

On D-Day, it would be the First Division's 16th Regimental Combat Team and the 29th the Division's 116th Regimental Combat Team that would combine in the first wave to hit Omaha. Both RCTs contained a medical, artillery, and engineer unit and were supported by 32 duplex-drive tanks.

Due to winds and waves, 27 of the 29 tanks that were launched to move in with the 16th RCT sank. Two remained in the water and made it to shore. Three more were landed later. On observing the fate of the 16th Combat Team's tanks, the 116th put theirs on the beach only to fall prey to German artillery fire. Heavy seas took a toll on artillery pieces which the Allies were bringing to shore.

Men of this first wave sought whatever cover they could find. Engineer demolition men braved enemy fire to try and destroy the beach obstacles. It appeared that the V Corps would never attain its mission of securing the beachhead and linking up with the adjacent British and American units.

By H-Hour plus 30 minutes, the rest of the two assault regiments and two Ranger battalions were to arrive; an hour after that, engineer and artillery special brigades were due to land.

Units already ashore were fragmented due to the shifting effect of the coastal current and the heavy enemy fire. Only 3 of the 16 tank dozers were working. The minutes passed and with them the opportunity to blow up many of the obstacles, because the rising water soon was too deep. Still the demolition men did what they could, and by 7:00 A.M. six gaps had been marked when the second wave arrived. So heroic were the demolition men in the face of enemy fire, that 15 of them were later awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Many of you remember when Mel and Jane Turner lived in O'Fallon, Illinois, before they moved to Arizona. Jane's uncle, Raymond E. Lanterman, was a member of the 146th Combat Engineers Battalion. In an essay written in March 1984, Lt. Lanterman documents many of the things we are learning in our study of Omaha Beach:

The 146th Combat Engineers Battalion arrived in the British Isles in 1943, and in early 1944 was stationed at Barnstable Bay in Devonshire, southwest England. Lundy Island, of pirate notoriety, was on the horizon. Our mission was to maintain, and to repair the damage done to, the nearby training area where troops who would take part in the invasion of France were trained in realistic rehearsals.

We watched unit after unit go through the rugged course, and were smugly congratulating ourselves on our relatively safe situation as the maintenance crew, when, to our consternation, early in May we learned that we were the next unit on the list and that another Engineer outfit would be cleaning up after us.



As engineers who would be landing early on D-Day, we concentrated on the demolition, using explosives, of obstacles, similar to those the Germans had erected on the coast of Normandy. Landing barges were to take us across the English Channel to France, and we invented a little song: “Coming in on a barge with a charge,” to the tune of, “Coming in on A Wing and A Prayer.”

Our training completed, we were isolated a few days before the invasion in a fenced enclosure—no passes outside for anybody—and briefed very thoroughly on that part of Normandy Beach we’d be landing on. For the briefing, we had low- and high-altitude aerial photographs provided by the Air Force’s 34th [Photo] Reconnaissance Squadron. There was also an extremely accurate scale model of Omaha Beach, complete with natural features, trees, houses, and other buildings, and even such German military installations as were known to be in the vicinity. We memorized the landing site and studied the obstacles in the photographs until we knew everything backwards and forwards. Later, when we did land, we discovered just how accurate the model had been; the coast looked just like it, right down to the last detail.

About the first day of June we were taken to Plymouth Harbor on England’s south coast where we were aboard LSTs (Landing Ship Tank) commanded by Coast Guard officers and moored cheek by jowl all over the place. Each LST assigned to combat engineers carried a tank-dozier in addition to its complement of troops. The vessels were equipped with galleys, and a stocky lieutenant from Arkansas who inhabited the one that tied to our port side was a baker by profession; it wasn’t long before we had a row of freshly baked pies laid out along the rail to cool.

On the evening of June 4, we sailed out into the English Channel. As far as the eye could see in all directions the sea was filled with landing craft, navy vessels, supply vessels, and other types of military shipping.

