

= Erhard Heiden =

Erhard Heiden (23 February 1901 ? c . April 1933) was an early member of the Nazi Party and the third commander of the paramilitary wing of Schutzstaffel (SS) , the Sturmabteilung (" Storm Detachment ; SA ") . He was appointed head of the SS , an elite subsection of the SA in 1927 . At that time the SS numbered less than a thousand men and found it difficult to cope under the much larger SA . Heiden was not a success in the post , and SS membership dropped significantly under his leadership . He was dismissed from his post in 1929 , officially for " family reasons " . He was arrested after the Nazis came to power in 1933 and is believed to have been executed in April , but not buried until September that same year .

= = Life = =

Erhard Heiden was born on 23 February 1901 in Weiler @-@ Simmerberg , a mostly Catholic city in Bavaria . In 1917 , he attended the NCO school in Fürstenfeldbruck . Little is known about his early life .

Following Germany 's defeat in World War I , hyperinflation , mass unemployment , poverty , crime and civil unrest plagued the country . During that time , Heiden served in a Freikorps unit . Also in 1919 , a small right @-@ wing political party known as the German Workers ' Party (DAP) was created and seated in Munich . In 1920 , it changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers ' Party (Nazi Party ; NSDAP) . It rejected the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and advocated antisemitism and anti @-@ Bolshevism .

In 1920 , Adolf Hitler , leader of the party , instructed Ernst Röhm , a war veteran and early associate , to organize an assault section to protect Nazi officials at rallies and disrupt those of their opponents . This was the Sturmabteilung (" Storm Detachment " ; SA) . Röhm took advantage of the high rate of unemployed young males and quickly expanded the organization into a paramilitary force . Heiden became an early member of the Nazi Party and the SA . In 1923 , Heiden joined a small bodyguard unit for Adolf Hitler named Stoßtrupp @-@ Hitler (" Shock Troop @-@ Hitler ") .

That same year , Hitler felt strong enough to try to seize power in Munich . Inspired by Benito Mussolini 's " March on Rome " the previous year , the Nazis aimed to first establish power in Munich and then challenge the government in Berlin . On 9 November 1923 the Stoßtrupp , along with the SA and several other paramilitary units , took part in the abortive coup d'état , resulting in the death of sixteen Nazi supporters and four police officers , an event known as the Beer Hall Putsch . After the putsch , Hitler and other Nazi leaders were incarcerated at Landsberg Prison for high treason . The Nazi Party and all associated formations , including the Stoßtrupp , were officially disbanded .

= = Career in the SS = =

After Hitler 's release from prison in December 1924 , the Nazi Party was officially refounded . In 1925 , Hitler ordered the formation of a new bodyguard unit , the Schutzkommando (" Protection Command ; SS ") . It was formed by Julius Schreck and included old Stoßtrupp members such as Emil Maurice and Heiden . That same year , the Schutzkommando was expanded and renamed the Sturmstaffel (" Storm Squadron ") , and finally the Schutzstaffel (" Protection Squadron " ; SS) . Heiden , described by William Shirer as " a former police stool @-@ pigeon of unsavory reputation " , joined the SS in 1925 and was an early advocate of separating the unit from the SA , its parent organization .

On 1 March 1927 , Joseph Berchtold transferred leadership of the SS to Heiden , who was his acting deputy . Berchtold had become disillusioned by the SA 's authority over the SS . As head of the SS , Heiden also found it difficult to function under the larger and more powerful SA . Under Heiden 's leadership a stricter code of discipline was enforced than would have been tolerated in the SA ranks . Heiden further demanded that the men under his command were not to be involved in party matters which were none of their concern . His intention was to create a small elite unit and

obtain higher quality recruits .

Except for the Munich area , the unit was unable to maintain any momentum . The membership of the SS declined from 1000 to 280 as the SS continued to struggle under the SA . As Heiden attempted to keep the small group from dissolving , Heinrich Himmler became his deputy in September 1927 . Himmler had a great enthusiasm and vision for the SS and displayed good organisational abilities which Heiden used . Himmler became the driving force within the SS and in time eclipsed Heiden .

Upon the dismissal of Heiden , Himmler assumed the position of Reichsführer @-@ SS with Hitler 's approval in January 1929 . There are differing accounts of the reason for this dismissal . The party merely announced that it was for " family reasons " . It was also suggested at the time that the dismissal was due to Heiden associating with Jews . Since 1928 , Heiden was co @-@ owner of a clothing supply business that sold uniforms to the SS . Another company in Munich supplied Heiden and his partner with the pants which were used for the SS uniforms . It was discovered that this other company was owned by a Jew . Further , it was alleged that Heiden had been making large profits on the clothing sales to the SS for uniforms . This led to Heiden having to resign as head of the SS . Historian Adrian Weale says that the dismissal was probably because he was ineffective in the job , but there also were rumors that he was a police informer . Himmler 's biographer Peter Longerich says that beyond the official announcement " we have no further clues to explain either Heiden 's dismissal or Himmler 's appointment " . Under Himmler the SS greatly expanded over time , with his ultimate aim being one to turn it into the most powerful organization in Germany .

= = Death = =

After Hitler and his party came to national power in 1933 , the SA numbered almost three million men and the SS about 52 @, @ 000 . As the Nazis had now achieved power , they began to swiftly eliminate all opposition . A death list was composed which included many Nazis who fell out of favor with Hitler and included names of men that other top Nazis wanted killed . In April 1933 Heiden was arrested and murdered on orders of Himmler and Heydrich by members of the Sicherheitsdienst (" Security Service " ; SD) , the intelligence and counterespionage department of the SS . His corpse was found in September 1933 and he was buried on 15 September 1933 .

= = = Explanatory notes = = =