

SA Chief of Staff Ernst Röhm (1934)

Abstract

Ernst Röhm (1887–1934) was a former Reichswehr officer and had been a member of the NSDAP since 1920. He had supported Hitler in the Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch and was among the Führer's closest friends. In 1924, Hitler put Röhm in charge of the SA [*Sturmabteilung* or Storm Detachment, also known as Brownshirts], which had been originally conceived solely as a security service. But as SA chief of staff Röhm pursued his own ambition of transforming the SA into a strong popular militia that would eventually replace the Reichswehr. After the Nazi takeover, Röhm called for a “second revolution” and for a socialist reconstruction of society; these demands, together with his ambitions for the SA, brought him into conflict with the party and the armed forces. Röhm and his organization were quickly isolated within the party because high officials like Göring and Himmler regarded the SA as a threat to their own spheres of power. In April 1934, Göring ordered evidence to be collected against Röhm, especially anything pertaining to the latter's well-known homosexuality. But Nazi leaders needed allegations that Röhm was planning a putsch to get rid of him permanently. Hitler used the pretext of a discussion to invite SA leaders to assemble on June 30 in Bad Wiessee, where Röhm was “taking the cure.” Alarmed by the threat of an alleged coup d'état, Göring, Himmler, and Reichswehr Minister Blomberg had agreed to use Himmler's SS against the SA, with the Reichswehr providing logistical support. On the early morning of June 30, 1934, Hitler finally gave the order for “Operation Hummingbird” to begin: Röhm and subordinate SA leaders were taken by surprise, arrested, and brought to Munich's Stadelheim prison, where many of them were shot later the same day. Röhm himself was murdered in Stadelheim on July 1. In this photo he is seen at an SA meeting in 1934; behind him is SA Gruppenführer Karl Ernst (1904–1934), who was also shot on June 30.

Source



Source: SA Chief of Staff Ernst Röhm and SA Gruppenführer Karl Ernst (behind Röhm) at an SA meeting, 1934. Unknown photographer.

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