We woke up on the morning of June 5th—back in Plymouth! Eisenhower had been compelled to order the armada to turn around and go back because the weather had turned foul and any attempt to land in France would have been foolhardy if not impossible. I still marvel that that vast fleet could be controlled in so efficient, orderly, and precise manner.

That evening, the 5th, we sailed again, and consoled one another by saying this was probably another dry run.

It wasn’t.

Before dawn on the 6th, we rendezvoused with a fleet of small landing craft—LCPs (Landing Craft Personnel)—each just large enough to hold a platoon of men, steered by a coxswain from the Coast Guard. We transferred to our LCP at sea, leaving the larger LST with its tank-dozier to come in on its own mission, and began the run to shore. For a few minutes, the LCPs ran side-by-side, so close together that we could converse with the people in the neighboring boats; we gradually drew apart, however, spacing out to the prescribed intervals for landing.

Our course took us past an enormous battleship whose big guns were blasting away in a softening-up mission. Great balls of fire and clouds of black smoke belched from her guns as she fired in rapid succession, sending shells screaming over our heads to explode on the mainland of Europe.



As we drew near Omaha Beach in the early morning light, we easily recognized the landmarks and features we had seen on the scale model and were beginning to receive fire from shore. At this distance, shells from German 88s, a very sleek and efficient weapon, were plopping into the sea around us, sending up geysers of spume as they exploded in the water. Some boats, of course, were hit; one unfortunate craft blew up when a shell dropped into it and set off the explosives aboard.

The timing of each phase of enormously complicated OPERATION OVERLORD had been carefully worked out to the last minute: at H-Hour, M-Minute, the first infantry units were to go ashore; at H-Hour plus five minutes we demolition engineers were to land. As thus scheduled, the infantry would have engaged the enemy, hopefully pushing him back, leaving us free to proceed with our mission without the necessity of defending ourselves.

Ah, *the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men* It happened that we arrived first in our particular sector, at H-Hour, M-Minute, at lowest tide, about 6 or 6:30 A.M. The LCP went aground before we touched shore, and the coxswain told us he could go no further; he was stuck on a sand bar. He lowered the ramp and we saw that we'd have to wade a distance of perhaps 50 or 70 yards to get to the beach.

I gave the order to disembark and jumped off the end of the ramp. Loaded with explosives, carbines, binoculars, primer cord, and what-all, we sank like stones. Fortunately, the water was only up to our necks; fortunately, also, there was very little wave action, and we started to wade in.

The spatter pattern of a cone of machine gun fire was hitting the water's surface off to our right, and we detoured to the left in order to give it as wide a berth as possible. That cone of fire never moved closer to us, to our relief, and we all made it to the beach intact, where we immediately set to work amid the THUNK of exploding mortar shells and the whistle of small arms bullets.

The intensive training grind we had gone through so recently tended to make robots of us; we could think of nothing but the tasks we were assigned to carry out and working under withering fire was something we had never experienced before. It was all very unreal.

One of our men had been a goof-off and a thorn in our flesh throughout his time in the outfit; he had even tried to climb over the fence in the sealed-off final briefing area to go to town. But here, when the chips were down, he was as calm as if he were in his own backyard at home, going about his assigned duties completely ignoring the danger, as if it were a commonplace thing to work under desperate conditions.

The obstacles we demolished were wooden poles standing upright in the sand; each pole was taller than a man, for tides are deep on that coast, and many had Teller anti-tank mines secured to their tops, which, at high tide, would be awash or perhaps just slightly under water; any boats coming in at high tide, then, would strike the mines and be disabled or destroyed. Our mission was to cut down the poles with explosives, detonating the mines as well, to create a passage through which landing barges coming in could navigate without danger.



For the demolition work, each of us carried a quantity of a pliable explosive substance stuffed into ordinary cotton stockings. We were to wrap these around the poles, close to the ground, then connect them all with primer cord, a kind of explosive rope. A fuse was then attached to the network of cord—fuses which had been kept waterproof by being sealed in condoms.

