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Reinhard Heydrich



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"Heydrich" redirects here. For other people with the surname, see [Heydrich \(surname\)](#).

Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich (German: [ˈʁaɪnhaʁt ˈtʁɪstʌn ˈɔʏçn̩ ˈhaɪdʁɪç] (listen)) (7 March 1904 – 4 June 1942) was a high-ranking German [Nazi](#) official during [World War II](#), and one of the main architects of [the Holocaust](#). He was *SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei* as well as chief of the [Reich Main Security Office](#) (including the [Gestapo](#), [Kripo](#), and [SD](#)). He was also *Stellvertretender Reichsprotektor* (Deputy/Acting Reich-Protector) of [Bohemia and Moravia](#), in what is now the [Czech Republic](#). Heydrich served as president of the International Criminal Police Commission (ICPC; later known as [Interpol](#)) and chaired the January 1942 [Wannsee Conference](#), which formalised plans for the [Final Solution](#) to the [Jewish Question](#)—the deportation and [genocide](#) of all

Reinhard Heydrich





Jews in German-occupied Europe.

Many historians regard him as the darkest figure within the Nazi elite; **Adolf Hitler** described him as "the man with the iron heart".^[4] He was the founding head of the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD), an intelligence organisation charged with seeking out and neutralising resistance to the **Nazi Party** via arrests, deportations, and murders. He helped organise **Kristallnacht**, a series of co-ordinated attacks against Jews throughout **Nazi Germany** and parts of **Austria** on 9–10 November 1938. The attacks, carried out by **SA stormtroopers** and civilians, presaged the Holocaust. Upon his arrival in **Prague**, Heydrich sought to eliminate opposition to the Nazi occupation by suppressing **Czech culture** and deporting and executing members of the **Czech resistance**. He was directly responsible for the **Einsatzgruppen**, the special task forces which travelled in the wake of the German armies and murdered over one million people, including Jews, by mass shooting.

Heydrich was attacked in Prague on 27 May 1942 by a British-trained team of Czech and Slovak soldiers who had been sent by the **Czechoslovak government-in-exile** to kill him in **Operation Anthropoid**. He died from his injuries a week later. Intelligence falsely

Heydrich as an *SS-Gruppenführer* in 1940

Deputy Protector of Bohemia and Moravia (acting Protector)

In office

29 September 1941 – 4 June 1942

Appointed by **Adolf Hitler**

Preceded by **Konstantin von Neurath**
(Protector until 24 August 1943)

Succeeded by **Kurt Daluege**
(Acting Protector)

Director of the Reich Main Security Office

In office

27 September 1939 – 4 June 1942

Appointed by **Heinrich Himmler**

Preceded by *Post created*

Succeeded by Heinrich Himmler (acting)

President of the ICPC (now known as Interpol)

In office

24 August 1940 – 4 June 1942

Preceded by **Otto Steinhäusl**

Succeeded by **Arthur Nebe**

Director of the Gestapo

In office

22 April 1934 – 27 September 1939

Appointed by Heinrich Himmler

Ελληνικά

Ido

Bahasa Indonesia

Íslenska

Italiano

עברית

ქართული

Latina

Latviešu

Lietuvių

Magyar

Bahasa Melayu

Nederlands

日本語

Norsk bokmål

Norsk nynorsk

Occitan

★ Polski

Português

Română

★ Русский

Simple English

Slovenčina

Slovenščina

★ Српски / srpski

Srpskohrvatski /
српскохрватски

Suomi

★ Svenska

Türkçe

linked the assassins to the villages of [Lidice](#) and [Ležáky](#). Lidice was razed to the ground; all men and boys over the age of 16 were shot, and all but a handful of its women and children were deported and killed in [Nazi concentration camps](#).

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Appointed by [Heinrich Himmler](#)

Preceded by [Rudolf Diels](#)

Succeeded by [Heinrich Müller](#)

Personal details

Born [Reinhard Tristan Eugen Heydrich](#)
7 March 1904
[Halle an der Saale, German Empire](#)

Died 4 June 1942 (aged 38)
[Prague-Libeň, Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia](#)
(now [Prague, Czech Republic](#))

Political party [National Socialist German Workers Party \(NSDAP\)](#)

Spouse(s) [Lina von Osten](#) (m. 1931; his death 1942)

Relations [Heinz Heydrich](#) (brother)

Children 4

Signature



Nickname(s) [The Hangman](#)^[1]
[The Butcher of Prague](#)^[2]
[The Blond Beast](#)^[2]
[Himmler's Evil Genius](#)^[2]

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Early life [\[edit \]](#)

Heydrich^[5] was born in 1904 in [Halle an der Saale](#) to composer and opera singer [Richard Bruno Heydrich](#) and his wife Elisabeth Anna Maria Amalia Krantz. His mother was Roman Catholic.^[6] His two forenames were patriotic musical tributes: "Reinhard" referred to the tragic hero from his father's opera *Amen*, and "Tristan" stems from [Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*](#). Heydrich's third name, "Eugen", was his late maternal grandfather's forename (Professor Eugen Krantz had been the director of the [Dresden Royal Conservatory](#)).^[7]

Heydrich was born into a family of social standing and substantial financial means. Music was a part of Heydrich's everyday life; his father founded the Halle Conservatory of Music, Theatre and Teaching and his mother taught piano there.^[8] Heydrich developed a passion for the violin and carried that interest into adulthood; he impressed listeners with his musical

Young Evil God of Death^[3]

Military career

Allegiance	 Weimar Republic (1922–1931)  Nazi Germany (1931–1942)
Service/branch	 Reichsmarine  Schutzstaffel  Luftwaffe
Years of service	1922–1942
Rank	<i>Oberleutnant zur See</i> (Reichsmarine) Major of the Reserve (Luftwaffe)  SS- <i>Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei</i>
Commands held	Reich Main Security Office
Battles/wars	Second World War
Awards	German Order (posthumous) Blood Order (posthumous) War Merit Cross 1st Class with Swords (posthumous) Wound Badge in Gold (posthumous)

talent.^[9]

