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LUCHINO VISCONTI'S

**THE**

**DAMNED**

PROPERTY OF  
PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

Warner Bros. Inc.  
presents

LUCHINO VISCONTI'S  
**THE DAMNED**

Technicolor®

**The Cast**

**Dirk Bogarde** as Friederich Bruckmann  
**Ingrid Thulin** as Baroness Sophie von Essenbeck  
**Helmut Griem** as Aschenbach  
**Helmut Berger** as Martin von Essenbeck  
**Charlotte Rampling** as Elisabeth Thallman  
**Florinda Bolkan** as Olga  
**Rene Koldehoff** as Baron Konstantin von Essenbeck  
**Umberto Orsini** as Herbert Thallman  
**Albrecht Schoenhals** as Baron Joachim von Essenbeck  
**Renaud Verley** as Guenther von Essenbeck  
**Nora Ricci** as Governess  
**Irina Wanka** as Lisa Keller  
**Valentina Ricci** as Thilde (aged 11)  
**Karin Mittendorf** as Erika (aged 8)

**The Credits**

Produced by **Alfredo Levy** and **Ever Haggiag** • Directed by  
**Luchino Visconti** • Executive producer, **Pietro Notarianni**  
• Screenplay by **Nicola Badalucco**, **Enrico Medioli**,  
**Luchino Visconti** • Directors of photography, **Armando**  
**Nannuzzi**, **Pasquale de Santis** • Art director & set de-  
signer, **Pasquale Romano** • Editor, **Ruggero Mastroianni**  
• Sound, **Vittorio Trentino** • Music by **Maurice Jarre** •  
Production supervisors, **Anna Davini**, **Umberto Sambuco**,  
**Gilberto Scarpellini** • Costume design, **Piero Tosi** • Make-  
up, **Alberto de Rossi**, **Mauro Gavazzi** • Hairdresser,  
**Luciano Vito** • Cameramen, **Nino Cristiani**, **Giuseppe**  
**Berardini** • Continuity, **Rometta Pietrostefani** • Assistant  
director, **Albino Cocco** • A **Pegaso-Praesidens** Film

# SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**Note:** *Historians are still debating the facts, and their interpretations, of Hitler Germany. The full truth will never be known because much evidence and many documents were destroyed by the perpetrators of Nazism. What is offered below is a framework of general historical material of the kind Visconti drew upon to create the fictional characters of his motion picture, "The Damned."*

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of a Germany deeply racked by depression and despair, seething with dissension, rotting of corruption and depravity. To validate his stewardship, an election was set for March 5. On the night of February 27, the Reichstag building (equivalent to the Capitol in Washington) was deliberately set afire by Nazis acting, highly probably, under the direction of Hermann Goering—drug addict, pervert, war hero, Hitler's top contact-man with the financial-industrial-military-aristocratic establishment. Even as the blaze started, secret squads fanned out through Germany to wreck all left-wing and liberal parties. Next day, Hitler by decree suspended constitutional liberties and took control of communications media. Yet, with the most formidable political opposition demolished and the electorate widely terrorized, he failed to obtain majority support by the ballot.

He proceeded to "coordinate" his regime through a series of parliamentary deceptions by which the Reichstag voted itself into oblivion. On July 14, 1933, the Nazi party became the sole legal political organization. Hitler was dictator of Germany, the Old Order was finished. He began to construct the New Order plainly set forth in his book, "Mein Kampf."

The New Order was to be a Germany purged of social turmoil and division, and sitting at the center, like Imperial Rome, of a Europe, then a world, revised to colonial status. A decisive portion of the German establishment had relished the glittering prospects offered by Hitler and had bet on him, financially and politically, to make them realities.

The main instrument by which he smashed his way upwards was the S.A., largely comprising desperate working-class people and bewildered shopkeepers and farmers. To them, he promised socialism—but of a clean and orderly and Germanic sort. The S.A. (or brownshirts) was the creation of Ernst Roehm—drunkard, homosexual, malcontent, genius of systematized brutality. Under Roehm's direction, the S.A. battered apart the tottering nation and opened a road for Hitler. But the S.A. were suspiciously regarded as "beefsteaks" ("brown outside, red inside").

To counterbalance and, if need be, curb the potentially dangerous and generally uncouth S.A., a second in-

strument called the S.S. was perfected by Heinrich Himmler—occupational failure, genius of calculated cruelty, subsequent architect of the fearsome Gestapo. The S.S. (or blackshirts) comprised mostly embittered and/or ambitious members of the elite, educated, professional, technical and intellectual classes. They also wore the Nazi symbol. It was their talismanic visa to the dazzling world Hitler would bring about. They were the praetorian guard of the New Order. Back of the S.S. stood the grim command of the Germany Army.

For many months, the diverse and contending factions yoked together as the Nazi movement and government wrestled for ultimate power. Hitler's rule was brought to a dangerous brink and formulation of the New Order was delayed. The most grave menace came from the unruly S.A. which demanded fulfillment of the German-style socialist revolution for which it had brawled in the streets so long. Realizing Der Fuehrer's promise might not be kept, the S.A. was arming itself to make the promise good, with him or without him.

On June 30, 1934, the ferocious conflict was resolved by what has come to be known as "the night of the long knives." Squads of S.S. and Army men descended on the S.A. The entire leadership, including most especially Roehm, was murdered. On the same night, Hitler also took care to have assassinated some old personal enemies, certain stiff-necked persons in the Army command and the establishment, and the leaders of certain right-wing groups which might become the replacement should he and the Nazis fail.

Now there remained only one obstacle—that portion of the establishment not yet seduced or intimidated into cooperation. Blackmail, the concentration camp, murder, the neat contrivances of the Gestapo had their intended effect, and the interior conquest of Germany was completed. Now the supposed servants of the Old Order were the masters and protagonists of the New Order. Now the degenerate, the debased, the defiled and the doublecross emerged as the usual way of life.

Visconti's superb film, "The Damned," embodies and personifies this lurid, kaleidoscopic context in the form of a noble German family whose business is steel and munitions. What happens to the members of that family is, symbolically, what happened to Germany upon the ascendancy of Hitler.