Just when we had made ready and were about to fire the charge, an infantry detachment landed. We yelled at the colonel leading them to keep his people back, for they'd be blown to bits if they came forward through the poles just then. He and his men flattened themselves out on the sand and we pulled the fuse. We must have done something right, for we got a successful blow, the blast of the charge ringing each pole pinched it in two and they all toppled.

The first part of our mission was now completed; we had felled the posts, and the tank-dozier could clear them away to create a path through the obstacles, which, in addition to the posts, consisted of many X-shaped iron constructions which were about two feet high, fashioned from short lengths of railroad rails. They resembled the jacks children play with.

The next task was to search for mines in the sand. The man who carried the mine detector had soon been killed, and I picked up the instrument and began to use it. By now the tank-dozier had arrived and was beginning to clear away the fallen poles and "jacks." I happened to be a few yards in front of the dozier when some unfriendly soul on the *Wehrmacht* side got a bead on me; I dropped, hit presumably by machine-gun fire.

"That tank-dozier is going to run over me," I thought, and tried to move out of its way without much success. (Later, in the hospital in England, I saw the driver and he assured me he'd seen my fall and wasn't about to run me down.)

The medic came up—a terribly young-looking boy—and knelt beside me to help. He was burdened with so much gear that he apologized for not being able to reach behind himself to get out medications and bandages. I told him to turn around, tell me what to look for, and I'd fish it out of his bulging knapsack. While we were doing this he muttered, "Lieutenant, I'm scared (defecation)-less."

I assured him he wasn't the only one.

The tank-dozier was put out of commission, so there was no more worry about being run over, but lying flat on my back, I felt water at my feet and realized that the tide was coming in. Now there was a new danger: I could drown here. I tried to scooch up higher, but the tide was faster than I could move; I owe my life to a couple of the men who sized up the situation and helped me to a position above the high-water line.

Now, it looked as if I might survive, and I wished that I had my movie camera with me, since it was impossible to get up and do anything useful. The morphine which the medic had administered made me groggy, although still quite aware, and I didn't know how long I was there—maybe an hour—before friendly hands put me on a stretcher and carried me to a big landing barge which had just disgorged its load and was taking wounded aboard.



A missile hit its superstructure and splattered fragments around, but we backed out safely and drew alongside a destroyer far out to sea, which took us wounded on and put us in sick bay bunks. Again, I could only marvel at the clockwork precision of the whole operation: if you needed something, say a destroyer for instance, there it was, waiting for you!

Today, forty years later, an invasion of this sort would simply be impossible, for a single modern nuclear weapon could wipe out such a fleet. The Allies were lucky Germany didn't have an atomic bomb.¹

NOTE: Raymond E. Lanterman died on January 23, 1994 after a lengthy illness. He was 77.²

Why was the defense of Omaha Beach so much more intense and effective than the other beaches at Normandy? Unknown to the Americans, landing on what was soon to become known as “Bloody Omaha,” German positions along the beaches were almost unscathed.

Before the invasion, Allied intelligence had completely lost track of the German 352nd Infantry, which was commanded by Maj. Gen. Dietrich Kraiss (Krys). The unit contained conscripts among its more than 12,000 men. But these green troops were stabilized by a cadre of seasoned combat veterans who had honed their skills in Poland and France and on the Russian Front. The unit had been moved to Normandy coast in March.

Kraiss, age 55, was a veteran of World War I and had been a company commander in that war. On November 6, 1943, he became commander of the 352nd Infantry Division in Normandy. Facing the Allies at Omaha Beach was the 916th Grenadier Regiment, an element of the 352nd. Reinforcing the 916th at Omaha was the 2nd Battalion of the 915th Grenadiers, as well as engineer units and antiaircraft detachments.

The 352nd was a new unit, and Kraiss trained his men hard; what the young recruits among his troops lacked in experience, Kraiss attempted to make up for in training.