His father was a [German nationalist](#) who instilled patriotic ideas in his three children, but was not affiliated with any political party until after World War I.^[10] The Heydrich household was strict. As a youth, he engaged his younger brother, [Heinz](#), in mock [fencing](#) duels. Heydrich was very intelligent and excelled in his schoolwork—especially in science—at the "Reformgymnasium".^[11] A talented athlete, he became an expert swimmer and fencer.^[9] He was shy, insecure, and was frequently bullied for his high-pitched voice and rumoured [Jewish](#) ancestry.^[12] The latter claim earned him the nickname "Moses Handel".^[13]

In 1918, World War I ended with Germany's defeat. In late February 1919, civil unrest—including strikes and clashes between communist and anti-communist groups—took place in Heydrich's home town of Halle. Under Defence Minister [Gustav Noske](#)'s directives, a right-wing paramilitary unit was formed and ordered to "recapture" Halle.^[14] Heydrich, then 15 years old, joined Maercker's Volunteer Rifles (the first [Freikorps](#) unit). When the skirmishes ended, Heydrich was part of the force assigned to protect private property.^[15] Little is known about his role, but the events left a strong impression; it was a "political awakening" for him.^[15] He joined the [Deutschvölkischer Schutz und Trutzbund](#) (National German Protection and Shelter League), an

(posthumous)
[Iron Cross](#) First Class (1941)
[Luftwaffe Pilot's Badge](#)
[Combat Clasp for Reconnaissance](#) in Silver (1941)
[Nazi Party Long Service Award](#) Third Class (10 Years Service)
[Police Long Service Award](#) Second Class (18 Years Service)
[SS-Honour Ring](#)
[Honour Sword of the Reichsführers-SS](#)
[Honour Chevron for the Old Guard](#)
[SS Long Service Award](#) (12 Years Service)
Grand Officer of the [Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus](#) of Italy (1937)
Knight Grand Cross of the [Order of the Crown of Italy](#) (1938)

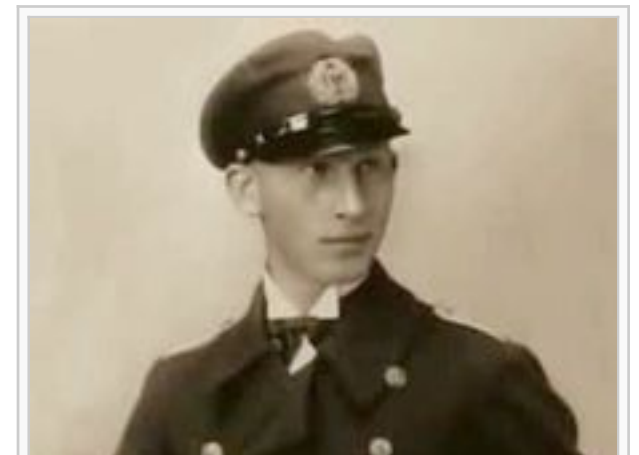
[anti-Semitic](#) organisation.^[16]

As a result of the conditions of the [Treaty of Versailles](#), [hyperinflation](#) spread across Germany and many lost their life savings. Halle was not spared. By 1921, few townspeople there could afford a musical education at Bruno Heydrich's conservatory. This led to a financial crisis for the Heydrich family.^[17]

Naval career [\[edit \]](#)

In 1922 Heydrich joined the German Navy (*Reichsmarine*), taking advantage of the security, structure, and pension it offered. He became a naval cadet at [Kiel](#), Germany's primary naval base. On 1 April 1924 he was promoted to senior midshipman (*Oberfähnrich zur See*) and sent to officer training at the [Naval Academy Mürwik](#).^[18] In 1926 he advanced to the rank of ensign (*Leutnant zur See*) and was assigned as a signals officer on the battleship *Schleswig-Holstein*, the flagship of Germany's North Sea Fleet. With the promotion came greater recognition. He received good evaluations from his superiors and had few problems with other crewmen. He was promoted on 1 July 1928 to the rank of sub-lieutenant (*Oberleutnant zur See*). The increased rank fuelled his ambition and arrogance.^[19]

Heydrich became notorious for his countless affairs. In December 1930 he attended a rowing-club ball and met [Lina von Osten](#). They became romantically involved and soon announced their engagement. Lina was already a Nazi Party follower; she had attended her first rally in 1929.^[20] In 1931 Heydrich was charged with "conduct unbecoming to an officer and gentleman" for breaking an engagement promise to a woman he had known for six



months before the von Osten engagement.^[21] Admiral [Erich Raeder](#) dismissed Heydrich from the navy that April. The dismissal devastated Heydrich, who found himself without career prospects.^[22] He kept the engagement and married Lina in December 1931.^[23]



Career in the SS and military [\[edit \]](#)

In 1931, [Heinrich Himmler](#) began setting up a [counterintelligence](#) division of the SS. Acting on the advice of his associate [Karl von Eberstein](#), who was von Osten's friend, Himmler agreed to interview Heydrich, but cancelled their appointment at the last minute.^[24] Lina ignored this message, packed Heydrich's suitcase, and sent him to Munich. Eberstein met Heydrich at the train station and took him to see Himmler.^[24] Himmler asked Heydrich to convey his ideas for developing an SS intelligence service. Himmler was so impressed that he hired Heydrich immediately.^{[25][26]} Although the starting salary of 180 *Reichsmarks* (the equivalent of 40 USD) was low, Heydrich decided to take the job because Lina's family supported the Nazi movement, and the quasi-military and revolutionary nature of the post appealed to him.^[27] At first he had to share an office and typewriter with a colleague, but by 1932 Heydrich was earning 290 *Reichsmarks* a month, a salary he described as "comfortable".^[28] As his power and influence grew throughout the 1930s, his salary grew commensurately; by 1938 his income increased to 17,371.53 *Reichsmarks* annually (the equivalent of 78,000 USD).^[29] His NSDAP number was 544,916 and his SS number was 10,120.^{[30][a]} Heydrich later received a [Totenkopfring](#) from Himmler for his service.^[32]

