *The Guilt of the Ultramontanists: A Reckoning with the Centre Party* provided, as far as he was concerned, 'a new and fearful insight into an enemy workshop. One gets really bitter when one reads all about it. What have we done to these people that they won't let us live? And that's even more true now. We want to be Germans and to fight to be so against all our enemies.' And yet he claimed that his criticism was not directed at the Christian religion as such. 'What enemies of the faith and of the Christian religion of love these people are.'[50] His comment on another anti-Jesuit pamphlet, which dealt with the 'black hangmen of the German people, who've been exposed', is particularly revealing: for him the 'ultramontane question' was 'definitely a secondary issue and the Jewish question the primary one, and not the other way round'.[51]

After the unsuccessful putsch he got to know Hitler through two books, and noted in his reading-list: 'He is a truly great man and above all a genuine and pure one. His speeches are marvellous examples of Germanness and Aryanness.'[52] This is in fact the first occasion on which Hitler's name appears in Himmler's surviving writings—his diary, correspondence, and reading-list. He was not one of those Nazi supporters who were attracted by the 'Führer's' charisma; instead, he became politically involved primarily in the context of the general preparations for a putsch that were being carried

out by right-wing paramilitary organizations in the years 1922/3. If he had a political hero at this time it was Röhm, not Hitler.

It is clear from his reading-list for the years 1923–4 that his interest in 'Teutonic' topics not only endured but increased.[53] Above all, in September 1923 he began reading the trilogy of novels by Werner Jansen published between 1916 and 1920. These were popular adventure stories in the form of versions of the *Nibelungenlied* and other sagas. Jansen had tried to transform these sagas into Teutonic-German myths, and infused them with racist and Teutonic clichés. The result was a kind of Karl May* for Teutonic enthusiasts and, above all, young readers.

To begin with, a few weeks after his participation in the Hitler putsch Himmler embarked on *The Book of Loyalty*. He was bowled over; 'One of the most magnificent and most German books I've ever read. He deals with the issue of German loyalty marvellously and provides a really true view of the state and the nation. Hagen is an ideal character.'[54] He had acquired a copy of the *Nibelungenlied* even before he had finished reading this 'Nibelungen novel'. 'Its immortal language, depth, and Germanness reflect an eternal beauty', he commented in his reading-list.[55] Almost a year later he read Jansen's *Book of Passion*, which he enjoyed just as much: '. . . I really feel that I belong to these Teutons, but that at the moment I'm very much alone in feeling this.'[56] Again, reading this novel prompted him to study an original source. He got hold of Tacitus' *Germania* and commented: 'What a marvellous picture of how pure and noble our ancestors were. That's how we should be again, or at least some us.'[57] A few weeks later he read Jansen's version of the *Gudrun* saga, and once more was swept away: 'It's the noble song of the Nordic woman. That is the ideal of which we Germans dream in our youth, for which we as men are prepared to die and in which we still believe', even if, he regretfully noted, 'one is so often disappointed'.[58] He was never to find his Gudrun, but when, in 1929, he came to select a name for his daughter, the choice was not a difficult one.

Apart from Jensen's novels, Hans Günther's treatment of 'the heroic ideal', which appeared under the title *Knight, Death, and Devil*, also had a crucial influence on Himmler's notion of 'Germanic heroism'. He read the book twice in the course of 1924, and noted briefly and pointedly: 'A book that expresses in wise and carefully considered words and sentences what I have felt and thought since I began to think.'[59] Germanic mythology,

* *Translators' note*: Karl May (1842–1912) was a popular novelist specializing in Wild West stories.

reinforced by all sorts of occult ideas, evidently became for him a kind of substitute religion.

The rural agitator

In the summer of 1924 Himmler took the fateful decision to adopt the role of political activist as his profession and the true purpose of his life. He began to work for the Lower Bavarian Nazi Gregor Strasser, a post which he appears to have acquired as a result of his involvement with the NSDAP in Lower Bavaria.[60]

Born in 1892, Strasser was a pharmacist in Landshut, one of the main towns of Lower Bavaria, and had held the rank of first lieutenant in the First World War. For some years he had been one of the leading Nazis in the region and had taken part in the Hitler putsch, for which he had been placed on remand. However, he was a candidate for the Völkisch Bloc, which was acting as a substitute for the banned Nazi Party in the Bavarian state elections of 6 April and 4 May (in the Palatinate). The Völkisch Bloc received 17.4 per cent of the vote (as much as the Social Democrats). Strasser was elected, released from prison, and took over the leadership of the Völkisch Bloc in the Bavarian parliament. Nowhere else in the Reich was the extreme Right so well represented in parliament. In the Reichstag elections of December 1924 Strasser also won a seat, this time as a candidate of the National Socialist Freedom Movement (Nationalsozialistische Freiheitsbewegung), a combined völkisch and Nazi grouping; as a Reichstag deputy he resigned his seat in Bavaria.