Kraiss' immediate superior was Lt. Gen. Erich Marcks, also a World War I veteran. He was assigned to the 84th Corps in Normandy in August 1943, with headquarters in Saint Lo (sānt-ló). The area under his control included 240 miles of coastline, an area that encompassed the Allied landing of June 6.

The corps consisted of four divisions—plus two that were added on D-Day, one of which was the 21st Panzer based at Caen.

¹ Raymond E. Lanterman, “D-Day 1944.” Personal manuscript dated 20 March 1984, Honolulu, Hawaii.

² See the excerpt, “Nazi Party” in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 8:570–71, which is inserted here at the end of lesson 3's notes: MD19-C-03, p. 25.



Commander in Chief of Germany's western force at the time of the invasion was 69-year-old Field Marshal Karl von Rundstedt. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel was in charge of inspecting and bolstering the Atlantic Wall defenses; his tactical credo was to stop the Allies on the beaches, where, he said, the war would be won or lost.

Under Rommel's direction, more than a million mines were set and thousands of obstacles consisting of concrete crossbeams, underwater barriers, and barbed-wire entanglements were put in place. Omaha, the most obvious landing site, received the lion's share of those impediments.

The desperate impact these preparations had on the invading forces at Omaha is the subject of the following quote by Stephen E. Ambrose, Professor of History at the University of New Orleans and Director of the Eisenhower Center and President of the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans. The following excerpt is from his book, *D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II*:

No tactician could have devised a better defensive situation. A narrow, enclosed battlefield, with no possibility of outflanking it; many natural obstacles for the attacker to overcome; an ideal place to build fixed fortifications and a trench system on the slope of the bluff and on the high ground looking down on a wide, open killing field for any infantry trying to cross no-man's-land.

The Allied planners hated the idea of assaulting Omaha Beach, but it had to be done. This was as obvious to Rommel as to Eisenhower. Both commanders recognized that if the Allies invaded Normandy, they would have to include Omaha Beach in the landing sites; otherwise the gap between Utah and the British beaches would be too great.

The waters offshore were heavily mined. Rommel had placed more beach obstacles here than at Utah. He had 12 strong points holding 88 and 75 mms and mortars. He had dozens of machine-gun pillboxes, supported by an extensive trench system.

Everything the Germans had learned in World War I about how to stop a frontal assault by infantry Rommel put to work at Omaha. He laid out the firing positions at angles to the beach to cover the tidal flat and beach shelf with crossing fire, plunging fire, and grazing fire, from all types of weapons.

He prepared artillery positions along the cliffs at either end of the beach, capable of delivering enfilade fire from 88s all across Omaha.

The larger artillery pieces were protected to the seaward by concrete wing walls. There was not one inch of the beach that had not been presighted for both grazing and plunging fire.³

³ Other sources for the chapter, "Omaha Beach: 'Just Plane Hell,'" include: William M. Vogt, "Remembering Omaha's Ordeal," *World War II*, May 1994, 42–49; Thomas E. Griess, "Omaha Beach," in *The Second World War: Europe and the Mediterranean* (Wayne: Avery Publishing Group, 1989), 297–299; David Irving, "Invasion," in *The War between the Generals* (New York: Congdon and Lattes, 1981), 146–160 passim.



Heroes at Normandy: Eisenhower's Mighty Men: Omaha Beach

Sun-Tzu: When you plunder a district, divide the wealth among your troops. When you enlarge your territory, divide the profits.⁴

1 Chronicles 11:10 Now these are the heads of the mighty men who David had, who gave him strong support in his kingdom. Together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel.

Four things gave the Allies the notion that they could successfully assault this all-but-impregnable position. First, Allied intelligence said that the fortifications and trenches were manned by the 716th Infantry Division, a low-quality unit made up of Poles and Russians with poor morale. At Omaha, intelligence reckoned that there was only one battalion of about 800 troops to man the defenses.

