

SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich - Nazi Leader



by H.H. Norden

Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich was born on 7th March 1904 in Halle an der Saale. He was the son of Richard Bruno Heydrich, a composer and Elisabeth Anna Amalia Krantz. The father was at the time of his birth director of a music school. Reinhard visited the Reform-Realgymnasium at the Hedwigstraße in Halle an der Saale. Already as a scholar he was very educated. He studied for instance the book "Histoire de la civilisation" by the French author Charles Seignobos and discussed the contents with his friend Erich Schultze.

After having finished his grammar-school Reinhard Heydrich joined the Reichsmarine as a sea-cadet in Kiel-Holtenau. The influence of the famous "Seeteufel" Graf Luckner, who stayed frequently as a guest at the residence of the Heydrich-family, certainly played a part with regard to Heydrich's choice for a career with the navy. He started his service with the Crew 22. After a training-period of four and a half years he was promoted Leutnant zur See on 1st October 1926 and then educated for a liaison officer. In 1928 he became Oberleutnant zur See. According to the later vice-admiral Kleikamp Heydrich was a man who as far as talent, knowledge and skillfulness were concerned, stood far above the average. Nothing seemed to obstruct a successful career with the navy. Destiny however had decreed otherwise. On 6th December 1930 Oberleutnant Heydrich met with the eighteen years old Lina von Osten. She came from the island Fehmarn in the Ostsee where her father was a school-master. On Boxing-day 1930 the couple became engaged. Heydrich sent his engagement-card also to a former girlfriend who was the daughter of an influential industrialist. The latter demanded from Heydrich that he would marry his daughter who wished to be Heydrich's fiancée herself. When he refused this the father lodged a complaint through admiral Raeder resulting in Heydrich being summoned before a navy court of honor. Giving effect to a recommendation of this court of honour admiral Raeder decided that Oberleutnant zur See Reinhard Heydrich had to be dismissed from the navy. It is remarkable that one has never discovered a written piece of evidence relating to the described court of honor-procedure. Heydrich was convinced that he was dismissed from the navy because of political reasons.

Through the later SS-Obergruppenführer Karl von Eberstein Heydrich made contact with Heinrich Himmler who had become Reichsführer. SS in January 1929. Himmler was just in

search of a capable man to build up an intelligence service for the SS. He gave Heydrich twenty minutes time to put on paper how he would take up such a task. Heydrich wrote down his ideas, sketched a suitable organization-structure and submitted the result to the Reichsführer who was very impressed and immediately decided to admit the former naval officer. Heydrich who already had become a member of the NSDAP on 1st June 1931, became a member of the SS in Hamburg on 14th July 1931. He now was an SS-Sturmmann with the SS-number 10120. On 26th December 1931 the marriage between Reinhard Heydrich and Lina von Osten took place in the village-church of Grossenbrode.

Heydrich began now with building up an intelligence department. This was in the early days known as "Abteilung Ic". End 1931 two rooms were rented for the "SS-Ic" on the fourth floor of the Türkenstraße 25 in Munich. This was the residence of party member Viktoria Edrich who had been hiding the "Blutfahne" in her wardrobe during the period that the SA and the SS were banned. In these times Heydrich was an SS-Hauptsturmführer. On 25th December 1931 he became SS-Sturmbannführer and on 29th July 1932 SS-Standartenführer und Chef des Sicherheitsdienstes des Reichsführers-SS. The name of the service was now Sicherheitsdienst (SD). In September 1932 the SD had its seat at a small villa in the Zuccalistraße 4 in Munich; Heydrich and his wife lived at the same address. Heydrich as leader of the Sicherheitsdienst was called "C"; his office "Zentrale Dienststelle des SD". In June 1933 Heydrich's first son Klaus was born. The year of the assumption of power, 1933, also brought the rank of SS-Brigadeführer. The SD now had its seat at the Wittelsbacherpalace in the Briennerstraße in Munich. On 9th November 1933 the SD became an independent SS-office. During the months November and December 1934 the SD moved to the Wilhelmstraße 102 in Berlin. On 17th June 1936 Reinhard Heydrich became Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD. On 27th September 1939 the Reichssicherheitshauptamt was formed with Heydrich as chief. In 1940 he was elected Präsident der Internationalen Kriminalpolizeilichen Kommission.

At the beginning of the German campaign in the West Heydrich passed his fighter pilot examination. During the campaign in Norway he flew from Stavanger several reconnaissance flights over England and Scotland with a Me 110. For his heroic way of acting he was awarded with the bronzene Frontflugspange and the Eiserne Kreuz II. Klasse. In the middle of May 1940 he was back in Berlin. On 1st January 1940 he became Reichsleiter des Fachamtes Fechten im NS-Reichsbund für Leibesübungen. During the campaign in Russia Heydrich served once more as a fighter pilot in southern Russia and was awarded with the silberne Frontflugspange and the Eiserne Kreuz I. Klasse,

On 23rd September 1941 Hitler relieved the Reichsprotektor für Böhmen und Mähren, Constantin von Neurath, of his office and appointed as from 27th September 1941 Reinhard Heydrich as acting Reichsprotektor. At the same time he was promoted SS-Obergruppenführer. The Führer relied on Heydrich to make the government of the protectorate function in close harmony with the Reich. Karl Hermann Frank, the Staatssekretär, who descended from the Sudetenland should assist him.