On 1 August 1931 Heydrich began his job as chief of the new 'Ic Service' (intelligence service).^[26] He set up office at the [Brown House](#), the Nazi Party headquarters in Munich. By October he had created a network of spies and informers for intelligence-gathering purposes and to obtain information to be used as [blackmail](#) to further political aims.^[33] Information on thousands of people

was recorded on index cards and stored at the Brown House.^[34] To mark the occasion of Heydrich's December wedding, Himmler promoted him to the rank of SS-*Sturmbannführer* (major).^[35]

In 1932 Heydrich's enemies began to spread rumours of his alleged Jewish ancestry.^[36] [Wilhelm Canaris](#) said he had obtained photocopies proving Heydrich's Jewish ancestry, but these photocopies never surfaced.^[37] Nazi Gauleiter [Rudolf Jordan](#) also claimed that Heydrich was not a pure Aryan.^[36] Within the Nazi organisation such innuendo could be damning, even for the head of the Reich's counterintelligence service. Gregor Strasser passed the allegations on to the Nazi Party's racial expert Dr. [Achim Gercke](#) who investigated Heydrich's genealogy.^[36] Gercke reported that Heydrich was "... of German origin and free from any coloured and Jewish blood".^[38] He insisted that the rumours were baseless.^[36] Even with this report, Heydrich privately engaged SD member Ernst Hoffman to further investigate and dispel the rumours.^[36]

Gestapo and SD [\[edit \]](#)

In mid-1932, Himmler appointed Heydrich chief of the renamed security service—the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD).^[26] Heydrich's counterintelligence service grew into an effective machine of terror and intimidation. With Hitler striving for absolute power in Germany, Himmler and Heydrich wished to control the political police forces of all 17 German states. They began with [Bavaria](#). In 1933, Heydrich gathered some of his men from the SD and together they stormed police headquarters in Munich and took over the police using intimidation tactics. Himmler became the Munich police chief and Heydrich became the commander of Department IV, the



[Gestapo](#) headquarters on [Prinz-Albrecht-Straße](#) in Berlin, 1933

political police.^[39]

In 1933, Hitler became [Chancellor of Germany](#), and through a series of decrees^[40] became Germany's *Führer und Reichskanzler* (leader and chancellor).^[41] The first [concentration camps](#), which were originally intended to house political opponents, were established in early 1933. By year's end there were over fifty camps.^[42]

[Hermann Göring](#) founded the [Gestapo](#) in 1933 as a [Prussian](#) police force. When Göring transferred full authority over the Gestapo to Himmler in April 1934, it immediately became an instrument of terror under the SS's purview.^[43] Himmler named Heydrich to head the Gestapo on 22 April 1934.^[44] On 9 June 1934, [Rudolph Hess](#) declared the SD the official Nazi intelligence service.^[45]

Crushing the SA [\[edit \]](#)

Beginning in April 1934, and at Hitler's request, Heydrich and Himmler began building a dossier on [Sturmabteilung](#) (SA) leader [Ernst Röhm](#) in an effort to remove him as a rival for party leadership. At this point, the SS was still part of the SA, the early Nazi paramilitary organisation which now numbered over 3 million men.^[46] At Hitler's direction, Heydrich, Himmler, Göring, and [Viktor Lutze](#) drew up lists of those who should be liquidated, starting with seven top SA officials and including many more. On 30 June 1934 the SS and Gestapo acted in coordinated mass arrests that continued for two days. Röhm was shot without trial, along with the leadership of the SA.^[47] The purge became known as the [Night of the Long Knives](#). Up to 200 people were killed in the action. Lutze was appointed SA's new head and it was converted into a sports and training organisation.^[48]



With the SA out of the way, Heydrich began building the Gestapo into an instrument of fear. He improved his index-



SS-Brigadeführer Heydrich, head of the Bavarian police and SD, in Munich, 1934

card system, creating categories of offenders with colour-coded cards.^[49] The Gestapo had the authority to arrest citizens on the suspicion that they might commit a crime, and the definition of a crime was at their discretion. The Gestapo Law, passed in 1936, gave police the right to act extra-legally. This led to the sweeping use of *Schutzhaft*—"protective custody", a euphemism for the power to imprison people without judicial proceedings.^[50] The courts were not allowed to investigate or interfere. The Gestapo was considered to be acting legally as long as it

was carrying out the leadership's will. People were arrested arbitrarily, sent to concentration camps, or killed.^[42]

Himmler began developing the notion of a **Germanic religion** and wanted SS members to leave the church. In early 1936, Heydrich left the Catholic Church. His wife, Lina, had already done so the year before. Heydrich not only felt he could no longer be a member, but came to consider the church's political power and influence a danger to the state.^[51]

Consolidating the police forces [\[edit \]](#)

On 17 June 1936 all police forces throughout Germany were united, following Hitler's appointment of Himmler as Chief of German Police. With this appointment by the Führer, Himmler and his deputy, Heydrich, became two of the most powerful men in the internal administration of Germany.^[52] Himmler immediately reorganised the police into two groups: the *Ordnungspolizei* (Order Police; Orpo), consisting of both the national uniformed police and



the municipal police, and the *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security Police; SiPo), consisting of the *Geheime StaatsPolizei* (Secret State Police; Gestapo) and *Kriminalpolizei* (Criminal Police; Kripo).^[53] At that point, Heydrich was head of the SiPo and SD. [Heinrich Müller](#) was the Gestapo's operations chief.^[54]

Heydrich was assigned to help organise the [1936 Summer Olympics](#) in Berlin. The games were used to promote the [propaganda aims](#) of the Nazi regime. Goodwill ambassadors were sent to countries that were considering a boycott. Anti-Jewish violence was forbidden for the duration, and news stands were required to stop displaying copies of *Der Stürmer*.^{[55][56]} For his part in the games' success, Heydrich was awarded the *Deutsches Olympiamehrenzeichen* or German [Olympic Games Decoration](#) (First Class).^[32]