As a supporter of a 'German Socialism', Strasser advocated views different from those of Hitler, particularly on social and economic issues. He demanded the 'nationalization' of land and of the means of production, and within the NSDAP represented a decidedly anti-capitalist stance.[61] His main task now consisted in trying to build up the party in north Germany. For this reason alone he spent little time in Bavaria, his old power-base, where Himmler now took over the office and dealt with party matters in Lower Bavaria more or less independently.[62]

During this period Himmler alternated between despondency and a determination to keep going. In August 1924 he wrote to his acquaintance in Milan (in response to a discouraging letter about the job prospects in Italy):

As you can see, I'm still here. I've got a terrific lot to do. I have to run the whole organization in Lower Bavaria and to build it up in every way. I don't have any time for myself and answering a letter promptly is out of the question. I'm very much enjoying the organizational work, for which I'm entirely responsible, and things would be great if one could look forward to victory or prepare for a struggle for freedom in the near future. As it is, it involves a lot of self-denial by us racists [*Völkische*]; it's work that will never bear visible fruit in the near future. One always has to bear in mind that the fruits of this work will be gathered only in later years and at the moment we may well be fighting a losing battle [. . .]

But we few are continuing with this work without wavering [. . .] Because one has to say to oneself if we don't do this work, which has got to be done, this sowing of the German idea, then no one will do it and then, in years to come, when the time is ripe, nothing will happen because nothing has been sown. It is selfless service for the great idea and a great cause, for which of course we shall never receive recognition and do not expect to receive it.[63]

In fact the conditions for agitation in favour of the Nazi cause in Lower Bavaria were, all things considered, not bad. For example, in the Reichstag election of December 1924 the Völkisch Bloc received 10 per cent of the vote in Landshut and became the third-strongest party after the BVP and the SPD; this exceeded the overall election results gained by the candidates of various Nazi groupings in Bavaria (5.1 per cent) and the Reich (3 per cent).[64]

In December 1924 Hitler was released from Landsberg prison, and in February 1925 he re-founded the Nazi Party (the ban on the party had been lifted after Hitler had promised the Bavarian prime minister to obey the law). Himmler in Landshut now had the task of bringing the Lower Bavarian Nazis, whom Strasser had gathered under the flag of the National Socialist Freedom Movement,[65] over to the NSDAP.

However, this did not occur without conflict. In July 1925 Nazi Party headquarters complained to Strasser that not a single membership form, on which the Lower Bavarian Nazis were obliged to sign up for the NSDAP, had reached Munich, let alone any subscriptions.[66] So in August Himmler travelled to Munich to discuss the organizational details of the transfer of almost 1,000 Lower Bavarian Hitler supporters, organized in twenty-five local branches, to the new NSDAP. However, he warned the headquarters beforehand that he would not deal with Max Amann (at that point head of the party publishing-house, the Eher Verlag), with whom he had had a confrontation on his previous visit six months earlier. He signed his letter, as

was usual for the racists at the time, with 'A True German Greeting of Hail (*treudeutschem Heilgruß*).'[67]

Himmler's fussiness about his personal dignity, and the lack of charm he showed in his personal manners, were not the only reasons for the tensions between the Munich headquarters and the Landshut office. Contrary to what he had said in his letter to his Milan acquaintance, Himmler had difficulty in coping with Landshut party business. He kept failing to meet the deadlines given him by Munich headquarters. He generally excused himself by referring to permanent overwork and speeches he had delivered outside the area.[68]

It took until the spring of 1926 before all the membership forms, which were supposed to have been filled in during the summer of 1925, were finally sent in, and the submission of the subscriptions, 10 pfennigs per member per month, to Munich was equally slow. Himmler evidently could cope only by responding to the increasingly urgent reminders from headquarters with an explanation in terms of local culture: 'The long delay, particularly in Landshut, really has less to do with people's indifference and more to do with their dislike of making any written or formal statement, something that is particularly prevalent in Lower Bavaria.'[69] In addition, there were political differences. For example, on one occasion headquarters wanted to know why the founder of the Nazi Party, Anton Drexler, who was now *persona non grata*, had been allowed to speak at a party meeting in Landshut.[70]

At least Himmler could count it as a success that the Munich headquarters had officially recognized the Landshut office,[71] and had recognized the *Kurier für Niederbayern* (with a circulation of 4,000 copies) as the party's official local newspaper.[72] In his activity report to the Gau rally of the Lower Bavarian NSDAP on 2 May 1926 in Landshut he produced a set of meticulously prepared figures: in the course of slightly more than six months 340 letters had been received and 480 letters and cards sent; no fewer than 2,131 items of propaganda material were distributed 'in the form of special editions, copies of *Weltkampf*, *Nationalsozialistische Briefe*, leaflets, other newspapers, and pamphlets'.[73] This account cannot, however, disguise the fact that Himmler was not, in the first instance, a pedantic and industrious party bureaucrat, who directed the party's activities from his desk in Landshut. On the contrary, he saw his job above all as continually to travel round the Gau and look after the local branches. Thus, between mid-November 1925 and the beginning of May 1926 he spoke at twenty-seven

meetings throughout the Gau of Lower Bavaria (this made him the most active party speaker in the Gau) as well as at twenty meetings outside the Gau, not just in Bavaria but also in Westphalia and north Germany, in the Hamburg area, in Schleswig-Holstein, and Mecklenburg.

