

“Night of the Long Knives”

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Abstract

History and sociology can be seen as subsets of psychology within general systems theory. Social past, present, and future cannot escape each other. Donald Trump’s ego fascination with autocrats is linked to his idolizing the charismatic 1930s version of Germany’s leader.

In my studies at UVA, then Harvard, and independently thereafter, I have noticed many times where history seems to essentially repeat itself. Looping is to be expected, because underlying both sociology and history are timeless aspects of structural-functional psychology. This dynamic is latent within a few other smart species – but only we humans have consciously combined the emergent nature of “progressive” history with regressive killing powers.

Today’s modern psychological world is the Stone Age world in new clothing. Autocratic leaders with P.T. Barnum skills, and their hominid followers, today operate exactly as they have throughout the ages. Both physics and psychology seemingly have much in common. To study the dynamic human past is to anticipate much of the future, for better or worse.

Learning From Adolph Hitler's "Night of the Long Knives"

From June 30 until July 2nd 1934, and now from just ninety years later in 2024, we can easily see how some of Hitler's nasty cookbook could be replicated.

In 1934 the angry WWI corporal was preparing to get revenge **[1]** on his enemies both within and without Germany for weakly surrendering his master race to bourgeoisie allies such as the French. In Hitler's view, weaklings in charge of Germany illegally surrendered in France to racial inferiors. All kinds of critical war details were deleted from Hitler's vision of betrayal, all of which made it very easy for defeated and deflated Teutonic Germans to buy into his revenge plans.

Much of the world was in 1934 suffering from a deep economic depression, so Hitler chose to entice his own aggrieved masses with visions of autobahns and new cars for all. The people never got their new Volkswagens; but the sale was all about promises, not deliveries.

Absolute autocrats always fear even their best friends who could become mortal rivals. They do not fear the sheepish masses who are easily duped and dominated. Hitler was highly supported by the Brownshirts, his Proud Boys of the day. Their strong leader was growing into a threat to the standard army. The army feared that Hitler would place them under his private army of thugs.

What Hitler did in June 1934 in his "night of the long knives" is a lesson for 2025. Hitler also understood how "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." By placing all elements of Weimar society under his absolute personal rule, he was able to gain supreme central power. Just before he started WWII – reminiscent of Putin's attack on Ukraine – he got all the Reich's military to swear personal allegiance to him, not to any constitution.

I doubt that Hitler in 1934 envisioned what could happen to his “thousand-year Reich” only eleven years later in 1945. Some sixty million mostly-innocent souls perished globally in that nasty war launched for virtually no purpose at all, other than satanic ego gratification. Just as the crazy ashes of WWI had prepared “modern” Europe for the ashes of WWII – so too did WWII set us all up for much greater carnage inside any future nuclear war.

Ironically, Albert Einstein’s $e=mc^2$ formula had helped the Manhattan Project propel blue Earth toward a permanently dark biospheric threat level that is beyond ordinary comprehension. [Einstein sadly said about his nuclear genie](#): “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.” **[2]**

The numerically small, but politically critical carnage of 1934 emboldens today’s narcissistic psychopaths. Hitler had his goons murder several hundred key political rivals, and even Nazi allies. Hundreds more were shipped off to the early concentration camps. When the remaining population of “good Germans” were told what he had brazenly done to avoid social chaos, they all fell into line. Years before, [Hitler had invented the MAGA fantasy](#) with an aggrieved German flavor. **[3]**

Meanwhile, many folks in 1930s America and elsewhere soon admired Hitler’s new Reich, as most people outside Nazi Germany were deep inside a global economic depression. A key difference, of course, is that neither Herbert Hoover, nor FDR ever thought about violently crushing American democracy itself. Our New Deal was truly a noble thing, not a purging of “undesirables.”

The very recent U.S. Supreme Court decision on presidential immunity emboldens any crazed chief executive to consider himself immune from all criminal laws while in office. We now have a tyrant’s paradise where competitors can be legally shot dead on 5th Avenue – and the shooter (under presidential command) gets away with it. Trump’s corrupted Court has

essentially legalized Mob boss rule. The [path to tyranny is now almost fully paved](#) with bad intentions. **[4]**

There is, in sum, ample evidence that [Trump worships violence as a political tool](#) against his enemies, real and imagined. Brute violence is his Hitlerian social philosophy of governing, not just a nasty ego trip. Is our precious *America the Beautiful* both strong enough and wise enough to resist? **[5]**

References

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Night_of_the_Long_Knives

[2] <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/14977-i-know-not-with-what-weapons-world-war-iii-will>

[3] <https://gizmodo.com/yes-adolf-hitler-really-said-he-would-make-germany-gre-1789261081>

[4] <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trumps-conviction-intensifies-calls-retribution-term/story?id=110927011>

[5] <https://theconversation.com/trumps-violent-rhetoric-echoes-the-fascist-commitment-to-a-destructive-and-bloody-rebirth-of-society-215138>