

## Gregor Strasser

**Gregor Strasser** (also **Straßer**, see ß) (May 31, 1892 – June 30, 1934) was a politician of the German Nazi Party (NSDAP). He was murdered in Berlin during the Night of the Long Knives.

Gregor Strasser and his younger brother Otto were born into the family of a Catholic judicial officer who lived in the Upper Bavarian market town of Geisenfeld. He attended grammar school and after his final examinations served his apprenticeship as a druggist in the Lower Bavarian village of Frontenhausen from 1910 until 1914. In 1914 he began to study pharmacy at Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich, which he suspended in the same year to enlist as a volunteer in the German Imperial Army. Strasser took part in World War I, rising to the rank of First Lieutenant, and was decorated with the Iron Cross, First and Second Class.

In 1918 he continued his interrupted studies at Friedrich-Alexander-University, Erlangen-Nuremberg and in 1919 he joined the rightist *Freikorps* of Franz Ritter von Epp (1868-1946) together with his brother Otto. Also in 1919 he passed his state examination successfully, and in 1920 started work as an apothecary in Landshut. He also established and commanded *Sturmbataillon Niederbayern* (English: Storm battalion Lower Bavaria). Young Heinrich Himmler served as his adjutant. In the middle of March 1920 Strasser's Freikorps was ready for participation in the failed Kapp Putsch. At the same time his brother Otto commanded a socialist *Rote Hundertschaft* (Red Group of a Hundred) to battle against this right wing "reactionary" coup d'état.

Soon Gregor Strasser was leading a *völkischer Wehrverband* ("ethnic defense union"), one of several such nationalist paramilitary groups. They joined forces with the NSDAP (Nazi Party) in 1921, which had been founded in Munich one year earlier. In November 1923 he took an active part in the miscarried Beer Hall Putsch. In a special part of the high treason trial against Adolf Hitler, Strasser was sentenced to one and a half years of *Festungshaft* (confinement in a fortress, which was regarded as an honorable detention in the German Empire) in Landsberg Prison by *Volksgericht München I* in April 1924. After few weeks Strasser was released because he had been elected a member of Bavarian Landtag for the Nazi-associated *Völkischer Block* on May 4, 1924. On December 7, 1924 he attained a seat in 3. Reichstag of *Weimar Republic*. He had run for the *Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei* (German Folkish Freedom Party), which served as substitute organization for the NSDAP (which had been banned temporarily from November 1923 until February 1925). Strasser kept this position until December 1932.

After the official refoundation of the NSDAP by Adolf Hitler in the Munich *Bürgerbräukeller* on February 26, 1925 Strasser became the first Gauleiter of Lower Bavaria/Upper Palatinate and, after the partition of this Gau, Lower Bavarian Gauleiter from October 1, 1928 until 1929. From June 30, 1926 until early 1928 he was *NSDAP Reichspropagandaleiter* (NSDAP Reich Leader for Propaganda) and from January 1928 until December 1932 he was the Nazi *Reichsorganisationsleiter* (Reich Organization Leader). Gregor Strasser reorganized the whole NSDAP structure, both in its regional formation and its vertical management hierarchy. The Nazi Party became a strictly centralist organization with the party's own control machinery and high propaganda capability. Strasser's ideas for restructuring the Nazi Reich Organization Leadership had been carried into effect by service regulations called *Politische Organisation – P.O.* – (Political Organization – P.O.) of the NSDAP on July 15, 1932.

After 1925, Strasser's outstanding organizational skill helped the NSDAP to make a big step from a marginal South German splinter party to a nationwide mass party, appealing to the lower classes and their tendency towards socialism. Its membership increased from about 27,000 in 1925 to more than 800,000 in 1931. Strasser established the NSDAP in northern and western Germany as a strong political association which quickly attained a higher membership than Hitler's southern party section. Moreover he arranged for the foundation of the BerlinSA (Stormtroopers) under Upper Silesian Nazi activist Kurt Daluege in March 1926. The party's own Foreign Organization (see NSDAP/AO) was formed on Strasser's initiative, and Dr. Hans Nieland was appointed its first leader on May 1, 1931. Together with his brother Otto, Strasser founded the Berlin *Kampf-Verlag* (Combat

Publishing) arm in March 1926, which published among others the programmatic weekly journal *Der Nationale Sozialist* (The National Socialist) from 1926 until 1930.

The Strasser brothers ruled the Berlin party organization unchallenged and developed an independent ideological profile from the south German party wing around Adolf Hitler. They advocated – at first together with Gregor Strasser's close collaborator in Rhineland and Westphalia Joseph Goebbels – an anti-capitalist, social revolutionary course for NSDAP that was heavily affected by anti-Semitism and anti-Marxism at the same time. With the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Nordwest* (Syndicate Northwest), a federation of north and west German NSDAP Gauleiters under his leadership (managing director was Joseph Goebbels) founded in 1925, Gregor Strasser had created an instrument to enforce the sociopolitical and economic ideas of the left NSDAP wing. But on February 14, 1926 Hitler asserted himself successfully against this "National Bolshevik" faction during the Bamberg Leader Conference. This earned Hitler absolute leadership within the NSDAP. The disbandment of the syndicate was decreed by a directive from Munich on July 1, 1926.

The programmatic and personal rivalry with Adolf Hitler worsened dramatically when Reichskanzler Kurt von Schleicher offered Gregor Strasser the vice-chancellorship and the office of the Prussian Prime Minister in December 1932. Von Schleicher hoped to disunite the NSDAP with Strasser's help and to pull the left Nazis around Strasser over to his national conservative side, as to prevent a revolution or takeover by Hitler. The plan failed because of Hitler's intervention, and resulted in Strasser's resignation from all party positions. He continued acting as a publicist as he did before his disempowerment. From June 1931 until its ban on February 4, 1933 he published the weekly newspaper *Die schwarze Front* The Black Front, which made little impact on contemporaries because of its small circulation (10,000 copies).

During the Nazi Party purge, which was called officially "*Röhm-Putsch*" by the Nazi propaganda (see Night of the Long Knives), Strasser was imprisoned and then assassinated on Hitler's personal order by the Berlin Gestapo on June 30, 1934. The assassins shot through a window into Strasser's cell, eventually killing him.

Although Strasser ultimately failed as a politician, the Strasser brothers' national revolutionary political theses, combined with their socialism, continue to exert a big influence on modern Neo-Nazism.