

Adolf Hitler -- Germany's Most Notorious Leader

I won't even begin to psychoanalyze one of the most dreaded names in [German history](#), Adolf Hitler. There are many historians, psychiatrists, and sociologists that have probably spent their careers trying to do it; and not ever fully coming to any understanding of what caused a simple boy to become the megalomaniac that he became.

There might never be an answer.

He was born average enough on April 20, 1889 in Braunau am Inn, in what was then Austria-Hungary, to Alois and Klara Hitler. That's right, the German Führer wasn't even German; he was Austrian.

His family moved to [Bavaria](#) when he was three years old, remaining an Austrian citizen until 1925. For seven years he was a "stateless" citizen until Germany gave him citizenship in 1932, only a year before he became [Chancellor of Germany](#).

Yes, that's a long time between being a three year old boy living in [Passau](#) to the forty-four year old guy running the Reichstag. He went to school like everyone else, albeit in a beautiful 11th century Benedictine Monastery. For a time he lived in Leonding and Lambach, before going off to Vienna to paint.

Yes, paint. Hitler loved to paint, even selling some of his paintings for extra money. His deepest wish was to attend the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, but they wouldn't accept him. They turned him down twice, suggesting he attend school for architecture. He didn't have the necessary schooling for that, so he bummed around Vienna for a while longer living on his orphan's pension, money from his mother, and sales of his art.

He returned to Germany in the first decade of the new century, selling more of his artwork to try and support himself (for a stretch he lived in a homeless shelter). By 1913 he had moved to [Munich](#), just as the [First World War](#) was about to break out.

Austrian authorities wanted Hitler to fight for them, Adolf wasn't having it. He was shown not to be physically fit enough for military service, yet when Germany (Bavaria) entered the war he went out of his way to be considered. He eventually earned the Iron Cross (2nd Class) in 1914 and the Iron Cross (1st Class) in 1918.

At this point in his life is where the maniacal Hitler emerges. It's been said that Hitler had a "vision" to save Germany while recuperating from a Mustard Gas attack in 1918.

Hitler continued his military service after the end of the war, which by chance and military order put him into the German Workers Party as a spy. Although his mission into the political party was a

covert one, he agreed with many of its policies (which were anti-Semitic, anti-Marxist, and anti-Capitalist). He joined their ranks in 1919 as member number 555.

After being discharged from the army in 1920, he dedicated his time to the German Workers Party; that eventually became known as the National Socialist German Workers Party. The world calls it the Nazi Party.

A year later he was elected the leader of the Nazi party, which talked against Jews and just about everyone else. His involvement in the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* or *NSDAP* (the German name for it) brought him to know many other famous names in Nazi history, Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, Ernst Röhm, and Julius Steicher (the man responsible for the very anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*) to name just a handful.

With the backing of the party behind him, Hitler and his friends tried to overthrow the Bavarian government, in what's called the Beer Hall Putsch. This failed attempt in the early 1920's landed him in jail for treason; a sentence that was pardoned in 1924.

In the short time Hitler was incarcerated is when he wrote his book, *Mein Kampf* (English translation, My Battle) that was dictated to Rudolf Hess. Within two years (1925-26) the book sold almost a quarter of a million copies; with 10 million books having been in circulation by 1945. Now more than sixty years later this book (still in publication) is quite controversial.

The NSDAP Party was banned while Hitler was serving his sentence. He petitioned the government to reinstate his party, which was granted in 1925. Throughout the rest of the 1920's, Hitler used his political platform to again blame the Jews for Germany's problems, including the loss of the war. He attacked the Treaty of Versailles (the treaty that officially ended World War I), more specifically the part that cut Germany's military strength (no tanks, no submarines, not much of anything).

That was only part of his tactics to rally the people of Germany. He kept attacking the Jews, as well as the [Weimar Republic's](#) liberal policies. When the Great Depression hit the country in 1930, Hitler again used his propaganda to gain more political influence. But, by not being a German citizen there wasn't much more he could do.

That changed in February 1932, when he was granted citizenship of Brunswick (one of Germany's states). This was the foot in the door Hitler needed to gain even more power, which he did get when he was elected Chancellor in 1933.

In a political underhanded move, Hitler asked von Hindenburg to "dissolve" the Reichstag which no one party could attain the majority vote. Von Hindenburg agreed, added to the Reichstag's fire that was blamed on the Communists — the NSDAP party got the majority vote in the Reichstag it needed.

Within months of the Nazis gaining control of the Reichstag, Hitler used his political power to outlaw any other political party. President von Hindenburg died in August 1934, giving Hitler the title of *Führer* and *Reichskanzler*, cementing his full control over Germany.

Over the next few years Hitler (and those like him) used propaganda and legal doctrine to turn Germany into an authoritarian regime; still blaming the Jews, Communists, Capitalists, Monarchists, and many other “-ists” for what was wrong.

What he really wanted was to get Germany back to work. By taking women out of the workforce, jobs opened to German men. By ignoring the Treaty of Versailles, Germany created jobs in weapons and rearming itself. By building the famous [Autobahn](#), [railways](#), and other public service works, Germany prospered again. He was thought by some to be the “Savior” of the German people.

Hitler also used his office to align himself with other parts of Europe (and the world) under Fascist regimes, like the Soviet Union, Italy, and Japan.

Throughout the mid to late 1930's, Hitler's biggest idea was *Lebensraum*, or living space. He wanted Germans to spread out. He also started his racial cleansing programs, killing many deemed “unworthy.”

Hitler killed many of his own people (those handicapped and retarded); as well as clergy (interesting considering he took money from the Catholic Church in Germany to further his cause and madness), Romas (gypsies), homosexuals, Poles, political opponents, and Jews; just about 17 million people in total. (That figure doesn't include the soldiers who died on both sides of the war).

It's been said Hitler knew about the concentration camps, however there's never been any shred of evidence to prove he ever actually visited one.

Throughout the six years of war, not to mention the preceding years, many attempts were made on Hitler's life. He managed to escape them all, including those by some of his top officers like Claus von Stauffenberg and Erwin Rommel (who was buried with full Nazi fanfare, so that people wouldn't know his top guys were trying to oust him). He used this to his advantage, believing Divine Providence kept him safe.

Hitler also never really wanted a war with the United Kingdom; he believed they all stemmed from the same Germanic Tribes. In England's case, they were part of the Germanic Anglo-Saxon Tribes. Again, he used propaganda to turn Germans against the British Empire, believing that they were a bunch of hypocrites.

By 1939, Hitler had put all the steps in place to go to war. Early that year he declared Czechoslovakia as a German protectorate, then six months later he invaded Poland. The

beginnings of [World War II](#) were considered a “Phoeny War” by writers and journalists, because it had yet to escalate. Little did they know what was to come.

Historians have blamed disease for Hitler’s madness, even naming syphilis as the culprit. Their basis for this theory was his mentioning this affliction numerous times throughout *Mein Kampf* and his lack of sexual promiscuity. He was powerful and wealthy; he could have had any woman he wanted.

But he only married his longtime companion (OK, she was his mistress) one day before committing suicide in order to avoid capture of the approaching Red Army at his bunker in [Berlin](#).

Today, the former underground bunker is a parking lot with only a small information board detailing what was once here. (You can find it at Gertrud-Kolmar-Strasse in Berlin.) It’s also one of the only places in Germany (other than Hitler Exhibit at the German Historical Museum in Berlin) where you’ll find any pictures or mention of Hitler the man, or his mission for Germany.