Second, the B-17s assigned to the air bombardment would hit the beach with everything they had, destroying the bunkers. Third, the naval bombardment would finish off anything left alive and moving after the B-17s finished. The infantry from the 29th and 1st Divisions going into Omaha were told that their problems would begin when they got to the top of the bluff and started to move inland toward their D-Day objectives.

The fourth cause for confidence that the job would be done was that 40,000 men and 3,500 motorized vehicles were scheduled to land at Omaha on D-Day.

The intelligence was wrong; instead of the contemptible 716th Division, the quite capable 352nd Division was in place. Instead of one German battalion to cover the beach, there were three. The cloud cover and late arrival caused the B-17s to delay their release; not a single bomb fell on the beach or bluff. The naval bombardment was too brief and generally inaccurate.

The Overlord plan for Omaha was elaborate and precise. It has the 116th Regiment of the 29th Division going in on the west, supported by Company C of the 2nd Ranger Battalion. The 16th Regiment of the 1st Division would go in on the east. It would be a linear attack, with the two regiments going in by companies abreast. There were eight sectors, from west to east named Charlie, Dog Green, Dog White, Dog Red, Easy Green, Easy Red, Fox Green, and Fox Red. The 116th Regimental Combat Team's sectors ran from Charlie to Easy Green. The 16th Regiment's RCT ran from Easy Red to Fox Red.

⁴ Sun-Tzu, 198.



The first waves would consist of two battalions from each of the regiments. Assault teams would cover every inch of beach. Ahead of the assault teams would be tanks, Navy underwater demolition teams, and Army engineers. Each assault team and the supporting units had specific tasks to perform, all geared to opening the exits. Demolition teams would blow the obstacles and mark the paths through them with flags, so that as the tide came in the coxswains would know where it was safe to go.

Next would come the following waves of landing craft, bringing reinforcements on a tight, strict schedule designed to put firepower into the battle when needed, plus more tanks, trucks, jeeps, medical units, headquarters, communication units—all the physical support and administrative control required of infantry conducting an all-out offensive.

Nothing worked according to plan.

In the lead Company A boat, Capt. Taylor Fellers and every one of his men were killed before the ramp went down. It just vaporized. No one ever learned whether it was the result of hitting a mine or getting hit by an 88.

All across the beach, the German machine guns were hurling fire of monstrous proportions on the hapless Americans. Because of the misplaced landings, the GIs were bunched together which allowed the Germans to concentrate their fire. German artillery fired at will.

About 60 percent of the men of Company A came from one town, Bedford, Virginia; for Bedford, the first fifteen minutes of Omaha was an unmitigated disaster. Companies G and F were supposed to come in to the (east) of Company A, but they drifted a half mile further east before landing, so all Germans around the heavily defended Vierville draw concentrated their fire on Company A.

When the ramps on the (landing crafts) dropped, the Germans just poured the machine-gun artillery, and mortar fire on them. It was a slaughter. Of the 200-plus men of the company, only a couple of dozen survived, and virtually all of them were wounded.

By 6:40 A.M., only one officer from Company A was still alive; Lt. E Ray Nance, and he had been hit in the heel and the belly. Every sergeant was either dead or wounded. On one boat, when the ramp was dropped every man in the thirty-man assault team was killed before any of them could get out.

Company A had hardly fired a weapon. Almost certainly it had not killed any Germans. It had expected to move up the Vierville draw and be on top of the bluff by 7:30, but at 7:30 its handful of survivors were huddled up against the seawall, virtually without weapons. It had lost 96 percent of its effective strength.



When Sgt. Warner Hamlett of F Company of the 116th RCT made it to the shore, he found that the weight of his clothes, sand, and equipment made it difficult to run. He could hear men shouting, “Get off the beach!” and realized, “our only chance was to get off as quick as possible, because there we were sitting ducks.”