In January 1937 Heydrich directed the SD to secretly begin collecting and analysing public opinion and report back their findings.^[57] He then had the Gestapo carry out house searches, arrests, and interrogations, thus in effect exercising control over public opinion.^[58] In February 1938 when the Austrian Chancellor [Kurt Schuschnigg](#) resisted Hitler's proposed merger with Germany, Heydrich intensified the pressure on Austria by organising Nazi demonstrations and distributing propaganda in Vienna stressing the common Germanic blood of the two countries.^[59] In the [Anschluss](#) on 12 March, Hitler declared the unification of Austria with Nazi Germany.^[60]

In mid-1939 Heydrich created the [Stiftung Nordhav](#) Foundation to obtain real estate for the SS and Security Police to use as guest houses and vacation spots.^[61] The Wannsee Villa, which the Stiftung Nordhav acquired in November 1940,^[62] was the site of the [Wannsee Conference](#) (20 January 1942). At the conference, senior Nazi officials formalised plans to deport and exterminate all Jews in German-occupied territory and those countries not yet conquered.^[63] This action was to be coordinated among the representatives from the Nazi state agencies present at the meeting.^[64]



[Seyß-Inquart, Adolf Hitler,](#)

Heinrich Himmler, and
Heydrich in Vienna, March
1938

On 27 September 1939 the SD and SiPo (made up of the Gestapo and the Kripo) were folded into the new Reich Main Security Office or [SS-Reichssicherheitshauptamt](#) (RSHA), which was placed under Heydrich's control.^[65] The title of "Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD" (Chief of Security Police and SD) or CSSD was conferred on Heydrich on 1 October.^[66] Heydrich became the president of the ICPC (later known as [Interpol](#)) on 24 August 1940,^[67] and its headquarters were transferred to Berlin. He was promoted to *SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei* on 24 September 1941.^[30]

Red Army purges [\[edit \]](#)

In 1936, Heydrich learned that a top-ranking Soviet officer was plotting to overthrow [Joseph Stalin](#). Sensing an opportunity to strike a blow at both the Soviet Army and [Admiral Canaris](#) of Germany's [Abwehr](#), Heydrich decided that the Russian officers should be "unmasked".^[68] He discussed the matter with Himmler and both in turn brought it to Hitler's attention. But the "information" Heydrich had received was actually misinformation planted by Stalin himself in an attempt to legitimise his planned purges of the [Red Army](#)'s high command. Stalin ordered one of his best [NKVD](#) agents, General [Nikolai Skoblin](#), to pass Heydrich false information suggesting that Marshal [Mikhail Tukhachevsky](#) and other Soviet generals were plotting against Stalin. Hitler approved Heydrich's plan to act on the information immediately.^[69] Heydrich's SD forged documents and letters implicated Tukhachevsky and other Red Army commanders. The material was delivered to the NKVD.^[68] The [Great Purge](#) of the Red Army followed on Stalin's orders. While Heydrich believed they had successfully deluded Stalin into executing or dismissing 35,000 of his officer corps, the importance of Heydrich's part is a matter of speculation and conjecture.^[70] Soviet military prosecutors did not use the forged documents against the generals in their secret trial; they instead relied on false confessions extorted or beaten out of the defendants.^[71]

Night-and-Fog decree [edit]



Commemorative plaque of the French victims of the Night-and-Fog Decree at [Hinzert concentration camp](#)

By late 1940, German armies had swept through most of Western Europe. The following year, Heydrich's SD was given responsibility for carrying out the *Nacht und Nebel* (Night-and-Fog) decree.^[72] According to the decree, "persons endangering German security" were to be arrested in a maximally discreet way: "under the cover of night and fog". People disappeared without a trace and none told of their whereabouts or fate.^[73] For each prisoner, the SD had to fill in a [questionnaire](#) that listed personal information, country of origin, and the details of

their crimes against the Reich. This questionnaire was placed in an envelope inscribed with a seal reading "Nacht und Nebel" and submitted to the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA). In the [WVHA](#) "Central Inmate File", as in many camp files, these prisoners would be given a special "covert prisoner" code, as opposed to the code for POW, Felon, Jew, Gypsy, etc.^[b] The decree remained in effect after Heydrich's death. The exact number of people who vanished under it has never been positively established, but it is estimated to be 7,000.^[74]

Acting Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia [edit]

Further information: [Czech resistance to Nazi occupation](#)

On 27 September 1941, Heydrich was appointed Deputy Reich Protector of the [Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia](#) (the part of [Czechoslovakia](#) incorporated into the Reich on 15 March 1939) and assumed control of the territory. The Reich Protector, [Konstantin von Neurath](#), remained the territory's titular head, but



was sent on "leave" because Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich felt his "soft approach" to the [Czechs](#) had promoted anti-German sentiment and encouraged anti-German resistance via strikes and sabotage.^[75] Upon his appointment, Heydrich told his aides: "We will Germanize the Czech vermin."^[76]

Heydrich came to [Prague](#) to enforce policy, fight resistance to the Nazi regime, and keep up production quotas of Czech motors and arms that were "extremely important to the German war effort".^[75]

He viewed the area as a bulwark of Germanism and condemned the Czech resistance's "stabs in the back". To realise his goals

Heydrich demanded racial classification of those who could and

could not be [Germanized](#). He explained, "Making this Czech garbage into Germans must give way to methods based on racist thought."^[77] Heydrich started his rule by terrorising the population: 92

people were executed within three days of his arrival in Prague. Their names appeared on posters throughout the occupied region.^[78] Almost all avenues by which Czechs could express the Czech

culture in public were closed.^[77] According to Heydrich's estimate, between 4,000 and 5,000

people were arrested by February 1942. Those who were not executed were sent to [Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp](#), where only four per cent of Czech prisoners survived the war.^[78] In

March 1942, further sweeps against Czech cultural and patriotic organisations, military, and intelligentsia resulted in the practical paralysis of Czech resistance. Although small disorganised

cells of [Central Leadership of Home Resistance \(Ústřední vedení odboje domácího, ÚVOD\)](#)

survived, only the communist resistance was able to function in a coordinated manner (although it also suffered arrests).^[78] The terror also served to paralyse resistance in society, with public and

widespread reprisals against any action resisting the German rule.^[78] Heydrich's brutal policies during that time quickly earned him the nickname "the Butcher of Prague".^[79]



Heydrich (left) with [Karl Hermann Frank](#) at [Prague Castle](#) in 1941

As Acting Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, Heydrich applied [carrot-and-stick](#) methods.^[80] Labour was reorganised on the basis of the [German Labour Front](#). Heydrich used equipment confiscated from the Czech organisation [Sokol](#) to organise events for workers.^[81] Food rations and free shoes were distributed, pensions were increased, and (for a time) free Saturdays were introduced.