His speaking activities were, of course, given extensive coverage in the *Kurier von Niederbayern*, the party newspaper edited by Himmler. In his role as an energetic rural agitator he dealt mainly with day-to-day political issues: he attacked the Dawes Plan (the 1924 adjustment by the Germans and the Allies of the reparations imposed by the Versailles Treaty),[74] justified the Nazis' support for compensation for the former royal families,[75] and strongly criticized the Treaty of Locarno.[76] However, his comments on day-to-day politics were saturated with völkisch ideology and implied more general political positions. Anti-Semitism formed a leitmotif in his speeches; he expatiated on 'dark Jewish conspiracies', spoke on the theme of 'Jews and Bolshevism' and on the 'Dangers posed by Jewry'.[77]

On 9 October 1924 he published a rabidly anti-Semitic article in his party newspaper. 'Newspapers, the telegraph and the telephone, inventions of the German and Aryan spirit,' were now, he explained to his readers, being used 'in the service of the Jewish drive for world supremacy'. And now 'the newest invention [...] the wireless transmitter', which as 'radio entertainment could be a means of education for the improvement of a whole nation and as such of huge benefit to the state and the nation', was 'without exception in the hands of Jewish businesses'. As a result 'of course only purely Jewish Talmudic productions of trite pseudo-culture or shamelessly corrupted products of the German spirit are broadcast to the world'. In May and June 1925, seemingly prompted by having just read an exposé ('a marvellous book'), he concentrated in particular on Freemasonry, or rather on the alleged close relationship between Freemasons and Jews. Moreover, in the book he had come across a historical elite which in his opinion represented a model, the warrior caste of the Hindus: 'we must be the Kshatriya caste. That will be our salvation.'[78] But those were private thoughts which he did not reveal to the Lower Bavarian peasants. However, in his speeches he did admit that as a model of organization the hated Freemasons were not to be despised. Thus, in a speech in Dingolfing in May 1925, 'On the Character and Goals of the Freeemasons', he 'repeatedly emphasized that we National Socialists could learn much from this organization, each part of which is highly efficient, and so long as we fail to

awaken the same sense of duty in ourselves we shall never achieve our goal'.[79]

Himmler also repeatedly dealt with agricultural issues in this predominantly agrarian district of Lower Bavaria, these being only too obvious given the agrarian crisis that began in 1925–6. Many peasants had become heavily indebted during the preceding years and now found themselves faced with falling prices. On 15 April 1926, for example, the *Kurier* reported on a meeting of the Plattling NSDAP local branch in which 'Herr Dipl.-Ag. Party comrade Himmler from Landshut spoke about the collapse of German agriculture'. According to the *Kurier*, numerous farmers had attended from the surrounding villages, who 'listened with bated breath to the speaker's clear and lively observations'. Himmler had larded his thoroughly anti-Semitic speech with numerous references to agrarian issues, which were intended to demonstrate his expertise in the subject. He related 'the terrible suffering of our nation since 1918', he described 'the systematic stifling and muzzling of every profession, and now their last representative, the peasantry, was about to succumb to international stock-exchange Jewry'. Mercilessly he castigated 'the so-called peasant leadership, whether they are called Heim or Kühler, Schlittenbauer or Gandorfer, since they're all slaves of Jewish loan capital'. The former employee of the Schleissheim nitrogen-fertilizer plant referred to the 'disastrous influence of the artificial fertilizer syndicates' as well as the no less fateful role of the grain exchange, 'which dictates prices to the peasant so that, despite the heavy burdens and taxes, he can hardly recoup the costs of production, with the result that he is forced to sell plots of land at knock-down prices or to take on loans from Jewish banks on crippling conditions'. According to Himmler, the only salvation lay in 'at last getting to know who our real common enemy is, and in the indomitable will to take on this enemy together'; all 'those of German stock must join together in a socially aware national community with the election slogan "the common weal before self-interest" and establish a new state based on National Socialism under the banner of the swastika'.[80]

At the same time Himmler published a piece in the *Nationalsozialistische Briefe* in which he expressed very similar views: 'the monopolistic position of the artificial fertilizer concerns' allegedly bore the primary responsibility for the high production costs which, together with cheap imports, the high price of credit, and 'Jewish' speculation in land, would lead to the collapse of