By short leaps and advances, using obstacles for protection, he worked his way toward the shingle.⁵

From the beach, to the GIs, that shingle looked like the most desirable place in the world to be at that moment. But when they reached it, they found [coiled barbed wire] covering it, no way to get across without blowing the wire, nothing on the other side but death and misery. And although they were now protected from machinegun and rifle fire coming down from the German trenches on the bluff, they were exposed to mortar fire. The few who made it had no organization, little or no leadership, only a handful of weapons. They could but huddle and hope for follow-up waves to bring in torpedoes to blow the wire.

E Company, 116th, landed farthest from the target. Scheduled to come in at Easy Green, it actually landed on the boundary between Easy Green and Fox Green, a half-mile off and intermixed with men from the 16th RCT, 1st Division. Pvt. Harry Parley was a flamethrower, so far as he is aware “the only flamethrower to come off the beach unscathed.”

“As our boat touched sand and the ramp went down,” Parley recalled, “I became a visitor to hell.” Boats on either side were getting hit by artillery. Some were burning, others were sinking. “I shut everything out and concentrated on following the men in front of me down the ramp and into the water.”

He immediately sank. “I was unable to come up. I knew I was drowning and made a futile attempt to unbuckle the flamethrower harness.” A buddy grabbed his flame thrower and pulled Parley forward, to where he could stand.

He had 220 yards to go to the beach. He made it exhausted. Machinegun fire was hitting the beach. “To this day, I don’t know why I didn’t dump the flamethrower and run like hell for shelter. But I didn’t.” He was behind the other members of the team. “Months later, trying to analyze why I was able to safely walk across the beach while others running ahead were hit, I found a simple answer. The Germans were directing their fire down onto the beach so that the line of advancing attackers would run into it and, since I was behind, I was ignored. In short, the burden on my back may well have saved my life.”

⁵ “Course, rounded detritus [rock debris] or alluvial material, as on a seashore, differing from ordinary gravel only in the larger size of the stones” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2d ed. [1953], s.v. “shingle”).



When Parley reached the shingle, he found chaos. “Men were trying to dig and scrape trenches or foxholes for protection from the mortars. Others were carrying or helping the wounded to shelter. Most of us were in no condition to carry on. We were just trying to stay alive.

Nineteen-year-old Pvt. Harold Baumgarten of B Company got a bullet through the top of his helmet while jumping from the ramp, then another hit the receiver of his M-1 as he carried it at port arms. He waded through the waist-deep water as his buddies fell alongside him.

Baumgarten had drawn the Star of David on the back of his field jacket, with “The Bronx, New York” written on it, that would let Hitler know who he was. Shells were bursting about him. “I raised my head to curse the Germans when an 88-shell exploded about twenty yards in front of me, hitting me in my left cheek. I felt like being hit with a baseball bat only the results were much worse. My upper jaw was shattered, the left cheek blown open. My upper lip was cut in half. The roof of my mouth was cut up and teeth and gums were laying all over my mouth. Blood poured freely from the gaping wound.”

The tide was coming in. Baumgarten washed his face with the cold, dirty Channel water and managed not to pass out. The water was rising about an inch a minute, so he had to get moving or drown. He took another hit, from a bullet, in his leg. He finally reached the seawall where a medic dressed his wounds.

Baumgarten was wounded five times that day, the last time by a bullet in his right knee as he was carried on a stretcher to the beach for evacuation. He went on to medical school and became a practicing physician.

At 7:30 the main command group of the 116th began to come in, including the regimental commander, Col. Charles Canham, and the assistant commander of the 29th Division, Brig. Gen. Norman Cota.

“Dutch” Cota moved among the men, galvanizing them into action-particularly when he coined what became a battle cry. As the 5th Ranger Battalion moved ashore at 8 A.M., it was he who yelled, “If you’re Rangers, get up and lead the way!”

Cota was an expert in amphibious assaults and infantry warfare. He had decided that they probably would die that day anyhow, and that if he survived, he would be a hero, but that either way, he would put his mission first. He and his brigade headquarters hit Omaha Beach at about 7:00 A.M. Omaha Beach would rank with Saratoga, the Alamo, and Gettysburg as a great display of American fortitude and determination. “Dutch” Cota provided the fire and heart that finally got the troops off that ill-fated beach.