[Unemployment insurance](#) was established for the first time.^[80] The [black market](#) was suppressed. Those associated with it or the resistance movement were tortured or executed. Heydrich labelled them "economic criminals" and "enemies of the people", which helped gain him support. Conditions in Prague and the rest of the Czech lands were relatively peaceful under Heydrich, and industrial output increased.^[80] Still, those measures could not hide shortages and increasing inflation; reports of growing discontent multiplied.^[81]

Despite public displays of goodwill towards the populace, privately Heydrich left no illusions about his eventual goal: "This entire area will one day be definitely German, and the Czechs have nothing to expect here." Eventually up to two-thirds of the populace were to be either [removed to regions of Russia](#) or exterminated after Nazi Germany won the war. Bohemia and Moravia faced annexation directly into the German Reich.^[82]

The Czech workforce was exploited as Nazi-conscripted labour.^[81] More than 100,000 workers were removed from "unsuitable" jobs and conscripted by the Ministry of Labour. By December 1941, Czechs could be called to work anywhere within the Reich. Between April and November 1942, 79,000 Czech workers were taken in this manner for work within Nazi Germany. Also, in February 1942, the work day was increased from eight to twelve hours.^[83]

Heydrich was, for all intents and purposes, military dictator of Bohemia and Moravia. His changes

Excerpt from a speech by Reinhard Heydrich in 1941



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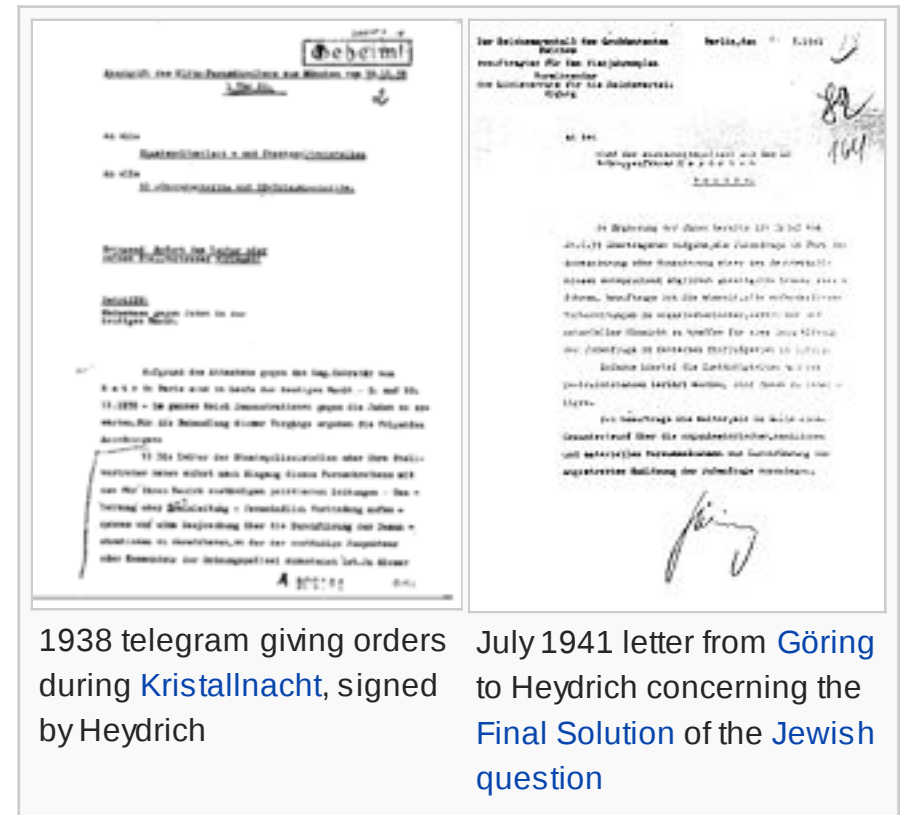
Problems playing this file? See [media help](#).

to the government's structure left President [Emil Hacha](#) and his cabinet virtually powerless. He often drove alone in a car with an open roof—a show of his confidence in the occupation forces and in his government's effectiveness.^[84]

Role in the Holocaust [\[edit \]](#)

Historians regard Heydrich as the most fearsome member of the Nazi elite.^{[85][86][87]} Hitler called him "the man with the iron heart".^[4] He was one of the main architects of the [Holocaust](#) during the early war years, answering only to, and taking orders from, Hitler, Göring, and Himmler in all matters pertaining to the deportation, imprisonment, and extermination of Jews.

