

Concentration Camp Dachau, SS takes command

In June 1933, *SS-Oberführer* Theodor Eicke became the Dachau commandant. In 1934, as the elite Nazi SS [*Schutzstaffel* — literally, protection squad; originally Adolf Hitler's bodyguards] took control of the Gestapo and all the concentration camps, Eicke was placed in overall command of the camps. On the night of June 30-July 1, 1934, known to history as "Night of the Long Knives," elite, ruthless Nazi SS men purged SA storm troopers in a grisly spree of mass assassination. Eicke personally executed SA chief Ernst Röhm in his cell at Munich. Promoted to *SS-Gruppenführer*, Eicke centralized administration, introduced torture and exemplary cruelty as deliberate methods of control, and propagated rules for the entire concentration camp system. From then until the defeat of Nazi Germany, all concentration camp guards were specially trained SS personnel. Central authority was headquartered at Dachau until October 1938, when it was removed to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp at Oranienburg.

Above: A cover mailed from the office of the Dachau commandant on February 18, 1935, to former prisoner Maier Schloss at Ingolstadt. Below: An October 3, 1934, inmate's post card from Schloss to his wife before he was released.

