

Goering, Hermann (Goring)

(1893--1946), Nazi leader, founder of the Nazi *Gestapo*, and Commander of the German Air Force.

Goering was born in Rosenheim, Bavaria, into a wealthy family. During World War I he served as a fighter pilot and won many medals for bravery. He joined the Nazi Party in 1922 after getting to know Adolf Hitler. He was soon appointed commander of the Storm Troopers (SA), the party's private army. In November 1923 Goering joined Hitler in his unsuccessful bid to take over the Bavarian government.

Goering had connections with members of the German aristocracy, so he was sent to Berlin to procure financial support for the party. In 1928 he convinced Hitler to let him represent the Nazi Party in the German parliament (Reichstag); he became speaker of the *Reichstag* in 1932 and helped Hitler to power in 1933.

Goering was given several positions in Hitler's government, and helped create the Nazi *Gestapo*. In 1934, he and Heinrich Himmler led the "Night of the Long Knives," in which they murdered SA leader Ernst Rohm. Goering was appointed Commander of the German Air Force (*Luftwaffe*) in 1935.

In 1936 Goering was put in charge of Hitler's Four-Year Plan, an economic program whose goal was to revitalize the German army and economy within four years in anticipation of war. Thus, Goering was given extensive powers within the economic sphere; one of his responsibilities was the confiscation of Jewish property.

When war broke out, Hitler appointed Goering his successor. On July 31, 1941 Goering set the stage for the "Final Solution" when he ordered Reinhard Hetdrich to make preparations to resolve the "Jewish question" in Europe.

Goering fell out of Hitler's good graces when the *Luftwaffe* failed to conquer Great Britain and protect Germany from attack. Goering spent the rest of the war on his estate, until he was completely removed of rank when he declared himself *Fuehrer* during the last days of the Nazi regime. Goering was convicted as a war criminal at the Nuremberg Trials. He was sentenced to death, but poisoned himself in his cell hours before his execution.