Heydrich was one of the organisers of [Kristallnacht](#), a [pogrom](#) against Jews throughout Germany on the night of 9–10 November 1938. Heydrich sent a telegram that night to various SD and Gestapo offices, helping to co-ordinate the pogrom with the SS, SD, Gestapo, uniformed police (Orpo), SA, Nazi party officials, and even the fire departments. It talks about permitting arson and destroying Jewish businesses and synagogues, and orders the confiscation of all "archival material" out of Jewish community centres and synagogues. The telegram ordered that "as many Jews – particularly affluent Jews – are to be arrested in all districts as can be accommodated in existing



1938 telegram giving orders during [Kristallnacht](#), signed by Heydrich

July 1941 letter from [Göring](#) to Heydrich concerning the [Final Solution](#) of the [Jewish question](#)

detention facilities ... Immediately after the arrests have been carried out, the appropriate concentration camps should be contacted to place the Jews into camps as quickly as possible."^{[88][89]} Twenty thousand Jews were sent to concentration camps in the days immediately following;^[90] historians consider Kristallnacht the beginning of the Holocaust.^[91]

When Hitler asked for a [pretext](#) for the [invasion of Poland](#) in 1939, Himmler, Heydrich, and Heinrich Müller masterminded a [false flag](#) plan code-named [Operation Himmler](#). It involved a fake attack on the German radio station at [Gleiwitz](#) on 31 August 1939. Heydrich masterminded the plan and toured the site, which was about four miles from the Polish border. Wearing Polish uniforms, 150 German troops carried out several attacks along the border. Hitler used the ruse as an excuse to launch his invasion.^{[92][93]}

On Himmler's instructions, Heydrich formed the [Einsatzgruppen](#) (task forces) to travel in the wake of the German armies at the start of World War II.^[94] On 21 September 1939, Heydrich sent out a teleprinter message on the "Jewish question in the occupied territory" to the chiefs of all Einsatzgruppen with instructions to round up Jewish people for placement into ghettos, called for the formation of [Judenräte](#) (Jewish councils), ordered a census, and promoted [Aryanization](#) plans for Jewish-owned businesses and farms, among other measures.^[c] The Einsatzgruppen followed the army into Poland to implement the plans. Later, in the Soviet Union, they were charged with rounding up and killing Jews via firing squad and gas vans. By the end of the war, the Einsatzgruppen had murdered over one million people, including over 700,000 in Russia alone.^[95] Heydrich, however, moved to ensure the safety and well-being of certain Jews, such as Paul Sommer, the former German champion fencer he knew from his pre-SS days. He also protected the Polish Olympic fencing team that competed at the 1936 Summer Olympics.^[96]

On 29 November 1939, Heydrich issued a cable about the "Evacuation of New Eastern Provinces", detailing the deportation of people by railway to concentration camps

"... the planned total measures are to be kept strictly secret ... the first prerequisite for the final aim

deportation of people by railway to concentration camps, and giving guidance surrounding the December 1939 census, which would be the basis on which those deportations were performed.^[97] In May 1941 Heydrich drew up regulations with [Quartermaster general Eduard Wagner](#) for the upcoming [invasion of the Soviet Union](#), which ensured that the Einsatzgruppen and army would co-operate in murdering Soviet Jews.^[98]

("Endziel") is the concentration of the Jews from the countryside into the larger cities." – Heydrich, September 1939^[c]

"By order of the [Reichsführer-SS](#), residency without possession of an identification card is punishable by death" – Heydrich, November 1939^[97]

On 10 October 1941, Heydrich was the senior officer at a "Final Solution" meeting of the RHSA^[d] in Prague that discussed deporting 50,000 Jews from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia to ghettos in [Minsk](#) and [Riga](#). Given his position, Heydrich was instrumental in carrying out these plans since his Gestapo was ready to organize deportations in the West and his *Einsatzgruppen* were already conducting extensive killing operations in the East.^[99] The officers attending also discussed taking 5,000 Jews from Prague "in the next few weeks" and handing them over to the Einsatzgruppen commanders [Arthur Nebe](#) and [Otto Rasch](#). Establishing ghettos in the Protectorate was also planned, resulting in the construction of [Theresienstadt](#),^[100] where 33,000 people would eventually die. Tens of thousands more passed through the camp on their way to their deaths in the East.^[101] In 1941 Himmler named Heydrich as "responsible for implementing" the forced movement of 60,000 Jews from Germany and Czechoslovakia to the [Lodz \(Litzmannstadt\) Ghetto](#) in Poland.^[102]

Earlier on 31 July 1941, Hermann Göring gave written authorisation to Heydrich to ensure the cooperation of administrative leaders of various government departments in the implementation of a *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final Solution to the [Jewish question](#)) in territories under German control.^[103] On 20 January 1942, Heydrich chaired a meeting, now called the Wannsee Conference, to discuss the implementation of the plan.^{[104][105]} Historian Donald Bloxham avows

that for all the discussion over perpetrators in the Final Solution, Heydrich "barely spared a hateful thought for the Jews" and instead concentrated his efforts on the scale of his "supranational task".^[106]

Assassination [edit]


Death in Prague [edit]

Main article: [Operation Anthropoid](#)


In London, the [Czechoslovak government-in-exile](#) resolved to kill Heydrich. [Jan Kubiš](#) and [Jozef Gabčík](#) headed the team chosen for the operation. Trained by the British [Special Operations Executive](#) (SOE), the pair returned to the Protectorate, parachuting from a [Handley Page Halifax](#), on 28 December 1941. They lived in hiding, preparing for the assassination attempt.^[107]

On 27 May 1942, Heydrich planned to meet Hitler in Berlin. German documents suggest that Hitler intended to transfer Heydrich to [German-occupied France](#), where the [French resistance](#) was gaining ground.^[108] Heydrich would have to pass a section where the Dresden-Prague road merged with a road to the Troja Bridge. The junction, in the Prague suburb of [Libeň](#), was well-suited for the attack because motorists have to slow for a hairpin bend. As Heydrich's car slowed, Gabčík took aim with a [Sten sub-machine gun](#), but it jammed and failed to fire. Instead of ordering his driver to speed away, Heydrich called his car to halt and attempted to confront the attackers. Kubiš then threw a bomb (a converted anti-tank mine) at the rear of the car as it stopped. The explosion wounded Heydrich and Kubiš.^[109]



The open-top [Mercedes-Benz](#) in which Heydrich was mortally wounded 



Postage stamp (1943) features the [death mask](#) of Heydrich 

When the smoke cleared, Heydrich emerged from the wreckage with his gun in his hand; he chased Kubiš and tried to return fire. Kubiš jumped on his bicycle and pedalled away. Heydrich ran after him for half a block but became weak from [shock](#) and collapsed. He sent his driver, Klein, to chase Gabčík on foot. In the ensuing firefight, Gabčík shot Klein in the leg and escaped to a local [safe house](#). Heydrich, still with pistol in hand, gripped his left flank, which was bleeding profusely.^[110]