In Prague Heydrich assumed command during an official ceremony at Hradcany Castle. With his wife and children he moved into the castle of Jungfern-Breschan which is situated at about twenty kilometers distance from Prague. In contradiction to the false information which is spread nowadays the measures taken by Heydrich were well received in the protectorate. Two hundred thousand pairs of shoes were distributed free and the tobacco rations for the workers were increased substantially. Heydrich also had plans to rebuild Prague as a German city and to link it through the German Autobahn system with Berlin.

Besides the position of Reichsprotektor Heydrich did retain the office of chief of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt. It was in this capacity that on 20th January 1942 he presided at a conference which took place in the villa Am Großen Wannsee 56/58 in Berlin. The

Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring had authorized Heydrich to make preparations with regard to the solution of the Jewish question. In contrast with the allegations of post-war publicists the objective of the national-socialist Germany was not the physical extermination of the Jewish people but to bring to an end the Jewish influence which was experienced as a burden in all parts of the national community. As early as in the thirties German government departments had taken the initiative to stimulate – in cooperation with Jewish organizations – the emigration of Jewish citizens to Palestine. As examples of this policy I can mention the "Haavara-agreement" and the "Rublee-Wohlthat-agreement". For a detailed explanation of the above-mentioned terms I can recommend the book "Auswanderung der Juden aus dem Dritten Reich" by Ingrid Weckert. Particularly the SS believed in a policy which pursued the emigration of the Jews. It was due only to the war – which Germany did not cause – that the emigration started to decrease. In the course of the war the decision was taken to evacuate the Jews to labor settlements in the East. In this context one should remember that already in March 1933 World Jewry had declared war on Germany. The taking of measures to evacuate the Jews from Europe has been the subject of the Wannsee-conference.

Meanwhile Eduard Benesch who considered himself as president in exile had evolved plans to have Reichsprotektor Heydrich assassinated. Two non-commissioned officers of the former Czechoslovakian army, Jan Kubis and Josef Gabčic, were chosen for this mission. Together with some others they were parachuted into the protectorate on 28th December 1941. During the following months they went into hiding and made inquiries regarding Heydrich's lifestyle and movements. In connection with the increase of activities of terrorist groups, stimulated and financed by London, particularly in Belgium and France Heydrich – who had with his measures restored order in the protectorate – would be appointed to Chef der Zivilverwaltung for Belgium and North-France and to Protektor of Vichy-France. On 27th May 1942 he would leave by plane to Berlin for a meeting with the Führer. By that time the assassins had chosen a hairpin turn in the Prague suburb of Holeschowitz as the place most suited for the assassination since there Heydrich's car had to reduce speed. On 27th May 1942 Heydrich had left Jungfernbreschan at 10.00 h.; at 10.30 h. he arrived at the spot where the assassins were waiting. He was driven by SS-Oberscharführer Klein in his dark-green open Mercedes Benz. One of the murderers, Gabčic, aimed a stengun at Heydrich and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. The weapon malfunctioned and failed to fire. Heydrich now drew his pistol and fired at Gabčic. At that time the second murderer, Kubis, threw a bomb which exploded close to the right rear-wheel of the Mercedes. Heydrich was seriously injured by fragments but fired nevertheless several shots at Kubis. Then he collapsed. A Czech lady hastened to Heydrich's assistance and so he was brought to the Bulovka-Hospital where both Czech- as German surgeons tried to save his life during more than one week. Unfortunately it was of no use: in the morning of 4th June 1942 Reinhard Heydrich died.

The coffin with the mortal remains of the Reichsprotektor lay in state, covered with a swastika flag, in the court-yard of Hradcany Castle. An honor guard of Wehrmacht- and SS-officers stood watch. In the afternoon of 7th June 1942 the coffin was brought by train from Prague to Berlin to be lain in state at the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Prinz Albrecht Straße 8, and later – on 9th June 1942 – in the Mosaic Hall of the new Reichschancellery. During the funeral ceremony the Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler delivered an oration in which he pointed out the great importance of Reinhard Heydrich. The last speaker was Adolf Hitler who called him one of the best national-socialists, one of the strongest defenders of the idea of the German Reich and one of the greatest adversaries of all enemies of the Reich. The Führer awarded the fallen hero the Verwundetenabzeichen in Gold and the oberste Stufe des Deutschen Ordens. The coffin with Heydrich's body was placed on a gun-carriage towed by six black horses and transported from the Wilhelmstraße to the Invaliden-cemetery. There the great soldier Reinhard Heydrich was laid to his last rest.