(End MD19-C-03. See MD19-D-04 for continuation of study at p. 31.)



Nazi Party, byname of National Socialist German Workers' Party, political party of the mass movement known as National Socialism. Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, the party gained power in Germany in 1933 and governed by totalitarian methods until 1945.

It was founded as the German Workers' Party by Anton Drexler, a Munich locksmith, in 1919. Hitler attended one of its meetings that year, and his energy and oratorical skills soon enabled him to take over the party. He ousted the party's former leaders in 1920–21 and renamed it the National Socialist German Workers' Party. In 1920 Hitler also formulated a 25-point program that became the permanent basis for the party. These appeals were accompanied by a strident anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Under Hitler the Nazi Party grew steadily in its home base of Bavaria. It organized strongarm groups to protect its rallies and meetings. These groups drew their members from war veterans groups and paramilitary organizations and were organized under the name *Sturmabteilung*

The Nazi Party's membership grew from 25,000 in 1925 to about 180,000 in 1929. Its organizational system spread through Germany at this time, and the party began contesting municipal, state, and federal elections with increasing frequency.

However, it was the effects of the Great Depression in Germany that brought the Nazi Party to its first real nationwide importance. The rapid rise in unemployment in 1929–30 provided millions of jobless and dissatisfied voters whom the Nazi Party exploited to its advantage. From 1929 to 1932 the party vastly increased its membership and voting strength; its vote in elections to the Reichstag⁶ (the German Parliament) increased from 800,000 votes in 1928 to about 14,000,000 votes in July 1932. By then big-business circles had begun to finance the Nazi electoral campaigns, and swelling bands of *Sturmabteilung* [Shtoom'-äp'-tī-loong] (SA)⁷ toughs increasingly dominated the street fighting with the communists that accompanied such campaigns.

⁶ "Reich. Literally, 'empire'; used specifically in: First Reich, the Holy Roman Empire, from the crowning of Otto I in Rome, 962–1806; Second Reich, the German Empire, 1871–1918, established by Bismarck; Third Reich, the German totalitarian state, 1933–1945, under the dictatorship of the chancellor (known also as the *Führer*) with a consultative cabinet and a single political party (see Nazi)" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. "Reich.")

⁷ "Assault Division"), byname Storm Troopers, or Brownshirts, in the German Nazi Party, a paramilitary organization whose methods of violent intimidation played a key role in Adolf Hitler's rise to power. The SA was founded in Munich by Hitler in 1921. The SA men protected Party meetings, marched in Nazi rallies, and physically assaulted political opponents" *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 10:273, s.v. "SA."



Hitler's shrewd maneuvering behind the scenes prompted the president of the German republic, Paul von Hindenburg, to name him chancellor on January 30, 1933. Hitler used the powers of his office to solidify the Nazi's position in the government during the following months. The elections of March 5, 1933, gave the Nazi Party 44 percent of the votes, and further unscrupulous tactics on Hitler's part turned the voting balance in the Reichstag in the Nazis' favor.

On July 14, 1933, his government declared the Nazi Party to be the only political party in Germany. On the death of Hindenburg in 1934 Hitler took the titles of Führer ("Leaderr"), chancellor, and commander in chief of the army, and he remained leader of the Nazi party as well. Nazi Party membership became mandatory for all higher civil servants and bureaucrats.

Hitler's word was the supreme and undisputed command in the party. The party came to control virtually all political, social, and cultural activities in Germany. Its vast and complex hierarchy was structured like a pyramid, with party-controlled mass organizations for youth, women, workers, and other groups at the bottom, party members and officials in the middle, and Hitler and his closest associates at the top wielding undisputed authority.

There have been minor Nazi parties in other countries (such as the United States), but after 1945 Nazism as a mass movement was virtually nonexistent.⁸

⁸ Ibid., "Nazi Party," 8:570-71.