A Czech woman went to Heydrich's aid and flagged down a delivery van. Heydrich was first placed in the driver's cab, but complained that the van's movement was causing him pain. He was placed in the back of the van, on his stomach, and taken to the emergency room at Na Bulovce Hospital.^[111] Heydrich had suffered severe injuries to his

left side, with major damage to his [diaphragm](#), [spleen](#), and [lung](#). He had also fractured a rib. A physician, Slanina, packed the chest wound, while another doctor, Walter Diek, tried unsuccessfully to remove the splinters. He immediately decided to operate. This was carried out by Diek, Slanina, and Hohlbaum. Heydrich was given several blood transfusions. A [splenectomy](#) was performed. The chest wound, left lung, and diaphragm were all [debrided](#) and the wounds closed.^[111] Himmler ordered another physician, [Karl Gebhardt](#), to fly to Prague to assume care. Despite a fever, Heydrich's recovery appeared to progress well. [Theodor Morell](#), Hitler's personal physician, suggested the use of [sulfonamide](#) (a new antibacterial drug), but Gebhardt, thinking Heydrich would recover, refused.^[112] On 2 June, during a visit by Himmler, Heydrich reconciled himself to his fate by reciting a part of one of his father's operas:

The world is just a barrel-organ which the Lord God turns Himself.
We all have to dance to the tune which is already on the drum.^[113]

Heydrich slipped into a coma after Himmler's visit and never regained consciousness. He died on 4 June, probably around 04:30. He was 38. The [autopsy](#) concluded that he died of [sepsis](#). Heydrich's facial expression as he died betrayed an "uncanny spirituality and entirely perverted beauty, like a renaissance Cardinal," according to [Bernhard Wehner](#), a Kripo police official who investigated the assassination.^[114]

Funeral [\[edit \]](#)

After an elaborate funeral held in Prague on 7 June 1942, Heydrich's coffin was placed on a train to Berlin, where a second ceremony was held in the new [Reich Chancellery](#) on 9 June. Himmler gave the eulogy.^[115] Hitler attended and placed Heydrich's decorations—including the highest grade of the [German Order](#), the [Blood Order Medal](#), the [Wound Badge in Gold](#) and the [War Merit Cross 1st Class with Swords](#)—on his funeral pillow.^[116] Although Heydrich's death was employed for pro-Reich propaganda, Hitler privately blamed Heydrich for his own death, through carelessness:

Since it is opportunity which makes not only the thief but also the assassin, such heroic gestures as driving in an open, unarmoured vehicle or walking about the streets unguarded are just damned stupidity, which serves the [Fatherland](#) not one



Bullet-scarred window in the Church [\[edit \]](#) of St. Cyril and St. Methodius in Prague, where Kubiš and his compatriots were cornered

whit. That a man as irreplaceable as Heydrich should expose himself to unnecessary danger, I can only condemn as stupid and idiotic.^[117]

Heydrich was interred in Berlin's [Invalidenfriedhof](#), a military cemetery.^[118] The exact burial spot is not known—a temporary wooden marker that disappeared when the Red Army overran the city in 1945 was never replaced, so that Heydrich's grave could not become a rallying point for [Neo-Nazis](#).^[119] A photograph of Heydrich's burial shows the wreaths and mourners to be in section A, which abuts the north wall of the Invalidenfriedhof and Scharnhorststraße, at the front of the cemetery.^[119] A recent biography of Heydrich also places the grave in Section A.^[120] Hitler planned for Heydrich to have a monumental tomb (designed by sculptor [Arno Breker](#) and architect [Wilhelm Kreis](#)), but due to Germany's declining fortunes, it was never built.^[119]

Heydrich's widow won the right to receive a pension as the result of a series of court cases against the [West German](#) government in 1956 and 1959. She was entitled to a substantial pension because her husband was a German general killed in action. The government had previously declined to pay because of Heydrich's role in the Holocaust.^[121] The couple had four children: Klaus, born in 1933, killed in a traffic accident in 1943; Heider, born in 1934; Silke, born in 1939; and Marte, born shortly after her father's death in 1942.^[122] Lina wrote a memoir, *Leben mit einem Kriegsverbrecher* (*Living With a War Criminal*), which was published in 1976.^[123] She remarried once and died in 1985.^[124]

Aftermath [[edit](#)]

Main article: [Lidice](#)



Heydrich's assailants hid in safe houses and eventually took refuge in [Ss. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral](#), an Orthodox church in Prague. After a traitor in the Czech



The massacre at Lidice



resistance betrayed their location,^[125] the church was surrounded by 800 members of the SS and Gestapo. Several Czechs were killed, and the remainder hid in the church's crypt. The Germans attempted to flush the men out with gunfire, tear gas, and by flooding the crypt. Eventually an entrance was made using explosives. Rather than surrender, the soldiers killed themselves. Supporters

of the assassins who were killed in the wake of these events included the church's leader, [Bishop Gorazd](#), who is now revered as a martyr of the Orthodox Church.^[126]

Infuriated by Heydrich's death, Hitler ordered the arrest and execution of 10,000 randomly selected Czechs. But after consultations with [Karl Hermann Frank](#), he tempered his response. The Czech lands were an important industrial zone for the German military, and indiscriminate killing could reduce the region's productivity.^[127] Hitler ordered a quick investigation. Intelligence falsely linked the assassins to the towns of [Lidice](#) and [Ležáky](#). A Gestapo report stated that Lidice, 22 kilometres (14 mi) north-west of Prague, was suspected as the assailants' hiding place because several Czech army officers, then in England, had come from there and the Gestapo found a resistance radio transmitter in Ležáky.^[128] On 9 June, after discussions with Himmler and Karl Hermann Frank, Hitler ordered brutal reprisals.^[129] Over 13,000 people were arrested, [deported](#), and imprisoned. Beginning on 10 June, all males over the age of 16 in the villages of Lidice and Ležáky were murdered. All the women in Ležáky were also murdered.^[125] All but four of the women from Lidice were deported immediately to [Ravensbrück](#) concentration camp (four were pregnant – they were forcibly aborted at the same hospital where Heydrich had died and then sent to the concentration camp). Some children were chosen for [Germanization](#), and 81 were killed in [gas vans](#) at the [Chełmno extermination camp](#). Both towns were burned and Lidice's ruins were levelled.^{[130][131]} At least 1,300 people were massacred after Heydrich's death.^{[132][133]}

Heydrich's replacements were [Ernst Kaltenbrunner](#) as the chief of [RSHA](#),^[118] and [Karl Hermann Frank](#) (27–28 May 1942) and [Kurt Daluege](#) (28 May 1942 – 14 October 1943) as the new acting [Reichsprotektors](#).

After Heydrich's death, the policies formalised at the Wannsee conference he chaired were carried out. The first three true [death camps](#), designed for mass killing with no [legal process](#) or pretext, were built and operated at [Treblinka](#), [Sobibór](#), and [Belżec](#). The project was named [Operation Reinhard](#) after Heydrich.^[134]

Summary of career [[edit](#)]

Heydrich's leadership style was to use fear to extract obedience and respect. He was a serious person, never friendly or jovial, who cultivated a soldierly demeanor. He exercised daily and took meticulous care of his appearance, and expected his subordinates to do the same.^[135] He had few close friends, and was highly suspicious, distrusting most of the other senior SS officers. Himmler was an exception; to him Heydrich offered blind obedience and was seen as a "true SS man" for his devotion. Himmler's own motivations for trusting Heydrich lay partly in Heydrich's lack of interest in taking Himmler's place (a view Heydrich told Himmler and others on several occasions).^[136]

Heydrich developed close professional relationships only within the circle of the SS security forces. [Heinrich Müller](#) was one such example, and Heydrich appears to have trusted him. [Adolf Eichmann](#)'s straightforward loyalty impressed Heydrich, and was one reason why he appointed him as secretary for the Wannsee Conference. [Herbert Kappler](#), who was appointed as commander of all SS security forces in Rome, was said to have been a protege of Heydrich.^[137] SS personnel favoured by Heydrich, especially those who attended the Wannsee conference, possessed similar traits of devotion to SS, lack of remorse regarding brutal or genocidal orders, and above all personal loyalty to Heydrich in his capacity as commander of the security forces. On the other

hand, Heydrich's dislike and distrust of [Arthur Nebe](#) and [Walter Schellenberg](#) may have stemmed from their independence and ambition.^[138]

Heydrich was said to despise the [Concentration Camp service](#) and held a particular derision for [Theodor Eicke](#), whom he referred to as an "ambitious dwarf". Heydrich had little to do with and did not trust [Oswald Pohl](#). He characterized [Rudolf Höss](#), commander of [Auschwitz](#), as an uneducated thug.^[139] Within upper SS administration, Heydrich was friendly towards [Karl Wolff](#). In later years, Wolff said he was always wary of Heydrich, who seemed to be waiting for an opportunity to move against him and disgrace him with Himmler. Within the [Allgemeine-SS](#), Heydrich forged relationships with some of the more powerful [SS and Police Leaders](#) such as [Friedrich Jecklen](#). Heydrich maintained a dialogue with him, but cautiously, especially after Jecklen ran afoul of Himmler in the late 1930s and early 1940s.^{[136][140]}

The security and police officials selected to run the camps of [Operation Reinhard](#) were among Heydrich's closest professional contacts. Heydrich was said to be on particularly good terms with [Odilo Globocnik](#) and [Christian Wirth](#). In his other realm of responsibility, that of governor of the Czech Protectorate, Heydrich behaved coldly towards [Karl Hermann Frank](#), whom he did not know well or trust.^[141]

SS record [[edit](#)]

Main article: [Service record of Reinhard Heydrich](#)

Heydrich's time in the SS was a mixture of rapid promotions, reserve commissions in the regular armed forces, and front-line combat service. During his 11 years with the SS Heydrich "rose from the ranks" and was appointed to every rank from private to full general. He was also a [major](#) in the [Luftwaffe](#), flying nearly 100 combat missions until 22 July 1941, when his plane was hit by Soviet anti-aircraft fire. Heydrich made an emergency landing behind enemy lines. He evaded a Soviet patrol and contacted a forward German patrol.^[142] After this Hitler personally ordered Heydrich to


return to Berlin to resume his SS duties.^[143] His service record also gives him credit as a Navy Reserve Lieutenant, although during World War II Heydrich had no contact with this military branch.

Heydrich received several Nazi and military awards, including the [German Order](#),^[144] [Blood Order](#),^[115] [Golden Party Badge](#), [Luftwaffe Pilot's Badge](#), bronze and silver combat mission bars, and the [Iron Cross](#) First and Second Classes.^[145]

See also [edit]

- [Glossary of Nazi Germany](#)
- [List of Nazi Party leaders and officials](#)
- [List of rulers of the Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia](#)
- [List of SS personnel](#)

Footnotes [edit]

- [^] He joined the SS in Hamburg on 14 July 1931.^[31]
- [^] For the coding of prisoners, see *IBM and the Holocaust* by Edwin Black, pp 355 and 362. Black references the "Administration of German Concentration Camps", 9 July 1945, PRO FO 371/46979 (Public Record Office, London), as well as "Decoding Key for Concentration Camp Card Index Files", n.d. NARG242/338 T-1021 Roll 5, JAG (National Archives, College Park); and in the last source Frame 99 is mentioned.
- [^] ^a ^b The telegram is evidence number PS-3363 from the Oswald Pohl case at the Nuremberg Trials. A translation of the text is available at yadvashem.org .
- [^] This description of the meeting was employed by Holocaust historian [Raul Hilberg](#) in *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Hilberg 1985, p. 164.

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25. [^] [Gerwarth 2011](#), pp. 51, 52.
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31. [^] [Gerwarth 2011](#), p. 53.
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35. [^] [Gerwarth 2011](#), p. 58.
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